

# Gay Straight Alliances:

What Alberta parents should know about Bill 10

Policy paper prepared for  
*Parents for Choice in Education*

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## Introduction: Parents for Choice in Education's position on Bill 10

Parents for Choice in Education (PCE) is a non-partisan, non-profit, grass-roots parents' group that advocates for excellence in education through maximum parental choice. PCE opposes the overreach of the Alberta Government in areas of school funding and school curriculum, such as 'Discovery Math' and 'Inspiring Education'. PCE has released a position paper calling on the Alberta Government to back away from its plan to impose 'Inspiring Education' on all Alberta schools by 2016.

Maximum choice in education, and an authentic diversity of schools available to parents, are the best ways to protect the rights of parents from across Alberta's multicultural society. Maximum choice for parents also has the important secondary benefit of creating a healthy competition in the education marketplace, resulting in a wide variety of top-quality schools which offer a great selection of educational enrichment options for parents to choose from, to the benefit of students. To allow the heavy hand of government 'innovation' to mandate any activity, curriculum, methodology or school club on all Alberta schools has the effect of reducing options, stifling choice, diminishing competition in the education marketplace, and producing a "one-size-fits-all" poor-quality education.

The issue of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) in schools has become a controversial political topic in Alberta, especially with the rapid passage of Bill 10, about which most parents were not consulted. Prior to the passage of Bill 10, GSAs were already permitted in Alberta schools, and many such clubs were already in place.

PCE does not oppose or support GSAs in schools. Rather, PCE affirms Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "*Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children*". PCE opposes Bill 10 because it fundamentally and profoundly disrespects the right of parents to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. Bill 10 has the practical effect of imposing GSAs on every school in Alberta, including Catholic, public, charter, private and independent schools. PCE does not oppose GSAs, but rather opposes the government's imposition of GSAs on every school through Bill 10.

In short, it should be the decision of parents (not politicians, bureaucrats, special interest groups, or political activists) as to what clubs, if any, are mandated at the school attended by their children.

PCE opposes Bill 10 because it puts students in charge of school clubs; imposes ideological clubs on all Alberta schools; does not require parental consent or parental knowledge; disrespects the importance of a school's culture; centralizes decision-making in Edmonton, at the Alberta Legislature; does not address the causes of bullying; was passed without any real debate about the nature of GSAs; is not based on credible research; was passed without consulting parents and other stakeholders; undermines parental rights in education; attacks choice in education; threatens the diversity of Alberta's schools, and undermines the fundamental *Charter* freedoms of citizens.

## Executive Summary

Every parent wants Alberta's schools to provide a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment. A law requiring this is redundant and unnecessary, but otherwise not harmful. When it comes to the best way(s) to achieve a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment in schools, there are as many different opinions as there are parents. All of these opinions should be considered and respected. None of them should be imposed on every school in Alberta as the only way.

Bill 10 effectively requires every school in Alberta to have a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), by empowering students to demand that their school start such a club, and requiring principals to comply with the demand. GSAs describe themselves as ideological clubs with a mission to cure society of "homophobia" and "heterosexism".

Bill 10 was passed by the Alberta Legislature on March 10, 2015, *within hours of being introduced*. Parents were not consulted about this new legislation, contrary to an express promise made by Premier Prentice in December of 2014.

Bill 10 imposes Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) on all schools in Alberta, through s. 35.1 of the *Education Act* and s. 16.1 the *School Act*. Bill 10 applies to public schools, Catholic schools, other religious schools (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, etc.), independent schools, and charter and alternative schools. Bill 10 applies to a school regardless of whether it receives full government funding, partial government funding, or no government funding. Bill 10 also applies to home-schools, to the extent that they are a "school operated by a board," but enforcing Bill 10 regarding homeschoolers would likely be very difficult on a practical level.

Under Bill 10, parents have no say as to whether or not the school attended by their children will host a GSA. Further, parents have no right to be notified if their child joins or attends a GSA.

In addition to mandating ideological clubs regardless of parents' concerns, Bill 10 also requires the school principal (and parents) to comply with a student's demand for an "activity" which could include, for example, a Gay Pride Day, or an outside speaker addressing students about "diversity".

### **What do Gay-Straight Alliances say about themselves?**

A few minutes spent reading one or more GSA websites makes it clear that GSAs describe themselves as ideological clubs which accept the idea that all forms of consensual sexual expression are legitimate. GSAs do not hold out abstinence from sex as a virtue worth pursuing. GSAs are therefore incompatible with, and hostile to, the teachings of Christianity, Islam, Orthodox Judaism, and other religions, not to mention the individual virtues of many agnostic or atheist families and communities. GSAs also embrace the idea that people (whether opposite-sex attracted or same-sex attracted)

are not really capable of, and not fully responsible for exercising, self-control and self-restraint when it comes to consensual sex.

Whether or not one agrees with this approach to human sexuality, it is clear that GSAs are based on a belief system (ideology) that not every parent will agree with.

### **Curing people of “homophobia” and silencing debate**

GSAs state that one of their primary purposes is to fight against “homophobia” and “heterosexism”.

Dictionaries define “phobia” as “an extreme or irrational fear of or aversion to something”. In clinical psychology, a *phobia* is a type of anxiety disorder, such that it constitutes a mild mental illness. Based on the common understanding of “phobia”, “homophobia” is an irrational fear of homosexuals or homosexuality.

However, in gay advocacy literature, the term “homophobia” includes any disagreement with gay marriage or gay sex, regardless of whether one’s opposition is motivated by religious, social, health, cultural, political, philosophical, or other reasons. One example of how the word “homophobia” is used to disparage, intimidate and silence people on account of their opinions was the *Fight Against Homophobia Award* being given to the Members of Parliament who voted in favour of same-sex marriage in 2006. One does not need to be a philosopher or logician to understand that those who believe that marriage is between one man and one woman stand accused of “homophobia”.

This *Fight Against Homophobia Award* is but one of thousands of examples where the word “homophobic” is used to describe any opinion (or person) in disagreement with the idea that homosexuality is normal, natural, healthy, and worthy of full social, cultural and political acceptance. The words “homophobia” and “homophobic” are also used routinely to describe opposition to gay marriage, and even political opinions about public policy issues like the accreditation of the law school at Trinity Western University. This is an abuse and distortion of language, and a bullying tactic in public policy debates.

