

**Excerpt of Submission to VSB consultation
on Draft Policy and Regulations – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities
(ACB and ACB R-1), May 29**

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I am Dr. Garner, an Instructor in the Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies Department at Simon Fraser University, and my PhD research and continuing work focuses on sex, gender and the body, and, in particular, queer and transgender experiences.

I'm also the Community Organizer of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition and we're currently working on a research project on queer and transgender poverty, and this policy under consideration has direct implications to this issue as I'll explain.

I'm here in support of the updates to the policy on sexual orientation and gender identities.

To recap two important points:

From what I heard at the meeting last week, we know that there's strong medical support for this policy from the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, the leading medical authorities on transgender health.

We also heard some very moving stories about this policy addressing safety issues and the urgent need for gender-neutral washrooms. If we were considering any other group of students facing daily discrimination, harassment, even violence, I can't imagine we'd still be talking about this issue; we would tackle it now! So we need to do this for this group of brave students!

I also want to add something new to the discussion and it addresses the issue of "parenting rights" in these situations – an argument that has come up multiple times in opposition to this policy.

24% of LGBT youth in BC are forced out of their homes.

So between 10-30% of homeless youth are queer.

Not to blame individual families but, in a culture of heterosexism, families are often not the best or safest place for queer and trans youth.

As Elizabeth Saewyc says, a well-renowned UBC professor:

"I think it boils down to stigma and discrimination, and it starts right with the family. So, if society as a whole says being gay is not ok, families take up that

homophobia or that biphobia or that transphobia. Then they reject their young person.”

And there are long-term implications...

She goes on to say:

“For LGBTQ youth, the issue of family acceptance, and school safety and inclusion, are two key factors that lead to them being homeless, on the street, or working at lower-income jobs and having difficulty with a survivable income as adults.”

Through this policy, the VSB can directly affect queer and trans homelessness and long-term poverty in a positive way, and indirectly work on family acceptance for the same outcomes, especially if there was more parent education built in.

That’s very strong evidence for the need for this policy.