

Student Achievement Committee, May 28, 2019

Parent delegate, Elio Freitas

Trustees, Director, staff, and members of the TCDSB community, my name is Elio Freitas and I am a parent with children in the board in Ward 10. I understand that the board has been considering adding new categories to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination in its Code of Conduct. The proposed additions are, "gender identity," "gender expression," "marital status" and "family status."

I have a problem with this, as I see a direct conflict between the teaching about gender embodied in the terms "gender identity" and "gender expression" and what the Catholic faith teaches about sex and gender.

To say that someone can adopt a gender identity implies that gender can be chosen and molded at will. Pope Francis has spoken out against this view of gender in his encyclical *Laudato Si*.

I have a quote to read from that document, a rather long one, but please bear with me.

"Pope Benedict XVI spoke of an 'ecology of man', based on the fact that 'man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will'... Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one's own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different. In this way we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment. It is not a healthy attitude which would seek to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it." [No. 155]

To insert the terms gender identity and gender expression into the Code of Conduct seems dangerous to me because it implies approval of a teaching about gender which Catholics cannot approve.

Moreover the law protects Catholic schools from being forced into saying things they should not say.

The Supreme Court has ruled that that public authorities must respect the denominational aspect of Catholic schools, in the recent case *Loyola v. Quebec, (2015)*, saying:

A secular state does not — and cannot — interfere with the beliefs or practices of a religious group unless they conflict with or harm overriding public interests. A secular state respects religious differences, it does not seek to extinguish them (para. 43).

Trustees, please vote against the addition of these four terms to the Board's Code of Conduct. Our students are already protected in the current policy from maltreatment based on their gender or sexual orientation. No more is needed. Remember that our schools need to have policies that reflect our Catholic lens through which we see the world.