

Same-sex equity policy for schools stirs debate

By Robert Faulkner
The Hamilton Spectator
May 13, 2008

A Hamilton public school board meeting saw a mix of Bibles, flashlights and rainbow signs last night, as trustees addressed a same-sex equity policy.

The board was dealing with the sexual orientation strand of a new equity policy, being approved in parts.

The guideline states the board will ensure its policies and practices, in the classroom and out, are anti-homophobic and anti-heterosexist. The board, accepting there are members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community in its schools and staff, vows to fix "unlawful barriers" to full participation.

Traditional-family activists said they felt their beliefs were being attacked with the use of terms such as homophobia and heterosexism.

Jim Enos, who identified himself as vice-president of the Hamilton-Wentworth Family Action Council, representing families with Christian values, said terms such as homophobia misrepresent the rational fear of disease students should have.

He said he felt passing the policy would cause HIV rates to rise if kids lose a fear of the "serious consequences of homosexual conduct."

"Any time we make a change, sometimes there are unanticipated consequences," Enos said.

Many of his supporters, about 80 in all, brought large Bibles and flashlights, which they shone on the ceiling during his talk to symbolize light in the darkness.

On the other side of the debate were same-sex equity supporters. Some wore rainbow leis, at least one held a sign that read, "I Support Equity for All."

One supporter was Lyla Miklos, who is on a city committee for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues.

"The fundamental we are speaking to is, we want to have a right to exist and not have to listen to people justify their hatred," Miklos said after the meeting.

Family council director Gloria Turner said she feared the board would use anti-bullying discipline to persecute children. Father Geoffrey Korz of the Pan-Orthodox Association of Greater Hamilton, warned that 20,000 Orthodox believers may leave the public board.

The meeting was civil. After hearing delegations, the trustees referred the policy strand back to staff. It will return at a June 2 meeting.

Enos said it was wise of the board to do so. But home and school advocate Lee Gowers said the board was led by intimidation, not reason.

From: https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/same-sex-equity-policy-for-schools-stirs-debate/article_24a8fcfe-fdf9-5320-93b2-20eae027dd98.html