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Statement from Egale Canada:

# New polling data shows that majority of Saskatchewanians believe children are likely to be harmed if school pronoun policy legislation is enacted.

October 10, 2023

New [data released today by spark\\*insights](#) following polling commissioned by Egale Canada shows that 59 per cent of Saskatchewanians believe children are likely to be harmed if the government moves ahead with enacting its school pronoun policy legislation.

The data also shows a drop in support for such policies, from what we saw in a previous poll that was published in August. Today's data shows that in Saskatchewan — where Premier Moe has said he will use the notwithstanding clause to pass legislation that would implement the policy despite a court ruling that it will cause irreparable harm to young people — only 45 per cent support his position of requiring parents to be informed, with 55 per cent supporting teacher discretion.

As Canada's leading organization for 2SLGBTQI people and issues, Egale is sounding the alarm and urging the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately halt their plans to implement this policy through legislation. This is in response to both a court ruling and now public opinion, which have found that it would inflict irreparable harm on vulnerable young people.

We have long known that school is a lifeline and a refuge for gender diverse students, especially for those who don't have safe home environments. If enacted, the Government of Saskatchewan's school pronoun policy will cause irreparable harm to some of the most vulnerable students, and even put their lives at risk.

- Research demonstrates that **the use of chosen names is associated with reductions in depression and suicidal ideation and attempts among trans youth.**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Russell ST, et al. Chosen name is linked to reduced depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behavior among transgender youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2018;63(4):503-505

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- **High levels of school connectedness is linked to 85% lower odds of suicide attempts**, compared to youth with low levels of connectedness.<sup>2</sup>
- School policies that deviate from the practice of affirming trans students' gender identities—including personal names and pronouns—risk further contributing to the **unjust and avoidable psychological distress caused by invalidating environments**.<sup>3 4</sup>
- A 2019 survey reported that **10% of trans youth respondents had experienced physical violence in the past year** by a family member, and **approximately 14% had been sexually abused by a family member**.<sup>5</sup>

This evidence is why the court has said that the policy will cause irreparable harm to young people. But the government has shown that it doesn't care by going around our judicial system in order to enact legislation that will translate to state-sponsored violence against the most vulnerable young people in our society.

In addition to demonstrating that the people of Saskatchewan believe this policy would harm vulnerable young people, the data unequivocally reveals that they want the Premier to prioritize addressing other urgent issues, such as the rising cost of living, fixing healthcare, and making housing more affordable. This policy is at the very bottom of their list of concerns, with 13 other issues coming before it.

In light of all of the evidence that the Government of Saskatchewan's school pronoun policy will cause irreparable harm to vulnerable young people, Egale Canada calls on the government to immediately halt its planned legislation, and to consult with education stakeholders, experts, parents, teachers, school divisions, and students in order to ensure safe schools where every young person feels accepted, respected, and free to be themselves.

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<sup>2</sup> Saewyc, E.M., Thawer, Z., O'Dwyer, C., Sinclair, J., Smith, A. (2021). Gender-diverse: A spotlight on the health of trans and non-binary young people in BC. Vancouver, BC: Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, University of British Columbia, and McCreary Centre Society.

<sup>3</sup> Clark K, Salway T, McConocha E, Pachankis JE. How do sexual and gender minority people acquire the capability for suicide? Voices from survivors of near-fatal suicide attempts. *SSM Qualitative Health Research* 2022;2:100044

<sup>4</sup> de Lange J, et al. Minority stress and suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among LGBT adolescents and young adults: A meta-analysis. *LGBT Health* 2022;9(4):222-237

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, A.B., Chan, A., Hall, S.L., Saewyc, E. M., & the Canadian Trans & Non-binary Youth Health Survey Research Group (2020). *Being Safe, Being Me 2019: Results of the Canadian Trans and Non-binary Youth Health Survey*. Vancouver, Canada: Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, University of British Columbia