

## Update on HWDSB Equity Policy - Sexual Orientation Strand

2 Corinthians 6: 17-18

*“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean things and I will receive you, and be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty.”*

**Presentations to HWDSB Equity Department:** 7 presentations regarding community perspectives on the Sexual Orientation strand of the Equity Policy were made on June 6 and 7. Of the 7 presentations, 6 groups/individuals (including HWFAC) expressed several concerns/objections regarding the draft policy, and only one was in support (Health Initiatives for Youth Hamilton formerly Planned Parenthood).

**HWFAC met with C. Reid:** In August, HWFAC met with HWDSB Associate Director Chuck Reid and presented him with a Table and correspondence outlining significant statistical evidence concerning the incidence and prevalence rates of HIV in the MSM (Men who have Sex with Men) group. This table produced by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care indicated that in 2004, 1 in 5 men in the MSM group residing in the Region of Toronto was HIV positive and that by 2008 this will increase to 1 in 4. He assured us that he would pass this information along to executive members. Contact us if you would like a copy of this Table and article, or print it from our website.

**Community Responses:** The (EP) Steering Committee, of which we sit as representatives of HWFAC for the Judeo-Christian principled community, met for the last time on Monday, September 24, 2007 to discuss the community consultation findings. Of 38 letters/briefs, 33 (85%) expressed strong objections to various aspects of the Policy. These included intolerance of beliefs, the sexualization of children, medical risks, stigmatizing of traditional views, affirming of homosexual conduct, permeating the curriculum, removal of undefined barriers, glossary problems, labeling of students as homophobic and heterosexist, Board's negligence in informing the public, and harmful indoctrination. Thank you to everyone for all your efforts thus far.

**Result:** Unfortunately (at least as far as what's happening within the natural realm), **HWDSB is proceeding with an anti-homophobia/anti-heterosexism draft policy** that will go before the Trustees for approval in the next couple of months. Most of the public's concerns and suggestions were dismissed by being out-voted by a majority of the Committee members. Some verbal clarifications were given but will not be included or attached to the Policy. It was suggested that they might become a part of the Board Meeting Minutes only. One clarification regarding the concern of harmful indoctrination reads *“That the policy does not evaluate or comment on belief systems but may result in sanctions for staff and students for behaviours that are inconsistent with the policy and related policies and legislation like the Harassment Policy and Safe Schools Act”*. This is not an accurate statement as the Sexual Orientation Strand from the outset is designed to eliminate or silence what they consider to be forms of homophobia and heterosexism, and these seem to include valid Judeo-Christian positions/worldviews. We see no sound basis for their ways other than it is an agenda they intend to complete with or without entire community support.

**Synopsis:** The HWDSB proposes to make the school environment more welcoming and less discriminatory to the LGBT community (which includes all non-heterosexual individuals, groups and gender identity groups) by having LGBT language and issues discussed in *all* subjects at *all* grade levels K - 12 and yet they say it will be ‘age-appropriate.’ How does one attempt to persuade a child in

kindergarten that homosexual sin is normal and acceptable in an age-appropriate manner? The LGBT community will identify perceived barriers to their learning and to their feeling welcome in the schools, and HWDSB will then eliminate such barriers. Will this mean Gay Pride Week in the classroom and what will the new 'Family Day' declared by Dalton McGuinty mean to the classroom? The Judeo-Christian principled Community will not participate in the 'barrier removal' part of the policy or in its implementation. There will be consequences given to those (staff and students) who are guilty of homophobia or heterosexism, which is supposed to be based upon harassment or discriminatory conduct, but is actually designed to penalize views, positions and beliefs. We discovered that, for some Committee members, our holding traditional views constitutes to them a 'fear' and therefore 'is homophobic.' They believe also that certain comments made by students/parents and certain books/curricula that reflect an assumption of traditional family/heterosexuality are discriminatory and 'heterosexist.' The potential for classroom and schoolyard conflict and conflict between parents and school administrators is enormous.

**Biased:** The HWFAC participated for two years in good faith within a Committee that was far outnumbered by LGBT interest groups and individuals, and a process that was flawed. HWDSB was denied opportunity to present medical evidence until after the draft was completed. All medical/religious/legal objections were dismissed as being either already protected within current laws and therefore unnecessary to affirm within the policy, or fell outside of current laws and could not be accommodated.

**Foundation:** We believe the foundation of this draft policy is built on sandy ground. It is not based on God's design for human sexuality, and goes beyond the 'legal' requirements for a harassment and discrimination-free environment.

The HWDSB seems to be standing upon the premise that the feelings and sexual interests of a small sexually-identified minority (that somehow falls under "discrimination") needs to override parents' God-given freedoms to practice and hold religion, belief and opinion, and their freedom to raise their own children according to their own moral values. Although religious belief is to be somehow respected, religious practice is not, as part of our religious practice is to teach our children about human sexuality when they enter the confusing stage of adolescence in order to guide them in the ways of God. Exposing them to a variety of damning sexual behaviours/lifestyles when they are young will only interfere with their innocence and view of sexuality.

Medical evidence seems not to be a consideration that carries much weight for the HWDSB. (We have found in the past that Harm Reduction principles seem to be the approach usually taken. That is, teach students how to participate in various sexual practices in a less harmful manner.) The HWDSB seem to be ignoring pertinent Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) and case law exemptions for perceived discrimination based upon reasons that are rational and health-based. HWDSB seems to have manipulated some International and OHRC definitions, e.g. discrimination is now to be "unequal treatment of non-dominant groups/individuals by one with a dominant identity ...," and e.g. excluding the term "irrational" from the definition of "homophobia."

**Public Unaware:** Most are unaware of the School Board's intentions. Those who were informed were the following:

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, HWDSB invited representation from organizations to submit a brief by June 1 for presentation on June 6 or 7. Names of organizations were submitted by members of the Steering Committee. HWDSB informed School Councils and Home & School Associations by email and hard copy in mid June after most had met for the last time in the school year. The greater public was informed

only through HWDSB website through 7 weeks of the summer if they by chance happened to search, find and comprehend it.

**Come out and be separate:** The Greek word used for ‘separate’ means to draw limits or set boundaries. We are to draw boundaries using God’s commands for our lives. We and our children will have no part of sexual sin be it fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lust and all other sexual sin. Not only must we draw the boundaries for our children, we must clearly define the boundaries for HWDSB and the teachers. An effective tool in doing this is the HWFAC Declaration of Spiritual Values which can be downloaded from our website. ([www.hamiltonfamilyaction.org](http://www.hamiltonfamilyaction.org))

**Prayer** - Ask the Lord to have mercy upon us in Hamilton, and to release spiritual renewal and revival in each of our lives, churches, government officials and school leaders. Pray for the School Board. Pray for the members of the LGBT community for the inner healing and deliverance they so badly need. Pray that Holy Spirit will convict all of us of our need to strive for Holiness and purity. Speak to and pray for your child’s teacher. Start today.

Hamilton-Wentworth Family Action Council