

Delegation to the Toronto Catholic District School Board

May 6, 2021

I am very pleased to have an opportunity to address the TCDSB on the issue of creating safe inclusive environments in the Board and at each of its schools for all students and particularly for 2SLGBTQ+ students.

I am sorry, however, that in 2021 after all the work that has been done in Canada to create an inclusive society, we are still having this conversation.

I am here to support the recommendations of the 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee that:

- Pride Month be proclaimed every June starting in 2021;
- The Pride flag be flown at the Catholic Education Centre from June 1-June 30; and
- Every school in the TCDSB raise the Pride flag from June 1-June 3

The committee considered the higher incidence of suicide among these students and the imperative that the Board do everything in its power create an inclusive environment.

To quote the Committee:

“Our Catholic faith urges us to reach out to those who are marginalized, excluded, discriminated against or forgotten and to celebrate individuality as God’s children.”

The report points out that their recommendations are consistent with the mission of the TCDSB:

“the TCDSB is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish, and school rooted in the love of Christ. We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.”

As you all know, because I have addressed you previously, I am not a member of the Catholic faith community. I am, however, a member of the United Church of Canada. As a member of the Christian community, I believe with you, that the teachings of Christ are explicitly about inclusion of

everyone in our love. Equity means that in order to give everyone access to that love and support, we sometimes have to go an extra mile.

Children living in fear because of their sexuality will not necessarily assume that they are included in the words of the mission or value statements. Systemic homophobia, parents and community who are fearful themselves, lack of public role models and debates like this one continue to create an environment of fear.

I implore this Board to send a clear signal to the students, staff and families of this education community, that you are indeed committed to your own mission statement and to the values and principles of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Your position as the largest Catholic school board in the province is one that comes with a responsibility to play a leadership role, especially on those issues that continue to divide the Catholic community.