

Central Okanagan School Board
1040 Hollywood Rd S
Kelowna, BC

Dear School Board Trustees and Superintendent Kaardal,

I would like to thank each of you for putting your name forward to serve as school board trustees. It is a big responsibility to oversee the care of students. After attending several school board meetings I can see the hours of commitment that you all contribute. Thank you for your dedication!

I am writing regarding an item on the Public Board Meeting Agenda for May 24th, 2023. Item #7.2 says that the “Central Okanagan Board of Education declares June as “Pride Month” in the Central Okanagan Schools”. I am wondering why no other group is given the same attention as the LGBTQ population. According to 2021 statistics Christians make up only about 40% of the population that identifying as religious in Kelowna and this group just celebrated a very important season of Passover to Pentecost, April 5th – May 28th. There was no special observance in recognition of the many Christian students in the district. I understand that this is about the inclusion of LGBTQ students but believe it is reasonable to limit the celebration to one day rather than a full month. To put things in proper perspective, we get one day to celebrate Canada, July 1st, and one day to celebrate our veterans, November 11th, etc.

The Central Okanagan School Board says their purpose is “to educate students in a safe, inclusive, equitable and inspirational learning environment where each learner develops the attributes and competencies to flourish in a global community”. My question is how will the students who identify as Christian, or some other special interest groups, feel inclusive and equitable when they are not given

the same month-long attention? Never mind that the school year already hyper-focuses daily on the LGBTQ as a result of the SOGI 123 learning resource.

Children attend school to receive an academic education and not for the purpose of social justice initiatives. It is important to bring the focus back to ensuring the equal treatment of all students focused on providing them a strong education.

I would also like to remind the Central Okanagan School Board that public spaces, ie school classrooms, hallways and the board office are to remain neutral. “The State of Neutrality” stipulates that neutrality must be adhered to and upheld by elected officials, school board trustees, and must be done so without favour and in respect of the law. Giving special rights to any one group is divisive and unlawful. Therefore, it is critical that all Central Okanagan School District spaces remain neutral in order to respect the beliefs of everyone.

This is in accordance with the Supreme Court of Canada when they addressed this issue in [Mouvement laïque québécois v. Saguenay \(City\)](#), 2015 SCC 16, [2015] 2 S.C.R. 3 (para 72 -74)¹. It states:
[73]...When the state adheres to a belief, it is not merely expressing an opinion on the subject. It is creating a hierarchy of beliefs and casting doubt on the value of those it does not share. It is also ranking the individuals who hold such beliefs.

[74] By expressing no preference, the state ensures that it preserves a neutral public space that is free of discrimination and in which true freedom to believe or not to believe is enjoyed by everyone equally, given that everyone is valued equally.

I look forward to your immediate attention to this matter in the form of an amendment to the district's decision.

Respectfully,

Laurie Baird

Action4Canada

Protecting Faith, Family & Freedom