



Conversion Therapy

Questions for Candidates

- **Where do you stand on conversion therapy directed at LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit people?**
- **Will you uphold the federal government's position that conversion therapy is immoral and painful, and that it does not reflect the values of our government or those of Canadians? If so, how? If not, why not?**
- **What will you do to end conversion therapy in Canada?**

Why Ask These Questions?

The United Church of Canada affirms that sexual orientations and gender identities are gifts from God, part of the marvellous diversity of creation. We affirm the value and dignity of all people. This is why we reject any therapy or practice that labels LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit* people as abnormal, broken, or not whole in any other way. We strongly condemn conversion therapy or any attempts to change a person's sexual or gender identity using treatment that tries to destroy a person's identity.

In January 2019, The United Church of Canada wrote to the prime minister to express concerns about this issue. We asked that the Government of Canada define conversion therapy broadly when it responds to this

issue. We recommended that the definition include "any formal therapy or practice that has the goal of changing a person's sexual or gender identity through any treatment that is hostile to a person's identity, is unethical, spiritually, and psychologically damaging, and not supported by evidence." We asked that any proposed laws include people of any age, and condemn any therapy or practice that tries to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.

*Being **Two-Spirit** is about a person's spirit—not a sexual or gender role/identity but a spiritual community role/placement. It is a term used by some Indigenous people whose spirits contain both male and female attributes, and should only be used by Indigenous people for self-identification. Some Indigenous people may self-identify as LGBTQIA+ and not Two-Spirit. **LGBTQIA+** is a placeholder that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/allies, and all other sexual orientations and gender identities.

Background

The Canadian Psychological Association has publicly condemned conversion therapy since 2015. It states that conversion therapy does not change sexual orientation or gender identity, but it does create distress and suicide among LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people, especially young people. It is emotionally and psychologically harmful.

In March 2019 the federal government chose not to ban conversion therapy under the *Canada Health Act*. Instead, it decided that the provinces should deal with this issue, since they license health care professionals. However, this does not recognize that health care professionals do not usually do these therapies. Alberta's current government has disbanded a working group formed by the previous government to study how to outlaw the practice of conversion therapy in the province.

Many people who originated conversion therapy have renounced the practice, saying it is ineffective and harmful, and yet conversion therapy is still practised in Canada, often directed at young people.

Religious groups, churches, Christian counsellors, and ministers run programs or counselling that are not easily identified as conversion therapy. These groups and professionals may fall outside the accountability of credentialing bodies, and their practices may not be named conversion therapy. To hide the fact that they are trying to change gender identity or sexual orientation, they may brand their programs as healing, mental health, breaking sexual addictions, or submitting to scripture.

Conversion therapy can include such practices as intensive prayer regimens that often result in deep shame and internalized self-hatred. The practices use discredited theories about what causes gender identity and sexual orientation, referring to LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit identity as demonic. Some groups conduct exorcisms or try to force people into gender-conforming behaviours. This toxic combination leaves individuals deeply wounded and often traumatized.

We must do everything we can to prevent further trauma. Banning conversion therapy, defined broadly, can help.

Learn More

Broadview, [I once led a conversion therapy organization](#)

CBC News, [Conversion therapy: What you need to know](#)

CBC News, [Federal ban on conversion therapy could face constitutional hurdles](#)

CityNews, [Federal action needed for conversion therapy video](#)

Huffington Post, [My Ministry Promoted Conversion Therapy. Now, I'm Trying to Own the Damage Done](#)

Human Rights Campaign, [The Lies and Dangers of Efforts to Change Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity](#)

National Film Board, [Cure for Love video](#)

PinkNews, [One fifth of gay cure therapy survivors have attempted suicide, survey finds](#)

State of Grace/Refinery 29, [The Life Threatening Dangers of Gay Conversion Therapy](#)

*For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together
in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.*

Psalms 139:13-14