

Trustees, staff, parents and guests, my name is Ina Rocha and I am a parent in Ward 8. I am here tonight to request that the board NOT amend its Code of Conduct to include four new words, “gender identity,” “gender expression,” “marital status,” and “family status.”

These terms cannot be applied without interfering with the distinctive nature of Catholic schools. Since the Constitution guarantees the denominational rights of Catholic schools, I remind all Trustees that they are Constitutionally protected when they decide that a policy is unsuitable for Catholic schools.

The terms “gender identity” and “gender expression” express the idea that people can choose a gender that may not match their biology. This school of thought Pope Francis calls “gender ideology.” The Pope has spoken out repeatedly against both the problem of what he calls gender ideology infiltrating schools as well as against same sex marriage. In a speech to the Polish bishops he gave in 2016 he said:

“In Europe, America, Latin America, Africa, and in some countries of Asia, there are genuine forms of ideological colonization taking place. And one of these - I will call it clearly by its name - is [the ideology of] ‘gender’. Today children - children! - are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching this? Because the books are provided by the persons and institutions that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this is terrible!”

It should be noted that scientists such as the neuroscientist Dr. Debra Soh, support Francis’ binary view of sexuality. In a recent op-ed in the *Globe and Mail* she wrote about Ontario’s sex ed curriculum “A curriculum that teaches gender fluidity is misleading and will impair a child’s ability to have an accurate understanding of the world.” [Soh, D. (2018, July 16) “Ontario’s sex-ed backlash isn’t about children’s safety, *Globe and Mail*]

About same sex marriage Pope Francis has said, “This mission which is entrusted to them, is all the more important inasmuch as the image of the family — as God wills it, composed of one man and one woman in view of the good of the spouses and also of the procreation and upbringing of children — is deformed through powerful adverse projects supported by ideological trends.” [Address to Équipes de Notre Dame, September 10, 2015].

As a parent I would object to adding language to the Code that might be perceived to shelter staff and teachers living in relationships or pursuing gender changes that are contrary to the teachings of the faith.

Trustees, I know that protecting children from the insidious effects of ideological colonization as Pope Francis requests, as well as preserving the Catholic nature of our schools are both things you take seriously. I hope to see evidence that of that in your votes not to add these four terms to the Code of Conduct, when the Code of Conduct comes to a vote.

Thank you for your attention.