



## Alberta's proposed transgender legislation and United Church action, March 2024

The [Northern Spirit Regional Council](#) Executive believes that taking action against this proposed legislation is a key part of our work as an Affirming Regional Council, and as a community that supports the dignity, rights, safety, and thriving of all children and youth. [Click here to read our chairperson's statement](#). Please [click here to read the statement from Chinook Winds Regional Council](#), the United Church in Southern Alberta.

We hope this resource helps you discern your own calls to action and faithful witness to God's all-embracing love. A more colourful and fancy version of this document is in the works! .

**This resource includes:** Legislation summary; our responses as church; moving to advocacy; what are the possible impacts of the proposed legislation, a closer look at the proposed legislation; and some more resources

### Summary: What's the proposed legislation about?

Strange as it sounds, nothing formal has been tabled as of March 2024. But the video released by Premier Smith on 31 January 2024 paints very concerning plans that far exceed anything introduced by other provinces to date. These include medical restrictions, sports bans targeting transgender girls, policies against respecting students' names and pronouns, and major new restrictions on sexual education. **See the end of this resource for full details.**

### Our responses as people of faith

First: **love**. So much of this movement to restrict people's rights is fear-based. Jesus' commandments to us are very clear. We are told to lead with love, be motivated by love, and be grounded in God's love. We are told that "perfect love casts out fear". (1 John 4:18). That is a direct challenge to the fear that is motivating so much of the dangerous legislation and accusations we're witnessing. Then, that love calls us into action.

**Put the needs and lived experiences of trans, Two Spirit, non binary, and other gender-diverse people first.** Also **support the loved ones and supporters of gender-diverse people.** Support teachers, medical staff, and athletes who are extremely concerned about the impact of these measures.

**Do our own thinking, reflecting, and learning.** Ask questions about what we're read or told, without taking claims at face value. That can include looking at our own fears, and gently challenging beliefs we carry, such as gender being limited only to women and men, or the

horrible accusation that Two Spirit and LGBTQIA people are a threat to children.

**Work together with our communities.** The United Church is part of the communities it serves, and we need to carry our presence into the community. How we are Public, Intentional, and Explicit will vary with the context, and with levels of safety. But in all cases, there are people and partnerships we need to encounter in our communities. Communities, and targeted people especially, notice when the church shows up, even if we never hear about it. Your presence makes a difference.

**Support existing actions** led by transgender groups and allies. Examples? Read on!

## Moving to advocacy

Here, the Regional Council recommends supporting actions that are already underway, while encouraging you to add your own perspectives as a community of faith, a United Church person, and a person of faith when you write or call. Much of the fear and hate directed at 2SLGBTQIA+ people have a religious basis, so it's crucial that we clearly name our Christian values of full inclusion and love, and our commitments to living those out. We know that when the church shows up to fully support Two Spirit and LGBTQIA people, it's noticed, and it makes a positive difference.

The United Church is non-partisan. We do not support one political party over another, and we critique or encourage, as needed, the plans and actions of all political parties and governing parties. Government has the responsibility to hear our concerns, and we have the responsibility to raise them. **It is in that spirit that we share these actions:**

[Customizable letter to MLAs and cabinet ministers](#), for residents of Alberta.

Meeting with your MLA is always an important if time-consuming strategy, and is most effective when done with a diverse group of organizations and people in your community or riding, as you are much more likely to secure a meeting. [A list all MLAs and their contact information is available here.](#)

Letter writing action to relevant AB cabinet ministers, for our members in NWT and NE BC, and for all Canadians, from the Canadian Anti-Hate Network. [Click here to access it.](#)

## What are the likely impacts if the legislation passes?

Many concerns about impacts are covered [in the statements compiled by Affirming Connections, available here](#). Trans advocate Fae Johnstone [offers a detailed analysis of the possible impacts here](#), and names why each aspect of the proposed legislation is simply not sound policy.

Affirming Connections offered this summary in a February 4 statement:

- Effectively removing fundamental sex education from schools and opportunities for all students to learn about healthy relationships, reproductive health, and consent.

- Removing the social visibility of 2SLGBTQ+ people, sending the message that being 2SLGBTQ+ is shameful and should be obliterated or invisible.
- Removing the rights of trans youth to have access to life-saving, gender-affirming, and age-appropriate medical care, even with a supportive parent's consent
- Removing the ability for a supportive parent to make their own healthcare decisions with their trans child under the age of 15.
- Forcing teachers to out trans youth to their parents, which puts many young people in dangerous situations where they are at a much higher risk for suicide and homelessness.
- Stigmatizing and discriminating against transgender female athletes.

## Summary of the proposed legislation

[Here is the X \(formerly Twitter\) video](#) of the Premier's original announcement. It's worth noting that the Premier frames these proposed measures as supporting "choice" and being supportive of trans people. For example, she says, "As premier of this province, I want every Albertan that identifies as transgender to know I care deeply about you and accept you as you are. As long as I lead this province, I will ensure you are supported and your rights are protected."

Yet this legislation would roll back many areas of both protection and inclusion, making the Premier's framing both chilling and unbelievable.

A myths versus facts analysis of the proposed legislation [is available here](#). Two professors offer a summary and commentary [in this article](#).

### What we know so far:

#### Healthcare

A prohibition on gender reassignment surgery for those 17 and under, a ban on puberty blockers for children 15 and under, while hormone therapy for the purposes of gender reassignment surgery will only be permitted with parental consent and physician and psychologist approval. In many cases, the restrictions proposed are already in place.

#### Education

New rules will require parents to opt in to every lesson on sexual education, sexual orientation and gender identity. (Currently the default is an opt out.) Any third-party materials on the subjects will need to be cleared by the education ministry before teachers can use them.

Children 15 and under will not be permitted to choose a pronoun or chosen name in schools other than what they were given at birth. While students 16 and 17 won't require permission, schools will be obligated to notify parents of the change.

## Sports

Trans women and girls will not be permitted to play in girls' leagues.

## Resources

Resources are included for your own background and to help you respond to questions and concerns. Our partner in Alberta, church-based Affirming Connections, [has compiled a list of resources](#), especially statements from professional associations and community groups. These are updated regularly, and the list is best viewed and refreshed in your internet browser. Resources include: perspectives from the education system, child and youth advocates, the medical system, sports experts, and more. [Please click here to access the list.](#)

### What is gender diversity?

[Celebrating Gender Diversity is the United Church's main resource; click here to access it.](#)

The Genderbread Person is a visual and text resource developed to explain key differences in terms and understandings, such as "gender" versus "sex". [Find the latest version here.](#)

### What are parental rights?

[Click here for a detailed discussion](#) of the concept of parents' rights and responsibilities versus the parental rights movement. We're preparing a summary resource on this concept and what it really means; watch for it!



If you find some errors or some fabulous resources, or just want to talk, please contact the Regional Council office at [northernspirit@united-church.ca](mailto:northernspirit@united-church.ca) and we will work out who on our Affirming team will respond.

Thank you for your actions, your concern, and your public, intentional, and explicit witness to God's love.