



## Statement – Students, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

February 2, 2024

The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), representing more than 5,400 principals and vice-principals in Ontario's public elementary and secondary schools, is dedicated to advancing human rights within the education system, especially as it relates to education leadership, fostering a culture of inclusivity, equity and respect for all individuals. We strive to create environments that promote the well-being and success of every student, and work toward building a more just and inclusive society.

We believe that all individuals, regardless of how they identify and within the wholeness of their full identity, are entitled to equal rights and opportunities. These beliefs are reflected in our [statement on human rights](#).

Earlier this week, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith announced a series of new policies around gender identity and transgender youth. These policies propose requiring parental consent for students aged 15 and under to have their preferred pronouns be used in schools, restrict access to gender reassignment surgeries and hormone therapy for those under 18 and implement parental notification and 'opt-in' when gender identity, sexual orientation or human sexuality will be taught in schools.

We oppose these proposals and strongly urge the Alberta government to withdraw this uninformed, dangerous and disrespectful plan. As expressed in a [previous statement](#) on August 29, 2023, we remain concerned about potential policy changes impacting the wellness and safety of 2SLGBTQQIA+ students. With respect to parental consent on the use of preferred names and/or pronouns at school, we believe that the ideal situation involves including parents and guardians in conversations and decision making. However, we support current school board policy that centers students in the decision making, honouring their right to self-identify, even when parental consent is not given, to foster an equitable and inclusive learning environment.

Students who do not have parental, family and/or community support that respects and validates their decisions about their identify and choice of name/pronoun often face higher risks of self-harm, emotional distress, isolation, deteriorating mental health and increased bullying. Gender-affirming practices help mitigate those risks, contributing to greater inclusion, belonging and success at school.

We encourage all governments to implement and support policies that are fair, equitable, anti-oppressive and value the individual rights and dignity of students and staff, particularly the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.