



Robin Pilkey

Chair and Trustee, Ward 7, Parkdale-High Park

5050 Yonge Street, 1st Floor
Toronto, Ontario M2N 5N8

Tel: (416) 395-8787
Fax: (416) 397-3114

E-mail: robin.pilkey@tdsb.on.ca

October 2, 2017

Dear Mr. Fishman,

We have received your letter with regards to concerns with a small section of the resource guide that was developed for Islamic Heritage Month at the Toronto District School Board. Please note this is a resource guide. It is not in any way, shape or form, a directive, nor is it enforceable as a policy would be. In reviewing the guide however, we can understand that the definition of Islamophobia could incorrectly be open to interpretation.

As a result, we have made the decision to change the definition in the resource guide to align with that of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC). The OHRC defines Islamophobia as including “racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic and societal level.”

The TDSB welcomes important input from the community and from organizations such as B’Nai Brith, however we must say that some of the suggestions made in your letter and subsequent news release are outrageous. To suggest that the TDSB is encouraging students to stay silent about what they experienced in their countries of birth or that the TDSB is somehow banning students and educators from criticizing executions and other human rights abuses around the world is categorically untrue.

Again, we will be changing the resource guide’s definition of Islamophobia. We will make this edit in the interest of moving forward in a positive way and trust that this change will address your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Pilkey', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robin Pilkey,
Chair, Toronto District School Board