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**Subject:** 6.1.1 - Request to Speak - Zefram Downer - Facility Change Room Safety - File CK 100-26  
**Attachments:** LETTER TO THE STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES .pdf; Action Project EFDT 486.pdf

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**From:** Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 5, 2023 8:23 PM  
**To:** City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>  
**Subject:** Email - Request to Speak - Zefram Downer - Facility Change Room Safety - File CK 100-26

--- Replies to this email will go to [REDACTED] ---

Submitted on Sunday, March 5, 2023 - 20:21

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

**I have read and understand the above statements.:** Yes

**Date:** Sunday, March 05, 2023

**To:** His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

**Pronouns:** They/them/theirs

**First Name:** Zefram (Zeena)

**Last Name:** Downer

**Phonetic spelling of first and/or last name:** ZEE-nuh DOWN-er

**Phone Number :** [REDACTED]

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Address:** [REDACTED] Clarence Avenue S

**City:** Saskatoon

**Province:** Saskatchewan

**Postal Code:** S7J [REDACTED]

**What do you wish to do ?:** Request to Speak

**If speaking will you be attending in person or remotely:** In person

**What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known)::** STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

**What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?:** Facility Change Room Safety [CK 100-26]

**Comments:**

I would like to read LETTER TO THE STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES that I am attaching. But, I am also attaching another document ACTION PROJECT EFDT 486 that demonstrates the educational research that I have done on this topic with the inclusion of all of the materials that I included in my research.

**Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?:** No

Good morning to the committee.

My name is Zeena Downer, I am a teacher candidate and a community member. We are here today to discuss safety in accessing public change rooms and washrooms here in Saskatoon.

But, while these conversations are happening. We are also discussing a silent narrative. Whether or not this committee views transgender people as active members of the community and active members of Saskatoon.

I could share emotional stories about the anti-transgender harassment that me or my friends and family have faced when accessing public spaces. But, sharing anecdotes from my daily life feels misplaced.

Nonetheless, I have very strong emotions about this discussion. About the group who brought this business forward to this committee - and about resolutions that might be made in the future surrounding this issue.

For the past two months I have spent numerous hours researching these anti-transgender and anti-drag performance protests that have been happening in Saskatoon. Most of which have been organized by people in this room today. Here is some history that I would like to share. The earliest public bathrooms in Canada were only for men. Women had to fight for the right to access a bathroom in public in Canada. The Saskatchewan government protects transgender people under categories of sex, rather than gender. And fights for the rights of transgender people alongside the rights of cisgender people. In our legislation we are all viewed similarly. And research demonstrates that the most vulnerable people in accessing public facilities like these, are transgender youth who have restrictions to use, legislated against them.

I think that our next steps are not to segregate bathrooms and changerooms by sex. Or through some arbitrary attributes that some people believe are only characteristics of transgender people. I think that we are already practicing our way forward. We have built gender neutral washrooms and change rooms. And we maintain our gendered washrooms and change rooms. We do not need segregated changerooms for transgender people. And transgender people cannot rely on family changerooms - as there are families that need access to these facilities possibly at the same time as transgender people.

I think it would be best for the committee to recognize what is happening here. This is targeted harassment on the part of the Buffalo Party. On behalf of Mark Friesen and those people who he affiliates with. They are continuing to draw lines between themselves and people who are already marginalized in the Saskatoon community.

Drag Story times are for families who either have transgender children or children belonging to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Or for parents who belong to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. These are public events that are put on for families who feel out of place in the Saskatoon community.

I remember on the first day of the protests outside of the Shaw centre. A member of our local police told the group which was supporting equitable access to public amenities for transgender and Queer people - that the people across from us were simply sharing opinions. But on their signs they were calling us - a small group of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, activists, and business owners - Perverts along with a slew of other discriminatory names. There is a longstanding legacy of hateful homophobic groups calling people who belong to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community Perverts. Calling us sick and mentally ill. And that is all that I witnessed in these protests organized by the Buffalo party.

They are attempting to stoke a flame that is not here in this room and that is being condemned in the Saskatoon community. But that is definitely present and not contested online. Researching these stories about these anti-trans and anti-drag performance protests - I have come across numerous online comment sections and debate forums - where grown adults are discussing what it is that they would do if they had the opportunity to prey upon a 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in a public space. They discuss harming them. Hurting them until their bodies are unrecognizable. They discuss killing them and erasing them from the community.

