

Egale Canada Urges all Schools to Foster Safe Spaces for 2SLGBTQI Students

Egale Responds to Homophobic and Transphobic Disruption at York Catholic District School Board Meeting

March 6, 2023 - Following the disruption of a York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) meeting last week by parents who oppose symbols of acceptance of 2SLGBTQI students, **Egale Canada is urging all schools to strengthen their efforts to foster safe and inclusive learning environments for all students.** The YCDSB meeting was disrupted by parents using homophobic and transphobic language to claim that 'safe space' stickers as well as other forms of positive messages for 2SLGBTQI students should be kept out of Catholic schools.

Catholic schools are publicly funded. Like all educational institutions, they have a duty to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, families, and staff, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The disruptive parents' extreme views are not in line with the official policy, nor with the human rights obligations, of Catholic school boards in Ontario.

Safe spaces in Catholic schools are paramount. Egale's national study, [*Still In Every Class in Every School*](#) (2021), found that 2SLGBTQI students at Catholic schools experienced more incidents of homophobic and transphobic harassment than students at other schools and were less likely to disclose these occurrences to school staff. Furthermore, Catholic school students were twice as likely to report experiencing verbal harassment based on their perceived sexual orientation (35%) than students who did not attend a Catholic school (18%). Similar differences were observed regarding verbal harassment based on gender identity (28% for students from Catholic schools versus 15% for students not attending a Catholic school).

2SLGBTQI students often face discrimination and marginalization in society, which can lead to negative health outcomes, including higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. It is essential that Catholic schools work to support these students and provide them with the resources and support they need to thrive.

Inclusive policies and practices, such as providing gender-neutral washrooms, implementing anti-bullying policies, providing resources and support for 2SLGBTQI students and their families, and safe

space sticker programs can help to create a safe and welcoming environment for all students.

Helen Kennedy (she/her)

Executive Director of Egale Canada

Egale is Canada's leading organization for 2SLGBTQI people and issues. We improve and save lives through research, education, awareness, and by advocating for human rights and equality in Canada and around the world. Our work helps create societies and systems that reflect the universal truth that all persons are equal and none is other.

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