

May 25th, 2016 PCE Meeting with Minister Eggen - Summary

On May 25, 2016 *Parents for Choice in Education* Executive Director Donna Trimble, Theresa Ng of *Informed Albertans* and Sara Baril of *PRO Children Alberta* and *Expose CSE Alberta* met with Education Minister, David Eggen. We would not have received this 60-minute meeting if not for the courage, perseverance and love of parents, grandparents and concerned citizens from across Alberta! We sincerely thank you all and are honored by the faith you put in us!

We used this 60 minute opportunity to clearly represent your concerns. Overall, Minister Eggen's tone and words were positive, collaborative and receptive. Throughout the meeting Minister Eggen often replied to the information with comments such as "that is interesting", "that is very helpful", "I can understand", "we will look into that". He acknowledged seeing the "hot spots", and "need[ing] to be conscious of people's rights... work[ing] in harmony."

During the meeting, 3 commonalities were established and 4 main points were addressed.

The 3 Commonalities:

- #1 priority for everyone is the protection and well-being of all Alberta children
- A common understanding that gender, identity, and sexuality are extremely important topics foundational to each individual's health and well-being
- Move beyond an "us" vs. "them" approach and toward a collaborative process bringing a variety of perspectives into these important conversations

Main Points Addressed:

- 1. Parental involvement is crucial in the care and counselling of at-risk youth (Speaker: Donna Trimble)**
 - Research quoted from TransPULSE to show parental support is paramount to the well-being of youth, especially those that identify as LGBTQ
- 2. Teachers and school staff must be properly equipped to access the necessary supports to best respond to the unique needs of each child (Speaker :Theresa Ng)**
 - To most effectively meet needs of children, teachers must be equipped to access supports (e.g. parents, other staff or professional expertise)
- 3. All children's' needs should be fully considered in relation to club attendance, counselling, and Sexual Education (Speaker: Sara Baril)**
 - Parents should be true "partners" where there are no secrets and factors of child's maturity, cognitive/emotional needs, culture, religious beliefs, etc. should be considered.
- 4. Government must respect school board autonomy to respond to the unique needs of children and families within their local context (Speaker: Donna Trimble)**
 - Bill 10 mandated clubs and how they could be named, removing rights of parents and administrators to ensure any activities in these clubs would be cohesive to the school setting or beliefs of parents → contradiction to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Education Act, where parents are the primary directors of their children's education.

Minister Eggen responded to our request for a follow up meeting with, "Sure, definitely."

Donna will be following up with Jeremy Nolais, the Chief of Staff for Minister Eggen, to garner this meeting, and we hope for continued dialogue including a thorough response to the information we provided.