Debate about sexual, social and political questions should be encouraged, because debate is an excellent tool for discovering truth, as well as for revealing weaknesses in an argument, or problems with a position. The distortion of the true meaning of “phobia”, and the misuse of “homophobia”, end the debate before it can even begin. When a person’s moral, political or philosophical opinions are dismissed as nothing more than manifestations of a phobia, all of society loses out on the benefits of authentic debate as a result.

### **GSAs denounce those who disagree as “fascists”**

In conjunction with denouncing those who disagree with GSAs as suffering from a mild

mental illness (“homophobia”), GSAs go as far as to further denounce their opponents as “fascists”. As [www.gaystraightalliance.org](http://www.gaystraightalliance.org) explains it:

You have a right to talk with your friends and fellow students about marriage equality, human rights, celebrating diversity, and the importance of liberty and justice for all. **The fascists do not want you to talk about these important topics**; they want to silence you just as they used lies, deception, and fearmongering to violate human rights in many states; **the fascists did the same thing in Nazi Germany and they are doing it in the Russian Federation**. They do not want you talking about your gay friends or family members. They do not want you standing up for human rights.

When you form a student organization, **you will immediately know you are dealing with abusive fascists if they try to limit what you call your student organization**. This is the first sign that such trustees, administrators, and school systems are disingenuous about confronting homophobia and discrimination ...

Such administrators and trustees abusing children in this manner are corrupt, should not be allowed around students and should be removed from their post; they are a source of the very discrimination gay straight alliances aim to combat. All public funding should be removed from such discriminatory institutions.

### **Bill 10 puts students in charge of school clubs**

Children should be heard and consulted, but not given authority to make the rules that govern our homes, schools, associations, or communities. Most Albertans understand that, while we love and respect our children, we also recognize that they lack the experience and maturity to make adult decisions. These simple truths were lost on Alberta MLAs when they passed Bill 10, which now puts students in charge of what clubs will be permitted in the school they attend.

All that is needed to impose a GSA or ideological “activity” in a school is for one student to ask the principal. The principal is legally obligated to say yes to that request, regardless of what that principal, or parents, think. While Bill 10 uses the term “request”, the actual text of Bill 10 makes it clear that a student has a legal right to *demand* a GSA.

Bill 10 does not require parental notification about whether their children attend a GSA. In practice, this means that ideological clubs can counsel children about complex moral issues without the consent – or even the knowledge – of their parents.

### **Bill 10 does not address the causes of bullying**

Some have argued that the purpose of Bill 10 is to help combat bullying in schools.

Though bullying is a problem that targets children by class, race, weight, appearance,

sexual orientation, geography and intelligence, nobody has ever seriously suggested Rich-Poor Alliances, Fat-Fit Alliances, Ugly-Attractive Alliances or Stupid-Smart Alliances as a solution to bullying, because such clubs would not address the root causes of bullying.

The root causes of bullying include the failure of some parents to model kindness and respect in their homes, and rotten cultural norms that exalt possessions, physical attractiveness and sex-appeal as being far more important than acquiring good character, demonstrated by virtues like humility, wisdom, unselfishness, and self-control. Pretexts being false excuses, bullying occurs even without an identifiable cause, because it is driven by whim; the victim is disliked and mistreated for no apparent reason. A student club that juxtaposes two opposites in its title is not likely to help parents teach their children compassion, generosity, and other aspects of good character.

### **Bill 10 attacks choice in education**

Until now, Alberta's education system has been the best in Canada because it provided authentic diversity in schools, and genuine choice for parents. Alberta parents have enjoyed more educational choice than parents in any other province. Alberta's education taxes are spent on a wide range of very different school choices, including Catholic, public, private, publicly-funded alternative and 'charter' schools, and homeschooling.

Most people would agree that a school's learning environment and culture are as important as the curriculum that is taught. There is more to education than the curriculum that is taught to children. A school's culture, environment, traditions, practices, beliefs, mission and goals all work together to form children not only academically and intellectually, but also morally, socially, culturally and spiritually. School culture matters.

The reasons for allowing – or disallowing – a particular student club at a particular school are as varied as the schools themselves. Reasons why parents might not want a particular club at their child's school are wide-ranging. Parents' opposition to the existence of a particular club at their child's school could be cultural, religious, social, or philosophical, or even based on a club promoting an arguably dangerous activity such as back-country skiing. By forcing ideological clubs on every school in Alberta, Bill 10 strips parents of their right to determine the culture of the school attended by their children.

The principle of decentralization, also known as subsidiarity, holds that social problems should be dealt with at the most immediate (or local) level consistent with their solution. Bill 10 rejects the idea of decentralization, by making it mandatory for every school principal in Alberta to accept a student's request for a GSA or ideological "activity", without any requirement to consider the needs, concerns and interests of the parents whose children attend that school.

Every school, including a public school, has an underlying belief system, and imparts

knowledge from a particular set of assumptions or worldview. Those who support imposing a GSA on every school in Alberta see their own worldview (including their assumptions about sexuality) as neutral and objective, and therefore as the only valid basis for legislation and public policy. They see others' beliefs (especially when it comes to sexuality) as somehow biased or prejudiced, and therefore not worthy of any consideration. In a free society that respect parental rights, and in the context of legislation governing education, neither progressives nor traditionalists should have the right to impose their views about sexuality (or any other topic) on others by way of mandating ideological student clubs. Yet this is exactly what Bill 10 does, by imposing one view on everyone.

Authentic diversity, and maximum choice for parents, are severely undermined by Bill 10, which renders parents and school principals legally incapable of refusing a "request" (actually a "demand") to allow ideological clubs and "activities" at their schools.

If Albertans don't speak up for parents' freedom, politicians will take us even further towards a "one size fits all" education system, step by gradual step, collecting taxes and returning the money to parents for education only on the condition that parents raise their children in the way chosen by the state.

### **Bill 10 fails to define "diversity"**

Bill 10 expressly holds out "diversity" as a goal that all schools must support and strive to achieve. Bill 10 defines "diversity" in conjunction with GSAs, which describe themselves as ideological clubs that seek to fight "homophobia" and "heterosexism".

