

Toronto Catholic board votes to include gender terms

The long-running gender debate at the Toronto Catholic District School Board came to end in the early morning hours of Nov. 8 with the board voting to include gender terms in its code of conduct.

The resolution followed the submission of a report by the Archdiocese of Toronto that supported the inclusion of the terms “gender expression, gender identity, family status and marital status” in the code in regards to protection from discrimination, with the addition that the policy “be interpreted through the lens of the Catholic faith as articulated by the teachings of the Church and protected in legislation.”

The terms align with revisions made to the code from Ontario’s Ministry of Education, which had instructed school boards to include the terms in their policies by Nov. 4.

Opponents to the change in language argued that the wording violates Catholic beliefs on gender and natural law, while proponents insisted that schools must have inclusive language that included the LGBTQ community.

The final vote at the seven-hour meeting was 8-4, with Garry Tanuan, Michael Del Grande, Nancy Crawford and Teresa Lubinski voting against the motion.

Those trustees had passed a motion in a sub-committee on Oct. 30 to eliminate all specific categories of groups protected from discrimination in favour of a code that was broadly inclusive of all people.

“We finally, finally, after months and months of turmoil and creating this division, we finally came together as a board and did the right thing by our students and our families,” board chair Maria Rizzo told the *Toronto Star*.

The new language in the board’s code of conduct now reads that all members of the school community must “respect and treat others fairly, regardless of, for example, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability.”