



November 27, 2020

Deputation to Legislative Assembly of Ontario - Committee Meeting

Re: Bill 213, Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020

By: Pam Hrick - Board Chair and Paul Jonathan Saguil - Board Vice-Chair, The 519

Pam Hrick:

My name is Pam Hrick. I am Chair of the Board of Management of The 519, a Toronto-based LGBTQ2S organization. I'm joined today by our Board's Vice-Chair, Paul Jonathan Saguil.

For 45 years, The 519 has been responding to the critical and emerging needs of LGBTQ2S communities in Toronto. It delivers services for the most vulnerable and marginalized, and leads advocacy, anti-violence, and access to justice initiatives.

The communities we serve have survived generations of abuse and discrimination. Survived with next to no legal protections. Survived targeted and violent policing. Survived public health indifference. Survived religious persecution, psychiatric abuses, hate-motivated crimes, and criminalization. This survival has come with the knowledge of unspeakable loss – lives extinguished as a result of indifference by our governments and state institutions and those who continue to believe that we should not exist.

Against the backdrop of our lived reality, we are here today to ask this committee to excise Schedule 2 from Bill 213 and prevent Canada Christian College from becoming an accredited university.

Earlier this week, the legislative assembly passed a motion to “condemn the extreme and hateful invective of Charles McVety and oppose any efforts to make Canada Christian College into an accredited university.” We are deeply disappointed that many members of the governing party, including three members of this committee, opposed this motion.

Canada Christian College is run by McVety, a long-time supporter of the Premier, and a notorious and vocal bigot who publicly perpetrates homophobia, transphobia, and Islamophobia. Granting this accreditation only serves to give McVety a larger platform to spread hate, at the expense of those who are most marginalized within our communities.

Premier Ford and his government have one primary job – to keep people safe. Yet instead of focusing on that job, it slipped Schedule 2 into omnibus legislation in the midst of a global pandemic, hoping we wouldn't notice.

We did.



Ostensibly, Bill 213 is supposed to be “Better for People, Smarter for Business”.

But Schedule 2 is neither. Granting accreditation to Canada Christian College only serves to promote hate.

In order to attend Canada Christian College you need to submit a headshot, a letter from a pastor and sign onto a Code of Conduct that prohibits premarital sex – among other things.

The College’s requirement that all prospective full-time and part-time students are required to submit a personal reference “from a pastor (with a church letterhead)” is nothing but a thinly-veiled “morality filter”.

The College’s Code of Conduct requires all staff, faculty, and students to “refrain from practices that are Biblically condemned” including “premarital sex, adultery, all types of fornication and related behaviour”. This is the same type of anti-queer dog whistle that our community has seen time and again.

If this all sounds familiar and tiresome, it’s because we fought this same kind of discrimination all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada in the form of the “Community Covenant” that was at issue when Trinity Western University, another evangelical institution, attempted to open an accredited law school.

In that case, the Supreme Court of Canada held that regulatory bodies in Ontario (and British Columbia) were right to consider whether Trinity Western’s admissions policy and code of conduct were contrary to the public interest that those bodies were mandated to uphold. Among other things, that Code of Conduct prohibited, “sexual intimacy that violates the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman”.

The fight over Trinity Western’s proposed law school lasted several years. At every stage of the legal proceedings, the courts came to the same conclusion: this kind of language discriminated against women, queer people, and religious minorities. In the result, the Supreme Court dismissed Trinity Western’s challenge to the rejection of its application for a law school license.

Paul Jonathan Saguil:

As counsel for a coalition of queer students and legal professionals that intervened in that case, I thought a ruling from the highest court in Canada should have settled the question about whether institutions of higher learning in Canada should be allowed to discriminate – but here we are again.



Unless it complies with applicable human rights principles, the government is basically inviting litigation over this issue – which would neither be better for the people of Ontario, nor smart for business.

In closing, The 519 vehemently opposes Bill 213 as it relates to Canada Christian College.

Federal statistics are alarming. 2014 reports show that 16% of hate crimes in Canada were motivated by sexual orientation, and 65% of those were violent in nature. Our realities clearly demonstrate that these numbers continue to rise at alarming rates.

If this Committee endorses and the legislature passes this legislation, it will openly welcome homophobia, transphobia, and Islamophobia within our province. This will result in further violence towards these communities. It will signal tolerance of anti-LGBTQ2S rhetoric.

Statistics from Stats Canada demonstrate that queer, trans, and non-binary individuals are experiencing violence more frequently, but report it less. The rate of self-reported violent victimization of LGBTQ2S individuals decreased by 67% between 2009 and 2014. This is compared to a decrease of 30% for heterosexual individuals.

Accreditation of Canada Christian College puts our communities at risk. This committee and this legislature will welcome and promote hate. This legislature will welcome discrimination. It will leave our communities vulnerable and unsafe, not knowing where to turn when experiencing such blatant discrimination because our Premier and his colleagues welcome it, causing further revictimization.

The 519 calls on this committee, Premier Ford, his government, and this legislature to do the right thing.

Our communities demand that you prevent Canada Christian College from becoming accredited, university degree-granting institution.

Thank you.