Tolerance does not consist of using "diversity" and "respect" as slogans to attack parental choice in education, or to censor disagreements about sex or sexuality. Rather, tolerance means accepting the authentic diversity expressed by a wide range of different schools, with differing cultures and learning environments. Parents should not be compelled, in the name of "diversity", to send their children to a school that has a belief system, code of conduct, student clubs, or learning environment with which parents disagree. Freedom of choice, if meaningful, extends to more than just one worldview.

### **Bill 10 undermines parental rights education**

The prior right of parents to determine the kind of education that shall be given to their children is an established principle recognized in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Canada's Constitution, Alberta's *Education Act* and *School Act*. This principle was affirmed again by the Supreme Court of Canada's March 19, 2015, decision in *Loyola v. Quebec*.

This fundamental principle of our free society also holds that parents have the right to impart their values to their children, even when those values are unpopular at a particular time or place.



While Bill 10 does add a recognition of parental rights to the *Alberta Bill of Rights*, that recognition is weakly worded as a general and vague “right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children.” This is in sharp contrast to the clear and specific provisions of the *Education Act* and *School Act* in Bill 10, which expressly require a school to establish a GSA or sponsor an activity if a student demands it. In light of other provisions of Bill 10, which completely and unequivocally exclude parents from having any say as to whether an ideological club or activity will be permitted at the school attended by their children, a Court is highly unlikely to let a general principle contained in the *Alberta Bill of Rights* prevail over specific legislation governing school clubs and activities.

Bill 10 fails to recognize and respect the right of parents to provide the kind of education that parents believe is best for their own children. Some parents may want to send their children to a school that hosts an ideological club like a GSA. Parents for Choice in Education supports their right to make that choice. But the preference of those parents should not be imposed on every school in Alberta through Bill 10.

### **Bill 10 undermines fundamental *Charter* freedoms**

The *Charter* describes freedom of religion and conscience as a “fundamental freedom” because it lies at the heart of Canada’s free and democratic society. The Supreme Court of Canada has held that the *Charter* requires government to accommodate varying beliefs, including the beliefs of atheists and agnostics.

Parental choice in education, and an authentic diversity among Alberta schools, is rendered meaningless if religious schools cannot define and live out their own mission and purpose. Catholics, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and Evangelical Christians are subject to the same taxes as those who reject any or all of these religions. Atheists, agnostics, and those who are religious but not affiliated with any particular religion or denomination, enjoy the same right to send their children to a school that teaches a worldview consistent with that taught at home. A school is effectively prevented from teaching its worldview if legislation compels that school to accept ideological clubs that advocate against that school’s mission, vision and worldview.

The intolerant argument of pro-GSA advocates is that religious schools have no right to communicate the parents’ beliefs about sexuality and sexual behaviour. This argument is based on a type of arrogance: progressives perceive their own opinions about sex to be absolute Truth, which should be imposed on fellow citizens, taxpayers and parents who disagree.

If religious schools in Alberta cannot create and sustain a school culture that is consistent with the school’s worldview, then Alberta’s education system will lose the authentic diversity which is its greatest strength.

## What do Gay-Straight Alliances say about themselves?

According to Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) websites, GSAs are ideological clubs which seek to cure society of “homophobia” and “heterosexism”, and which accept the idea that all forms of consensual sexual expression are legitimate.

As [www.gaystraightalliance.org](http://www.gaystraightalliance.org) explains it:

Some individuals - gay and straight - are looking for mutual companionship and emotional support. They are searching for someone to share their life with, to grow old with, to raise a family with. Other people are looking for immediate gratification; they are discovering things about themselves and others, trying to determine what attributes they want in someone when they finally decide, if ever, to settle down.

Sex and relationships mean no more and no less than an individual - gay or straight - places significance upon them. And no two people are exactly alike.

Regardless of your sexual orientation or gender, visit for example the Health Knowledge Base at Planned Parenthood to empower yourself about sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing. If corrupt, sanctimonious, and genocidal politicians aim to create ignorance to prevent schools from protecting the health and wellbeing of humans, then thoughtful, understanding human beings must stand up to protect ourselves and one another.<sup>1</sup>

The Planned Parenthood “Health Knowledge Base”<sup>2</sup> referred to in the paragraph above states the following:

- Emergency contraception safely and effectively prevents pregnancy up to five days after unprotected sex.
- Birth control lets you prevent and plan the timing of pregnancy. Compare birth control options and find the best method for you.
- Abortion is a safe way to end a pregnancy. Get the facts about the abortion pill and in-clinic abortion.
- Sexually transmitted infections are passed during sexual contact. Learn more about STD symptoms, testing, and treatment.
- Worried? Have you had unprotected sex? Chat with a health educator right now and figure out what to do next.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with this approach to human sexuality, it is clear that GSAs are based on a belief system (ideology) that not every parent will agree with.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gaystraightalliance.org](http://www.gaystraightalliance.org)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

## Curing people of “homophobia” and silencing debate

Dictionaries define “phobia” as “an extreme or irrational fear of or aversion to something”<sup>3</sup>; “a persistent, irrational fear of a specific object, activity, or situation that leads to a compelling desire to avoid it, despite the awareness and reassurance that it is not dangerous”<sup>4</sup>; and “an exaggerated usually inexplicable and illogical fear of a particular object, class of objects, or situation.”<sup>5</sup> In clinical psychology, a *phobia* is a type of anxiety disorder, such that it constitutes a mild mental illness.

Based on the common understanding of “phobia”, “homophobia” is an irrational fear of homosexuals or homosexuality.

No doubt there are genuinely homophobic people, who would, for example, refuse to attend a meeting or event if they knew or suspected that homosexuals would be present at that meeting or event. Genuine homophobia would be exemplified by a homophobic person refusing to shake the hand of a homosexual, or refusing to have any association with homosexuals.

However, in gay advocacy literature, the term “homophobia” includes any disagreement with gay marriage or gay sex, regardless of whether one’s opposition is motivated by religious, social, health, cultural, political, philosophical, or other reasons. One example of how the word “homophobia” is used to disparage, intimidate and silence people on account of their political opinions was the *Fight Against Homophobia Award*<sup>6</sup> being given to the Members of Parliament who voted in favour of same-sex marriage in 2006. One does not need to be a philosopher or logician to understand that those who believe that marriage is between one man and one woman stand accused of “homophobia”.