If these protests are not hateful and are purely about protecting hypothetical children. Why is it that in all of the comment sections on articles related to these happenings, that adult persons are sharing horrifying fantasies about harming a person who simply wishes to use a public facility in peace.

I have a call to action for this committee to share with other committees. Call this what it is. And condemn it. This is Harassment. Bullying. Hatred. Homophobia and Transphobia.

We cannot allow our community here in Saskatoon that is already hurt from struggling to deal with a Pandemic, struggling to make ends meet financially, struggling to feed their families. To also bear the weight of one hate groups gross political tactics.

This group may feel that it's "concerns" have grounding - because of the policies and legislation that is currently being passed in the United States. But I would also ask this committee to address that as well. And encourage other committees of the Saskatoon government to do the same. Call out the policy making in the United States as unconstitutional. As hateful. Segregation is harmful and hateful. And, comes from a very racist part of all countries histories.

Thank you for your time.

## Why Does Progress Equal Sex Segregation?

### **Summary of Action Project**

My action project consists of two parts: firstly, I observed and participated in a series of counter-protests. The counter protest was held in response to a series of protests, organized by Mark Friesen, taking place each weekend of February, 2023 on Saturday (Feb., 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th). The first protest was held at town hall (Jan. 30th, 2023), and was organized in response to a wildly misinformed, and very public complaint about a “naked, trans-identified man in the women’s change rooms at the Shaw Centre in Saskatoon”. The original complaint was not, of course, filed with the police, but shared in anti-transgender parenting Facebook groups. Where, I believe the person who fabricated the story could find sympathizers and folks who would share similar levels of hateful thinking about transgender people, and transfeminine peoples in particular.

Secondly, I created an augmented reality learning center in the gendered washrooms at the College of Education, on the main floor of the building. These learning centers are to be shared through a QR-Code that folks can scan with their cellphones and then visit the augmented reality learning centre. It will highlight three important aspects of public restrooms and change-rooms: Who can access public washrooms/changerooms?; How are gender minorities treated when accessing them?; How does Canada’s white supremacist legacy influence this? I will interrogate these three aspects of public access to restrooms and change-rooms through North American History, more specifically Canadian History. Then, I will elaborate on why it is important to understand the history of public access to restrooms and change rooms according to these three aspects. Thus, my virtual learning space will educate folks on why insisting upon sex

segregation in public access, is actually a reconstruction of white supremacist values and ideals. I will attach the QR-Code to a poster titled: Why does progress equal sex segregation? The question is intentional, so that in my interrogation of Public Access I can examine white supremacist constructions such as: progress, normalcy, sex, and gender.

### **Connection to Course Themes, Outcomes, and Catalogue**

I would like to state that this action project relates specifically to the course themes and objectives. I find that this action project relates to the theme: “analyze the political, psychological, and ethical issues surrounding 2SLGBTQI+ topics for teacher/administrators, students, staff, and families.” Additionally, it relates to the outcomes:

“discuss and analyze topics relevant to 2SLGBTQI+ students, educators, and communities; explore community attitudes towards sexuality, gender identity and gender expression, and the way these attitudes impact school life; explore relevant current realities faced by teachers, principals, counselors, and librarians; discuss the ways that colonialism and heteropatriarchy impact schools and learning communities.”

These connections are important, as they have shaped my research and exploration. I have sought to understand how the public sphere can impact and shape perceptions of transness and transgender identities. And, how these ideologies can take root in the educational sphere and swiftly become policy and practice.

I would like to first focus on the articles and videos from the course catalogue written by Alex Wilson (2008 & 2015) and Qwo-Li Driskill (2015). These three articles speak about historical Indigenous gender structures, and how they connect to and resurge in the modern day. Driskill (2015; 10:00-10:45) shares a list of gender labels that have existed historically in their Cherokee communities. They share these labels and stories of Cherokee history, to demonstrate

the living history of Two-Spiritedness that is how Two-Spiritedness grows in modernity, and is rooted both in history and modernity. Driskill (2015; 10:45-15:00) calls for folks to question and critique the lasting legacy of anti-Indigeneity and anti-Transgender sentiments and actions of the colonial government. Driskill notes that binary gender and sex structures are a direct result of the colonial government's hetero-sexist patriarchal settler colonialism, and that these "are central to the invasion and occupation of Indigenous lands". That these colonial binaries, are central to the ongoing genocide and displacement of Indigenous peoples, on Indigenous lands. Driskill shares that these tools are used to ensure that all gendered folks police each other, and distract settlers and Indigenous peoples alike from the ultimate goal of the colonial project, the seizing of Indigenous lands.

