

*Canadians for Positive Community Standards (C.P.C.S.)  
Presentation regarding the Equity Policy, Sexual Orientation Strand  
June 6, 2007 – Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the Board's Draft Equity Policy, Sexual Orientation Strand.

The group which I represent today – C.P.C.S. – was founded in 1991 and incorporated in 1992 as a non-profit organization. The first 'object' for which C.P.C.S. was established, reads: "...for the purpose of ... promoting positive community standards for Canadians in all aspects of daily life."

It was noted in our brief submitted on June 1, 2007, that the concern within the draft "sexual orientation strand" of the Equity Policy is one of imbalance. The heterosexual orientation of mainstream families seems not to be duly represented, for "heterosexual" is not even in the glossary.

One must ask, "Is there a difference between 'heterosexuality' and 'heterosexism' in the minds of the drafters of this equity policy? It would seem they have equated the two, instead of pointing out that the former is an orientation, and the latter is a misuse of that orientation. No mention is made throughout the document of the inclusion of heterosexual individuals – the mainstream – within this Board policy. The confrontational statement then, that "The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is committed to ensuring that all policies, (etc.) ... are ... anti-heterosexist" (1.1) leaves much to be desired in this "equity" policy. Inclusiveness, for which the Board claims to strive, cannot be achieved by shutting out mainstream heterosexual values or demanding that the public as a whole approve of others' sexual practices.

**Chief Justice McLachlin – S.C.C. – (Chamberlain v. Surrey School District #36) states: "... the demand for tolerance cannot be interpreted as the demand to approve of another person's beliefs or practices. When we ask people to be tolerant of others, we do not ask them to abandon their personal convictions."** That indeed would be something other than "education." That heterosexual people – the mainstream – may hold informed personal conviction that other sexual orientations, when consummated, risk possibly unhealthy consequences – is not a form of prejudice or discrimination. It is a personal conviction to which they are entitled, and which should not be called heterosexism, and threatened with "challenge and elimination." (2.3 (4.4))

In closing, it is suggested that fairness can be achieved by expanding the "glossary" to include proper definitions of lawfully recognized terms such as sexual orientation (which needs to be defined even in provincial legislation), homosexuality, lesbianism, heterosexuality, diversity, etc. If "coined" terms are being defined, such as heterosexism, bisexuality, transgenderism, homophobia, etc. perhaps additions such as homosexism, heterophobia, need to be added. To be fair, that these definitions are free of any bias, is paramount. To infer that heterosexuality is the 'perceived traditional gender role' is intended to cast doubt, and that very intention is unfair.

Further, in the interests of transparency and responsibility, the Equity Policy Supporting Guidelines: Sexual Orientation” should be formally presented to the tax-paying public who fund our educational systems, for true and comprehensive community consultation (1.4), with a realistic time-line for response and input (i.e. more than one week).

In the interest of fairness and equal treatment, the unnecessarily strong language in parts of the document, such as “identifying and eliminating,” “ensure compliance,” “challenged and eliminated,” needs to be addressed if fair and equal “inclusion” of everyone is the aim. There is no place in a democratic and free society for such language.

Finally, the document should show that this strand of the Equity Policy truly delivers curricula and teaching methods in the spirit of these words taken from the draft: “respect for all people,” “inclusive environments,” “community partnerships,” “free of bias.”

We congratulate the Board on tackling a difficult and conflicted aspect of our society today. Once re-vamped, with a sensitivity to and a compassion for, all who attend our schools, we believe that the equity policy has good potential to achieve its excellent goal of a “physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, and spiritually safe, learning environment for all students.” (10.4)