This *Fight Against Homophobia Award* is but one of thousands of examples where the word “homophobic” is used to describe a person or an opinion that disagrees with the idea that homosexuality is normal, natural, healthy, and worthy of full social and political acceptance. The words “homophobia” and “homophobic” are also used routinely to describe opposition to gay marriage, and even political opinions about public policy issues like the accreditation of the law school at Trinity Western University. This is an abuse and distortion of language. Someone who believes that gay sex is sinful, unhealthy, or unnatural may well be *mistaken* in her opinion, but she is not “homophobic” on account of her opinion. People who disagree with gay marriage, or who support the fundamental *Charter* freedoms of the students and staff of Trinity Western University, have reasoned opinions, not a phobia of gay people.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/phobia](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/phobia)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/phobia>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/phobia>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.homophobic.org/default.aspx?scheme=3087>

<sup>7</sup> On January 28, 2015, the Nova Scotia Supreme Court held in favour of the *Charter* freedoms of Trinity Western University students and staff: [http://www.courts.ns.ca/News\\_of\\_Courts/documents/2015nsse25.pdf](http://www.courts.ns.ca/News_of_Courts/documents/2015nsse25.pdf)

Debate about sexual, social and political questions should be encouraged, because debate is an excellent tool for discovering truth, as well as for revealing weaknesses in an argument or problems with a position. When an idea is denounced as being nothing other than an irrational and illogical fear, one need not even consider it, let alone take it seriously. The distortion of the true meaning of “phobia”, and the misuse of “homophobia”, end the debate before it can even begin. When a person’s moral, political or philosophical opinions are dismissed as nothing more than manifestations of a phobia, this effectively silences the discussion and debate of ideas. All of society, and each of its members individually, lose out as a result.

One of the primary purposes of GSAs is to fight against “homophobia.” In light of the fact that this term is frequently defined and used as including disagreement with gay marriage and/or gay sex, GSAs are ideological clubs. GSAs also embrace the idea that people (gay and straight) are not really capable of, and not responsible for exercising, self-control and self-restraint when it comes to sex. GSAs do not hold out abstinence from sex as a virtue worth pursuing. GSAs are therefore incompatible with, and hostile to, the teachings of Christianity, Islam, Orthodox Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism, and other religions.

## Disagreeing with GSAs is considered “fascist”

In conjunction with denouncing all disagreement with the opinions of GSA supporters as being a mild mental illness (“homophobia”), GSAs go as far as to further denounce their opponents as “fascists”. As [www.gaystraightalliance.org](http://www.gaystraightalliance.org) explains it:

American rightwing fascists are trying to stop you from discussing marriage equality for gay couples with your friends in school, but the First Amendment is alive and well in the USA. Education will triumph over ignorance.

You have a right to talk with your friends and fellow students about marriage equality, human rights, celebrating diversity, and the importance of liberty and justice for all. The fascists do not want you to talk about these important topics; they want to silence you just as they used lies, deception, and fearmongering to violate human rights in many states; the fascists did the same thing in Nazi Germany and they are doing it in the Russian Federation. They do not want you talking about your gay friends or family members. They do not want you standing up for human rights.

Exercise your First Amendment rights to teach your friends and to show the fascists you will not be silenced.

When you form a student organization, you will immediately know you are dealing with abusive fascists if they try to limit what you call your student organization. This is the first sign that such trustees, administrators, and school systems are disingenuous about confronting homophobia and discrimination; they start out

discriminating against your organization by trying to dictate its name and prevent its name being used to most-easily convey its purpose.

For instance, they don't want the term gay, straight or rainbow used in the name because that would actually be specific and clear. Such administrators and trustees abusing children in this manner are corrupt, should not be allowed around students and should be removed from their post; they are a source of the very discrimination gay straight alliances aim to combat. All public funding should be removed from such discriminatory institutions.<sup>8</sup>

## The text of Bill 10 pertaining to GSAs and “activities”

Bill 10 was passed very quickly by the Alberta Legislature on March 10, 2015. Parents were not consulted about this new legislation, contrary to an express promise made by Premier Prentice in December of 2014, when his government withdrew legislation that was worded very differently.

The text of Bill 10, which is now law in Alberta, states:

**35.1(1)** If one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall

- (a) permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and
- (b) designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization or to assist in organizing the activity.

**35.1(2)** For the purposes of subsection (1), an organization or activity includes an organization or activity that promotes equality and non-discrimination with respect to, without limitation, race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, including but not limited to organizations such as gay-straight alliances, diversity clubs, anti-racism clubs and anti-bullying clubs.

**35.1(3)** The students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization, including the name “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”, after consulting with the principal.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.gaystraightalliance.org/>

**35.1(4)** The principal shall immediately inform the board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in subsection (1), and if so informed, the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization at the school.

Bill 10 imposes, through section 35.1 of the *Education Act* and s. 16.1 the *School Act*, gay straight alliances in both name (*Education Act*, s. 35.1(3); *School Act*, s. 16.1(3)) and substance *Education Act*, s. 35.1(2); *School Act*, s. 16.1(2), along with undefined “activit[ies]” that “foster a sense of belonging” upon any school operated by a board, regardless of whether school administration or parents object to them.

## Bill 10 puts students in charge of school clubs

Children should be heard and consulted, but not given authority to make the rules that govern Alberta’s homes, schools, associations, or communities. Our laws prohibit minors from purchasing alcohol and tobacco, joining the army, voting, and much more. Most Albertans understand that, while we love and respect our children, we also recognize that they lack the experience and maturity to make adult decisions.

These simple truths were lost on Alberta MLAs when they passed Bill 10, which now puts students in charge of what clubs will be permitted in the school they attend.

Bill 10 expressly excludes parents from having a say as to what clubs (if any) should be permitted at the school attended by their children. All that is needed is for one student to ask the principal for a school club, or for some undefined “activity”, and the principal is now legally obligated to say yes to that request. The principal must then designate a staff member to assist the club or activity. If the school’s staff members disagree with the club or activity, or if staff members are unable to assist due to expense or time constraints, the Education Minister will appoint an outsider (“responsible adult”) to create and run the club, and/or to organize the activity. There is no requirement for this outsider to agree with the school’s mission and vision. If the club or activity is directly contrary to the mission, philosophy, goals or culture of the school, parents still have no say. A “request” in Bill 10 is actually a demand that cannot be refused: not by the principal, not by teachers, not by parents, and not even by the Alberta Government itself, as it wrote its own discretion out of Bill 10 by repeatedly using the word “shall”.

