

Severing the Parent-Child Bond in Education

By John Hilton O'Brien, 1 February 2023

How did it come to this?

Last week, we ran a [column](#) pointing out that “Calgary’s Metta gender identity clinic is accepting referrals of children as young as five years old, from teachers. Parents don’t need to be in the loop. In fact, Canada’s Public Health Agency enjoins teachers not to “out” such kids to their parents.” While what the clinic is apparently doing is odious, it is part of a more general effort to sever the bond between parents and children in schools. It’s a big problem – and one that Parents for Choice in Education (PCE) has fought against for many years.

But how have we come to a point where the Metta clinic’s referral policy is possible? And how can we put a stop to it?

In 2016, my predecessor at PCE, Donna Trimble, published a [column](#) in the Calgary Herald, entitled *An Alberta Parent’s Call to Action: When Parents Lose Rights, Children are Endangered*. At that time the government had issued official “[Guidelines for Best Practices](#)” that required schools to seek the express permission of students before disclosing any information regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression to parents. PCE pointed out that this isolates children from their own parents, which is a recipe for psychological distress. The column also answered the argument that transition was necessary to prevent suicide: it shared research from the US National Gay and Lesbian Task force showing that “those who have medically transitioned and surgically transitioned have higher rates of suicide than those who have not,”

which has been repeated in [more recent studies](#).

As PCE wrote in that column some seven years ago, “Who will be to blame if children are lost? The parents, because they put their faith in the authorities and were unaware they were being kept ignorant of their child’s needs? The teacher and school that hid the child’s struggles from the child’s parents? . . . or the Alberta Government which allows this dangerous policy to remain on the books for many school districts across Alberta? . . . If Alberta parents want to avoid such a moment of soul searching after the loss of a child, we, each and every Alberta parent, must take action.”

The government’s answer was to enshrine its horrible secrecy requirement in law. It made every school adopt an Orwellian “[Safe and Caring](#)” policy forcing teachers and staff to keep secrets from parents. Thanks in part to PCE’s advocacy and the fortitude of thousands of its supporters, some of the largest [rallies](#) in Alberta’s history gathered in Calgary and Edmonton. While a new government rescinded the [secrecy law](#), it did not require school boards to rescind the policies they had [already passed](#).

The Metta clinic – which is explicitly a *children’s* gender change clinic – is part of this long-running discussion. The policy to accept secret referrals from schools makes it part of the ongoing attempt to sever children from parents in our schools. Changing governments didn’t solve the problem.

So, what can we do?

First, search your local school boards’ policies on PCE’s [site](#). Check it for yourself: see if a search of your school board’s policy handbook finds the wording from the days of Notley’s government “notification, if any . . .” If it does, insist that the board remove it.

If you have children in a school district that mandates secrecy, you can move them to another system until the policy changes. That means looking into the Separate board, private schools (which are surprisingly affordable), Charter schools, or even home education.

Third, [advocate](#) alongside PCE. We want legislation that creates a legally binding protocol about severing parental rights. There must be a threshold of genuine documented concern for the safety of the child, and a sign-off from an authority such as Child Welfare or the police – a protocol that can be challenged in the courts. Add your voice in letters to the editor and to public officials.

Fourth, become involved in politics. If you’re a UCP member, demand that your local constituency board propose a parental rights policy at the next AGM. If you’re an NDP member, point out that secrecy is a weapon of elites against working-class families, and demand that the party stop supporting it. And if your local trustees won’t do anything, support a better candidate in the 2025 school board election – maybe yourself.

Finally, sign the [Parental Consent is Key](#) letter found at Parents for Choice in Education, and join this with

thousands of parents and guardians as we battle to take back our children's school.

We end this clarion call as we ended all those years ago, "Parents - not

teachers, schools, bureaucrats or activists - must remain the primary caregivers and decision makers in their children's education."

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