



## Statement – Students, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

August 29, 2023

The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), representing more than 5,400 principals and vice-principals in Ontario's public elementary and secondary schools, is concerned about potential policy changes that impact the wellness and safety of 2SLGBTQQA+ students.

Recently, provincial governments in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan made legislative changes requiring students under the age of 16 to seek parental consent to change preferred names or pronouns at school. We are concerned about similar developments impacting schools in Ontario.

While we believe that the ideal situation would include parents and guardians in the conversations and decision making, we support current school board policy in Ontario that centers the students in the decision making and honours their right to self-identify, even when parental consent is not given, to support an equitable and inclusive learning environment. Students who do not have parental, family and community support that respects and validates them face higher risks of self-harm, emotional distress, isolation, deteriorating mental health and increased bullying. Gender-affirming practices such as honouring preferred names and pronouns help to reduce those risks and contribute to greater inclusion, belonging and success at school.

The OPC supports existing policies, being followed in school boards across the province that are fair, equitable, anti-oppressive and value the individual rights and dignity of students and staff. Boards have a duty to uphold the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) for all students and staff, as it relates to gender identity and gender expression.

Our support for the 2SLGBTQQA+ community also extends to school and board staff. Gender diverse staff should expect to be able to perform and complete their duties free from harassment, discrimination and threats of harm.