These new legal powers conferred on Alberta’s children have been justified as necessary for promoting a “welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.” But are Alberta’s parents, teachers, and principals not already striving every day to create this kind of learning environment in schools? And if they are not how will putting students in charge of clubs and “activities”, while deliberately excluding parental input and involvement, create better schools?

Aside from the sheer foolishness of putting children in charge of what clubs are permitted in schools, Bill 10 is a gross violation of the principle that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

## Bill 10 does not require parental consent or parental knowledge

Further, Bill 10 does not require parental notification about whether their children attend a GSA. In practice, this means that ideological clubs can counsel children about complex moral issues without the consent – or even the knowledge – of their parents. As the Alberta Government itself explains it:

There is no requirement in Bill 10 requiring parental notification or consent for a student to participate in a GSA. School boards, staff and teachers have a responsibility to act in the best interest of their students, by ensuring their health and safety. School boards and teachers have a duty of care; the government expects them to act in the best interest of their students within the context of all of their legal obligations.<sup>9</sup>

## Bill 10 imposes ideological clubs on all Alberta schools

According to [www.gaystraightalliance.org](http://www.gaystraightalliance.org) and numerous other GSA websites, every gay and straight student has a right to be free from harassment, violence, name-calling and intimidation, and all students deserve dignity and respect.

These are assertions that virtually no person would disagree with. In particular, parents who disagree with having GSAs in their children's schools agree entirely that harassment, violence, name-calling, intimidation and bullying are completely unacceptable behaviours.

Why, then, the need for a GSA?

Since schools already prohibit harassment, violence, name-calling, intimidation, and bullying, and since schools already strive to ensure that students are treated with dignity and respect, the only conceivable reason for a GSA at a school is ideological: to fight against "homophobia" (disagreement with same-sex marriage and/or disagreement with a libertine sexual ethic) and "heterosexism". GSA websites make this quite clear themselves: they are ideological clubs which exist for the purpose of "educating" all of society about the merits of homosexuality and gay marriage.

It is ironic that GSAs, while denouncing name-calling, repeatedly refer to anyone who disagrees with a GSA as "fascist."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/supportingstudent/safeschools/amendments-to-bill-10.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.gaystraightalliance.org/>

## Myths and facts surrounding Bill 10

*Myth #1: Bill 10 merely allows GSAs to exist in schools.*

**Fact:** Prior to Bill 10, GSAs were already legally permitted in all Alberta schools. The principal of each school had the authority, entrusted to her or him by parents, to grant or deny a request for a GSA.

*Myth #2: Bill 10 does not apply to Catholic schools and other religious schools.*

**Fact:** Bill 10 applies to “a school operated by a board”, which means every school in Alberta. Only home-schooling families are exempt.

*Myth #3: Schools can refuse a GSA if the principal and/or parents are against it.*

**Fact:** Bill 10 says that a principal “shall” permit the establishment of a GSA if one or more students request one. This “request” (which effectively functions like a demand) can be put to the principal or any teacher. The principal is legally obligated to say “yes” to this demand.

*Myth #4: Bill 10 is limited to student clubs.*

**Fact:** In addition to what Bill 10 says about student clubs, Bill 10 expressly authorizes the holding of an “activity” such as a Gay Pride Day, a raising of the rainbow flag, or the hosting of an outside speaker on “diversity” or “non-discrimination”. The principal no longer has any legal authority to refuse a student demand to hold an “activity” at the school. Parents’ concerns are irrelevant under Bill 10.

*Myth #5: Religious schools can still refuse to have a GSA, by establishing their own anti-bullying club.*

**Fact:** Bill 10 denies principals the right to refuse a “voluntary student organization” requested by one or more students. A club established by the school itself likely does not qualify as a “voluntary student organization.” Further, it is open to any student to argue in Court that the school’s anti-bullying club does not promote respect for “diversity”, in which case the Court would order the establishment of a GSA even if the school already has an anti-bullying club.

*Myth #6: Bill 10 is limited to GSAs. The new law cannot be used or abused by various special interest groups seeking to promote their views to children.*

**Fact:** Bill 10 applies to any and all school clubs, as well as “activities”, which “intend to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging”. These words from Bill 10 can be used by any group that wishes to promote its beliefs or goals to students through a student club or “activity”.

*Myth #7: Catholic schools and other religious schools in Alberta can have their own anti-bullying clubs that are not called “gay-straight alliances” or “queer-straight alliances”.*

**Fact:** Section 35.1(3) empowers students (not parents, teachers and principals) to



choose the club's name. Students must "consult" the principal about the name, but do not need her or his permission to call their club a "gay-straight alliance" or "queer-straight alliance".

*Myth #8: Parents still have a say as to what clubs are permitted at the school where their children attend.*

**Fact:** Parents have no say at all as to whether or not a GSA or "activity" is permitted at the school where their children attend. Even if 100% of the parents of a particular school believe that they have a better solution to bullying than GSAs, and even if 100% of these parents disagree with the GSA's mission of curing "homophobia" and fighting "heterosexism", the school's principal has no legal authority to act on parental concerns.

*Myth #9: Bill 10 respects the autonomy of schools to make their own decisions about anti-bullying policies.*

**Fact:** If neither the school's principal nor any of its teachers are willing or able to help establish and maintain a GSA, the Minister will appoint an outsider ("responsible adult") to work with the students to establish a GSA, or to organize an "activity". The Minister could appoint a political activist, or any person who is hostile to the school's mission, vision and purpose.

## Bill 10 disrespects the importance of a school's culture

There is more to education than the curriculum that is taught to children. A school's culture, environment, traditions, practices, beliefs, mission and goals all work together to form children not only academically and intellectually, but morally, socially, culturally and spiritually.

If one were to move away from the emotion, name-calling and absence of rational debate that surrounds GSAs, most Albertans would support the general concept of local autonomy and local decision-making, with decisions about school clubs being made by principals and parents.

