

To: Marc-Olivier Girard, Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights
Parliamentary brief regarding Bill C-6
This brief is submitted on behalf of the
Women's Human Rights Campaign Canada – Alberta Chapter

November 18, 2020

To the Committee:

Our concerns can be stated very simply, and pertain to the definition of conversion therapy in the text:

“In sections 320.102 to 320.106, **conversion therapy** means a practice, treatment or service designed to change a person’s sexual orientation to heterosexual or gender identity to cisgender, or to repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour”

We have no objections to the portion of the definition that pertain to sexual orientation.

However, we have grave concerns regarding the portion of the definition that pertains to gender identity, and particularly the use in this definition of the term cisgender.

No Canadian legislation should ever include language that tacitly accepts that some category of persons exists for whom sex-based stereotyping is appropriate. This is what the term “cisgender” denotes.

“Cisgender” is a term that is uniquely dangerous to women and girls, and as such it does not belong in Canadian legislation. It presumes the existence of women and girls who are comfortable living within the constraints of sex-based stereotypes about femininity. There are no such women and girls, because all women and girls are harmed to a greater or lesser degree by sex-based stereotypes.

“Cisgender” is also a term that is dangerous to men and boys, because it assumes that there exists some category of men and boys comfortable living within the constraints of sex-based stereotypes about masculinity. However, because of sexism and the differential impact of sex-

based stereotyping, the term cisgender is relatively less dangerous to men and boys than it is to women and girls.

The legislation as written suggest that some Canadians are “cisgender”: that is, comfortable living within the constraints of sex-based stereotypes. This is insulting to all Canadians, particularly degrading to women and girls, and factually incorrect. In protecting some Canadians from having their “gender identity” changed to “cisgender”, it suggests that there are other Canadians for whom a life lived within the confines of sex role stereotypes is appropriate. There are no Canadians for whom this is tolerable, fair, or true.

We suggest the language be amended as follows: first, that “cisgender” be eliminated entirely; second, that “sex role stereotyping” or “sex-based stereotyping” be substituted for “gender identity”, such that the amended law will prohibit any therapeutic approaches that suggest as obligatory or in any way reinforce sex-based stereotypes.

Thank you.

Kathleen Lowrey, on behalf of WHRC-Alberta

About the WHRC:

Women's Human Rights Campaign (WHRC) is a group of volunteer women from across the globe dedicated to protecting women's sex-based rights. Our volunteers include academics, writers, organizers, activists, and health practitioners, and aim to represent the total breadth of the human female experience.

The [Declaration on Women's Sex Based Rights](https://www.womensdeclaration.com/en/) : (<https://www.womensdeclaration.com/en/>) was created by the founders of WHRC to lobby nations to maintain language protecting women and girls on the basis of sex rather than "gender" or "gender identity".