

Diverse Coalition Stands Up for Sexual Health in Ontario

144 community and health organizations join together to show support at Queens Park

Embargoed

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Toronto, September 23 – The updates to the sexual health education component of the Health and Physical Education curriculum have polarized community agencies and parents across the province. Today, members of a new and diverse Ontario Coalition Supporting Health Education (OCSHE) are speaking out in support of updated sexual health education in Ontario.

The coalition is comprised of more than 140 member organizations from across Ontario that includes: faith-based organizations, Francophone and First Nations groups, university representatives, parent groups, hospitals, educational not-for-profits and community health centres.

“This coalition represents groups with different beliefs, backgrounds, areas of expertise and languages, yet we stand together in our support for this curriculum,” said Rabea Murtaza, Founder of Muslims for Ontario’s Health and Physical Education Curriculum. “Quality, age-appropriate sexual health education is a right of all students.”

The discussion around the new curriculum is contentious and advocates on both sides run the risk of becoming misinformed. The last update to the Health and Physical Education curriculum, which includes sexual health education, occurred in 1998. This change predates social media, smartphones and the legalization of same-sex marriage. The curriculum was developed in consultation with parents, community groups, educators and health experts to give Ontario students essential health knowledge they need to make informed choices in today’s world. This curriculum also represents student feedback more widely than any other Ontario curriculum to date.

“Health education, including sex ed, is a shared responsibility; it includes parents and families, the school system, the health community, and students themselves,” said Doug Kerr, parent and founder of People for Ontario’s Sex-Ed Curriculum. “We all have a responsibility to give our children the information they need to make smart decisions about their sexual health.”

The Ontario Coalition Supporting Health Education (OCSHE) encourages parents, and education and health professionals who support this curriculum to speak out and take action. Everyone can join the conversation on social media by asking questions and showing their support using the hashtag #SupportSexEd. You can also support the movement by signing a petition in support of the new curriculum at change.org/SupportSexEd.

“We stand united in the belief that this curriculum will make the youth of Ontario safer and healthier,” said Sarah Hobbs-Blyth, Executive Director of Planned Parenthood Toronto. “This curriculum is founded on research, science, prudent public health principles, and adherence to the Ontario Code of Human Rights. We cannot ignore its importance and place in our schools.”

Please visit supportthealtheducation.ca for a list of the 144 community and health organizations who support the updated sexual health component of the curriculum. The OCSHE’s has also released a public service announcement made by youth to encourage an honest discussion of sexual health education, including its positive impact on health and wellbeing.

About Ontario Coalition Supporting Health Education (OCSHE)

The Ontario Coalition Supporting Health Education is made up of over 140 organizations including community groups, hospitals, universities, educational not-for-profits, parent groups and health organizations. The coalition formed in response to the public protests and boycotts from a variety of groups who are unhappy with various aspects of the new curriculum. Coalition members support the updated sexual health component of the Health and Physical Education curriculum now in Ontario schools because it is the result of consultation, research, science, prudent public health principles, and adherence to the Ontario Code of Human Rights.

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