Every school is different, and should strive to meet the particular and specific needs of the parents who entrust that school with an important part of their children's education. School clubs are an important part of that equation. Some schools are so small that they have no clubs at all. Some schools may have only sports teams, and not necessarily in respect of each and every sport. Some schools may have only student clubs based on traditional extra-curricular activities like music, drama, chess, and debating. Some schools may allow student Liberal, NDP and Conservative clubs, while other schools may choose to prohibit partisan political clubs.

Some schools may welcome one or more religious clubs, while other schools may view all religious activity as having no proper place in the school at all. Some schools may welcome only religious clubs that are consistent with the religion that is taught at the school. For example, a Jewish school may disallow the existence of a Muslim student

club; a Muslim school may disallow a Christian student club; a Catholic school may disallow an atheist student club, and so on.

The reasons for allowing – or disallowing – a particular student club at a particular school are as varied as the schools themselves. A school’s culture and environment is as important to education as the curriculum. For example, a Muslim or Jewish school would likely have a rule against children bringing ham or pork to school as part of their lunch. A school that teaches that eating pig’s meat is contrary to the laws of God, if it wants to be true to itself, will also make that a rule enforced within the school. In similar fashion, many parents who send their children to a public school would strongly disagree with a priest or pastor creating and running a religious club at their children’s school.

Reasons why parents might not want a particular club at their child’s school are wide-ranging. For example, parents may legitimately object to an “international travel club” or even a ski club on account of it being too expensive for every student to participate in; parents may be concerned about creating divisions among students based on parents’ socio-economic status. Some parents dislike guns and would object to any kind of hunting or target-shooting club being present at their child’s school, even if the club’s activities never occurred at the school itself, and even if the safety precautions were stringent. Parents’ opposition to the existence of a particular club at their child’s school could be cultural, religious, social, or philosophical, or even based on a club promoting an arguably dangerous activity such as back-country skiing.

The concern of parents about a particular club existing at their child’s school is not limited only to whether or not their child joins or attends the club in question. School culture matters. Many parents would object to religious and political clubs at their child’s school not because they fear that their child would join the “wrong” club (although that might also concern parents) but because parents believe, with good reason, that the existence of the club itself is contrary to, or harmful to, the culture and environment of the school to which they send their child or children.

Allowing schools to decide independently what clubs are acceptable results in a wider variety of choice. In Alberta, funding follows the child, so parents can choose the school that best fits their needs and concerns for the direction of their children’s education. In so doing, the rights of all parents and all taxpayers are respected.

The Supreme Court of Canada in *Caldwell v. Stuart* upheld the decision of a Catholic school to terminate a teacher’s employment because she openly and publicly repudiated Catholic teaching about marriage and sexuality through her conduct outside the classroom. The teacher’s human rights complaint was dismissed because religious schools have a legal right to insist that their teachers be practicing adherents of the school’s faith. In this decision and others, the Court has recognized and affirmed the importance of the school’s culture and educational environment. There is more to education than just curriculum. Teachers and school clubs are both methods used by schools to transmit values, beliefs, knowledge and character.

If the Alberta Government brought forward a “clubs bill” that made no express reference to GSAs, and if this legislation empowered students to decide what clubs will be permitted at the school they attend, without requiring the consent of parents, would Albertans support such legislation? Would parents not say that they should be in charge of, or at least consulted about, the culture and environment of the school which their child or children attend? By imposing mandatory GSAs, Bill 10 strips parents of their right to determine the culture and environment of the schools their children attend.

## Bill 10 centralizes decision-making in Edmonton, at the Alberta Legislature

The principle of decentralization, also known as subsidiarity, holds that social problems should be dealt with at the most immediate (or local) level consistent with their solution. The idea is that a central authority (federal, provincial, municipal, community, school, family) should perform only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level. Decentralization gives individual and group initiative maximum scope to solve problems.

Alexis de Tocqueville's classic study, *Democracy in America*, noted that the French Revolution began with "a push towards decentralization... in the end, an extension of centralization." He wrote that "[d]ecentralization has, not only an administrative value, but also a civic dimension, since it increases the opportunities for citizens to take interest in public affairs; it makes them get accustomed to using freedom. And from the accumulation of these local, active, persnickety freedoms, is born the most efficient counterweight against the claims of the central government, even if it were supported by an impersonal, collective will."

Bill 10 entirely rejects the idea of decentralization, by making it mandatory for a school principal to accept a student's request for a GSA or other school club, or “activity”, without any need to consult, let alone consider the interests of the parents whose children attend that school.

## Bill 10 does not address the causes of bullying

Some have argued that the purpose of Bill 10 is to help combat bullying in schools. Though bullying is a problem that targets children by class, race, weight, appearance, sexual orientation, geography and intelligence, nobody has ever seriously suggested Rich-Poor Alliances, Fat-Thin Alliances, Ugly-Attractive Alliances or Stupid-Smart Alliances as a solution to bullying, because such clubs would not address the root causes of bullying. Those root causes include the failure of some parents to model kindness and respect in their homes, and rotten cultural norms that exalt possessions, physical attractiveness and sex-appeal as being far more important than acquiring good character, demonstrated by virtues like humility, wisdom, unselfishness, and self-control.

Pretexts being false excuses, bullying even occurs without any identifiable cause or basis, because it is driven by whim; the victim is disliked and mistreated for no apparent reason. A school club that juxtaposes two opposites in its title is not likely to cause parents to do a better job of teaching their children compassion, generosity, and other aspects of good character.

## Bill 10 was passed without debate about the nature of GSAs

The push for mandatory GSAs in all Alberta schools, culminating with the passage of Bill 10 in March of 2015, has been predicated on the notion that GSAs are the best way, if not the only way, to combat bullying against children who experience same-sex attraction and/or questions about their own gender identity and sexuality.

Any disagreement with this premise has been denounced as “homophobic”, with the result that there has been virtually no real debate about the nature of GSAs as ideological clubs.

Most people become intimidated when they are bullied with accusations of being “bigots”, “fascists”, “hateful” and “homophobic”. Albertans would like to debate the merit of GSAs, but name-calling effectively prevents them from doing so.

## Bill 10 is not based on credible research

Insufficient research has been conducted to demonstrate whether GSAs would help, or harm, certain students. The effective imposition of GSAs on every school in Alberta through legislation, without regard for cultural sensitivities and religious affiliations, ignores the legal rights of parents. It also ignores the negative repercussions for children that attend a club at school that is in direct opposition to the deep-seated beliefs of his or her parents at home. Bill 10 potentially creates a learning environment that is less supportive than the present one. Until issues central to the debate surrounding GSAs in Alberta are carefully examined and fully understood, the safety and security of gay and straight students is potentially and unnecessarily placed at risk.

