

Protesters and counter-protesters share their polarizing views on the contentious SOGI 123 curriculum at the B.C. Legislature Sept. 29. (Keri Coles/News Staff)



Protesters clash over SOGI 123 at Legislature

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Protesters clashed on the front steps of the B.C. Legislature in Victoria Saturday, sharing their polarizing views on the contentious SOGI 123 curriculum.

Dozens against the resource, used by teachers across the province to discuss sexual orientation and inclusivity with students, held signs that read “SOGI 123 needs to end.” and “Don’t bully the parents we have rights, too.”

“You can be anything you want, but you cannot tell our children your world views,” shouted Laura Lynn-Thompson, an anti-SOGI Christian blogger running for a spot on the Burnaby school board in the upcoming election.

Less than an arms-length away, counter protesters chanted “SOGI

saves lives,” with rainbow pride and BC Teachers Federation flags, as well as signs that read “trust our teachers,” and “Pro-education, anti-ignorance, stand with SOGI.”

SOGI 123 has been part of B.C. Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum for two years. But with some school board trustee candidates running on platforms that condemn the teaching tool, including in Coquitlam, Richmond and Chilliwack, it appears tensions remain high on the issue.

On Friday, 180 pastors signed what they are calling the West Coast Christian Accord, calling on Education Minister Rob Fleming to remove SOGI 123 immediately.

But a joint statement of support released by the ministry Saturday, and backed by a number of associations

including the BC Federation of PAC, Metis Nation BC and the school trustees association, says staff and teachers stand unified on keeping it.

“There is no room for any type of discrimination in our schools,” the statement reads.

“All of our province’s 60 school districts have now updated their codes of conduct and all independent schools have updated their harassment and bullying prevention policies that safeguard students from being bullied for their sexual orientation or gender identity.

“Students have the complete support of teachers, administrators, support staff, trustees and parents as we create learning environments where all students are free of discrimination so they can thrive and live authentic lives.”