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“**Canadians deserve right to choose their healthcare”:**

**Professional counselor responds to Conservative Party position**

“The Conservative Party must protect the right of Canadians to select a counselor of their choice,” says a Canadian professional counselor. Dr. Ann Gillies, who has counseled Canadians on a host of issues, is very concerned about that the reintroduction of a federal law to ban, “conversion therapy.”

Bill C-6, goes as far as banning any practice or treatment to **repress or reduce non-heterosexual** attraction or sexual behaviour, especially for those under 18. “The problem is the Bill makes no distinction between consent and coercion. People, including young people, who may not want to behave a certain kind of way sexually, would not be allowed to get support from the counselor, pastor or spiritual leader of their choice,” says Gillies. “Even parents and grandparents of young children would not be allowed to seek out the counselling of their choice for their child.

Gillies says even though the ban is only for those under 18, adults would be denied access to advertising for that service. Professional counsellors would also be reluctant to help anyone seeking the counseling, even if they are over 18, because of the way the counseling is described and the threat of criminal charges.

Rather than speaking out for these Canadians, Gillies says, the Conservative Party responded

by stating that "conversion therapies are immoral, painful, and do not reflect the values of our government or those of Canadians." And that Conservatives agree that conversion therapy is wrong and should be banned. No Canadian should be forced to change who they are.

Gillies says the language is based on false assumptions – that therapies for those with unwanted same-sex attractions are ***always forced***, ***always immoral, and painful.*** “The media and government officials suppress voices of those who want this help and who have received this help,” says Gillies. The Conservative Party must make it clear that yes, we should oppose any coercive counseling but we must also support any counseling that Canadians freely choose.”

Gillies says, she has compiled a substantial amount of research ***on the success of talk based therapies*** for those with unwanted same sex attraction who freely want this counseling. “Many Canadians don’t want to base their identities or their sexual behavior on their sexual desires or gender feelings, but instead get their value and guidance for life from a religious text or other means,” says Gillies. “They have a right to make that healthcare and moral choice. I would hope the Conservative Party will speak out for them.”

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