An Alberta Government document entitled *Creating Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, & Safe Learning Environments-Gay-Straight Alliances in Schools* describes itself as “a fact sheet”. It was published in November of 2013. In calling the document a “fact sheet” the Alberta Government sets up the expectation that the details contained within in it are indeed *facts*. But no objective or credible research has been put forward to support the arguments and assertions in this document.

The same holds true for another document relied on by the Alberta Government in imposing GSAs on every school: *Gay-straight Alliances in Alberta Schools – A Guide for Teachers*. There is nothing in this *Guide* that would suggest that its preparation, writing,

and editing included consultations with parents, or with anyone not already in favour of GSAs. Although acknowledging the need for parent support, the *Guide* appears to welcome parent participation only if supportive of GSAs. It therefore pits mandatory GSAs against alternative proposals from parents to create safe places for students. The *Guide* ignores the wide variety of options available to combat bullying, which could address the nuanced needs of all stakeholders. Like the “fact sheet,” the *Guide* is pure advocacy, not research.

While the Alberta Government presents a *fact sheet* and a *Guide* to support the establishment of GSAs in every Alberta school, much of what is being passed off as *fact* is more appropriately called *opinion*.

In the absence of credible and objective research, the Alberta Government should acknowledge that its plans for imposing mandatory GSAs on every Alberta school were ill-advised. The Alberta Government should acknowledge that its present explanation of why GSAs are to be imposed on every school through legislation neglects many valid points of view based on sound reasoning.

## Bill 10 was passed without consulting parents and other stakeholders

The principal stakeholders related to GSAs are students, parents, teachers, administrators, society at large, and the Alberta Government.

Each of these groups has multiple differing opinions within it. No student speaks for all students; no parent speaks for all parents; and the Alberta Teachers’ Association does not speak for all teachers who are required by law to join it and pay money to it. Catholic teachers know that they will be denounced as “hateful” and “homophobic” if they express any disagreement with GSAs, in light of the fact that this treatment has been inflicted upon, and continues to be inflicted upon, anyone who publicly opposes Bill 10.

Some would argue that Bill 10 is legitimate by virtue of the fact that it was supported by MLAs from all four parties now represented in the Alberta Legislature. It should be remembered that many politicians – of all parties – intensely dislike public debate on controversial issues. For example, in 1984 Parliament amended the *Canada Elections Act* to restrict citizen speech and activism during federal elections, with the full consent of all parties in Parliament, who passed this legislation quickly and quietly. In Alberta and elsewhere, citizens have seen a remarkable degree of cooperation between political parties when it comes to the salaries, severance pay, and pension plans for politicians.

Had all stakeholders in Alberta been fully consulted about Bill 10 – as Premier Prentice expressly promised to do in December of 2014 – there could have been real debate in the Legislature, and in society at large. Of course such debate would have been chilled and limited due to the practice of pro-GSA advocates denouncing their opponents as

“hateful” and “homophobic” and “bigoted”. But the behaviour of pro-GSA advocates is no excuse for the Alberta Government’s failure to consult all stakeholders fully.

Instead of considering the different opinions and proposed solutions of all Albertans, the Alberta Government has allowed the voice of a small grouping of activists to speak on behalf of everyone. Instead of consulting all stakeholders, the Alberta Government has quickly passed Bill 10, which satisfies one small group (without concrete evidence that it will be beneficial to gay students or straight students), while expressly removing the rights of all remaining stakeholders.

## Bill 10 undermines parental rights in education

The importance and priority of parental rights concerning their children’s education is an established and recognized principle.

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*<sup>11</sup> states that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. This fundamental principle of our free society also exists in Canada’s constitution, which expressly recognizes the right of parents to impart their values to their children through religious schools, regardless of how popular or unpopular that religion’s teachings may be at a particular time or place. The *Universal Declaration* was drafted and signed in response to governments using their coercive powers to indoctrinate children into the state’s ideology, contrary to the wishes of parents.

But even a democracy like Canada protects parental rights in education, as was affirmed again by the Supreme Court of Canada in its March 19, 2015, decision in *Loyola v. Quebec*.

Parental rights in education have been repeatedly recognized in Alberta’s legislature. In Alberta’s *School Act*, the legislature recognized that “parents have a right and a responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children”. This recognition was also implemented in Alberta’s *Education Act* which at s. 32 states that “[a] parent has the prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be provided to the parent’s child, and . . . has the responsibility to (a) act as the primary guide and decision-maker with respect to the child’s education....”<sup>12</sup>

While Bill 10 does add a recognition of parental rights to the *Alberta Bill of Rights*, that recognition is weakly worded as the “right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children” rather than the strong existing language of the *Education Act* quoted above. Further, in the context of the other provisions of Bill 10 which effectively and significantly undermine parental involvement and responsibility for

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

<sup>12</sup> It may be significant to note that Bill 10 substantially incorporates the remainder s. 32 of the *Education Act*, which address parental responsibilities, into the *School Act* as s. 16.2 while starkly omitting the sections of s. 32 quoted above which recognize parental rights.

aspects of their children's education, it is very unlikely that the recognition of this new parental right will protect children, parents or schools from the mandatory imposition of things such as GSAs or any other "activity" required under Bill 10.

Bill 10 fails to recognize and respect the rights of parents to provide the kind of education that parents believe is best for their own children.

GSAs may have an appropriate place in some schools where parents invite and support them. Whether or not GSAs exist in schools should be left to the discretion of parents. Parents must be permitted to offer support for their children in a way that take into account the needs of their individual child and family situations. Moreover, imposing mandatory GSAs in all schools neglects to address the root cause or causes of bullying experienced by many students.

Some parents may want to send their children to a school that hosts an ideological club like a GSA, and where the principal has no legal authority to say no to a demand for an "activity." They should be able to do so. But the preference of those parents should not be imposed on every school in Alberta through Bill 10.