Moving on to the two articles and the video created by Alex Wilson. These articles and this video, are used to share an understanding of how Indigenous bodies are policed and legislated against to enforce strict hegemonic gender structures. Wilson (2015, p. 2) shares that settlers arrived on these lands with a commitment to a legacy of binary thinking. Thus, it is understandable that following this, binary gender and sex became deeply entrenched in the Canadian understanding, both legal and historical. Wilson (2015) also shares an understanding, that Indigenous peoples were forcibly assimilated into these heteropatriarchal gender structures through Residential schools for generations. Which, shares another understanding, that this forcible schooling practice remains inherent in our current education system. I would argue that our schooling system, is used to school settlers and newcomers into the structures of white supremacy and colonialism. This is achieved by enforcing strict gender policing throughout recreation, imagination, and socialization. A similar understanding is shared by Caitlin Ryan in

her article about children at play and their reproduction of heterosexist gender tropes in recreation, imagination, and socialization<sup>1</sup>. These connections I make, demonstrate the positioning of this action project as rooted in my growing understanding of the themes and objectives of this course.

### **Important Learning from Action Project**

The history of bathrooms, and public access to bathrooms in Canada was difficult to uncover. Referencing Cavanagh, it is likely due to the sordid nature of conversations about toilets and the taboo nature of discussing what one does in the bathroom (Cavanagh, 2011; Lowe, 2019). However, it is important to note that the issue I investigated for my action project was almost a non-issue, as in 2010, the House of Commons almost passed Bill C-398 “The Bathroom Bill”; potentially, missing an opportunity to ratify gender correlatory change room and washroom access for all peoples (Cavanagh, 2011). I believe that there is an intentionality to the smear campaign being run in the protests that I witnessed. There was a definite attack on the character of Queer peoples (Cavanagh, 2011). I think that this is intentional, as I have correctly placed gender as a tool of the colonial government to encourage a system of policing, one guided by white supremacist ideals, that is focused on alienating transgender bodies (specifically those belonging to Black and Indigenous Trans and Gender Non-conforming peoples). Interestingly, this issue has a lasting legacy, as early public restrooms were male only and first started appearing only 138 years ago (Lowe, 2019). I think the rise in anti-transgender sentiments in the United States has signaled a response from like-minded settler Canadians (Cavanagh, 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> Ryan, C.L. (2016). Kissing brides and loving hot vampires: Children’s construction and perpetuation of heteronormativity in elementary school classrooms. *Sex Education* 16(1). 77-90.



My building concern is that, with the lasting legacy of gender segregation in Canada, the signals sent from citizens and policy/law makers in the United States, are having a substantial impact on the political sphere in Canada (Cavanagh, 2011; Murchison et al., 2019; Porta et al., 2017). So much so, that our town council is hearing these issues as valid concerns, instead of the anti-Indigenous colonial red-herrings that they are. Most of the concern from protestors, propped up homophobic and transphobic stereotypes of Queer people as dangerous and criminal; considering my reading, I find this absurd as it was made clear upon examination, that transgender folks are more likely to experience violence when accessing washrooms or changerooms especially if there are restrictions for transgender people to access these public amenities (Cavanagh, 2011; Murchison et al., 2019; Porta et al., 2017). Making these claims to hypothetical scenarios a very obvious attempt to derail the work of Queer activism.

There are many factors to consider going forward in other research done on similar topics, such as the long lasting effects on Queer peoples holistic health if restrictions are legislated against them, and concerns about how intersecting identities will be further policed under this legislation, specifically racialized and disabled identities (Grossman et al., 2011, Murchison et al., 2019, Porta et al., 2017). However, the knowledge gained through this action project draws connections between the lasting colonial occupancy of these lands - and the white supremacist attitudes held by white settlers towards race, gender, and sexuality. Especially, towards people that white settlers view as "others". Thus, I have demonstrated the importance in understanding these specific political and social issues for educators and educational staff. This understanding of these issues, will assist anti-oppressive educators in working towards equitable treatment for all people regardless of gender identity. These outbursts of white supremacy

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should always be questioned in the Canadian context, as we have a deep and troubling past of  
allying with white supremacy and turning a blind eye to genocide and hatred.

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