## Bill 10 attacks choice in education

Alberta's parents enjoy more educational choice than parents in any other province. Alberta's education taxes are spent on a wide range of very different school choices, including Catholic, public, private, publicly-funded alternative and 'charter' schools, and homeschooling. Most parents would agree that a school's learning environment and culture are as important as the curriculum that is taught.

The greatest strength of Alberta's education system has always been its commitment to authentic diversity and maximum choice for parents. That strength is severely undermined by Bill 10, which renders parents and school principals legally incapable of refusing a "request" (actually a "demand") to allow ideological clubs at their schools.

Alberta's education system is the best in Canada because it provides authentic diversity, and genuine choice for parents. Diversity means that government funding goes to different kinds of schools: public, Catholic, private, charter, and homeschooling. Every school has an underlying belief system, and imparts knowledge from a particular set of assumptions or worldview. A diversity of belief systems, expressed by different schools, ensures that Alberta parents have real choice in the kinds of education available to their children.

If Albertans don't speak up for parents' freedom, politicians will take us towards a "one size fits all" education system, step by gradual step, collecting taxes and returning the money to parents for education only on the condition that parents raise their children in a way chosen by the state.

## Bill 10 threatens the diversity of Alberta's schools

Every school in Alberta, whether public, Catholic, private, or charter, has an underlying belief system. Every school imparts knowledge from a particular set of assumptions, or worldview. Adherence to specific beliefs is not limited to Jewish, Muslim, Catholic and other Christian schools. Public schools adhere to assumptions and values as much as religious schools do, and have their own teachings about what they consider to be “acceptable” or “appropriate”.

Those who support imposing a GSA on every school in Alberta see their own worldview as neutral and objective (and therefore the only basis for legislation and public policy), and see others' beliefs as somehow biased or prejudiced, and therefore not worthy of any consideration.

When it comes to beliefs about sexuality and sexual behaviour, intolerance can become especially pronounced. Self-styled progressives, who divorce sex from marriage and accept all consensual sexual behaviour as legitimate, adhere to one particular opinion or belief. Traditionalists, who see sex as sacred and as inextricably bound to the marriage of one man and one woman, adhere to a different opinion or belief. Both progressive and traditionalist parents should have the right to send their children to the kind of school that best accords with the parents' beliefs. The existence of various kinds of school clubs has a strong and direct impact on the school's culture and learning environment.

In a free society, and in the context of legislation governing education, neither progressives nor traditionalists have the right to impose their views about sexuality on others by way of mandating ideological clubs. Yet this is exactly what Bill 10 does.

## Bill 10 fails to define “diversity”

Tolerance does not consist of using “diversity” and “respect” as slogans to attack parental choice in education, or to censor disagreements about sex. Rather, tolerance means accepting the authentic diversity expressed by a wide range of different schools, with differing cultures and learning environments. Parents should not be compelled to send their children to a school that has a belief system, code of conduct, student clubs, or learning environment with which parents disagree. This freedom of choice, to be meaningful, must extend to more than just one worldview.

Bill 10 expressly holds out “diversity” as a goal that all schools must support and strive to achieve. This could be good or bad, depending on how “diversity” is defined. If “diversity” means that schools should welcome students of all races and ethnicities, and all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, few if any parents would object. But Bill 10 does not define “diversity” in this way. Instead, Bill 10 defines “diversity” in conjunction with GSAs, which are ideological clubs that seek to fight “homophobia” and



“heterosexism”.

Bill 10 excludes parents from having any say as to what clubs are permitted at their children’s schools, and authorizes the Education Minister to appoint a “responsible adult” (who need not agree with the school’s mission and purpose) to help establish and run GSAs if the principal, teachers and parents disagree with GSAs. This being the case, what confidence can parents have that “diversity” will not be interpreted so as to promote or force acceptance of an ideology that parents reject?

## Bill 10 undermines fundamental *Charter* freedoms

The *Charter* describes freedom of religion and conscience as a “fundamental freedom” because it lies at the heart of Canada’s free and democratic society. The Supreme Court of Canada has held that the *Charter* requires government to accommodate varying beliefs. In harmony with the *Charter*, the Alberta government funds alternative programs in order to nurture diversity, and support maximum choice for parents and students. As the *Alternative Programs Handbook* puts it: “Alberta’s learning system respects the right and responsibility of parents to make decisions that best suit the needs of their children. By supporting programs of choice, the province strengthens the public school system and promotes the availability of diverse educational experiences for Alberta students.”

Parental choice in education is rendered meaningless if religious schools cannot define and live out their own mission and purpose. Catholics, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and Evangelical Christians are subject to the same taxes as those who reject any or all of these religions. Atheists, agnostics, and those who are religious but not affiliated with any particular religion or denomination, enjoy the same right to send their children to a school that teaches a worldview consistent with that taught at home. A school is precluded from teaching its worldview if legislation compels it to accept ideological clubs that advocate against that school’s mission, vision and worldview.

Diversity in education should not extend to the teaching of racism, or the violent destruction of our democracy by terrorism. But nobody is arguing that parental rights to choice in education should include these things. Rather, parental choice in education should include the right to determine the school’s culture and learning environment, of which school clubs are an important component.

The intolerant argument of pro-GSA advocates is that religious schools are not entitled to transmit the parents’ beliefs about sexuality and sexual behaviour. This argument is based on a type of arrogance: progressives perceive their own opinions about sex to be absolute Truth, which should be imposed on fellow citizens, taxpayers and parents who disagree.

If religious schools in Alberta cannot create and sustain a school culture that is consistent with the school’s worldview, then Alberta’s education system will lose the

authentic diversity which is its greatest strength.

## About the authors

In the current political, cultural and social climate in Alberta, anyone who criticizes Bill 10 will be quickly denounced as any or all of “homophobic”, “bigoted”, “hateful”, “intolerant,” etc. Citizens are afraid to speak up, fearing social ostracism and even negative consequences for career advancement. For this reason, the authors of this paper have chosen to remain anonymous. The authors of this paper’s analysis, as the analysis itself will convey, are recognized and accredited professionals who have deliberately chosen anonymity. The research and writing of this paper has been coordinated by Donna Trimble, Executive Director of Parents for Choice in Education. Additionally, if the authors were to reveal their names, criticism would likely be directed at the authors rather than at the paper’s arguments. In this sense, anonymity can have a positive benefit by deflecting attention away from the authors and on to the arguments, which is where the attention belongs.