

## 2SLGBTQIA+ Questionnaire for Waterloo Region Municipal Candidates

**Name:** Patrick Merlihan

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**Do you identify as a member of a 2SLGBTQIA+ community?**

No

**What role are you running for?**

Mayor

**What do you believe are the most critical issues for the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community? If elected, how would you work with the local community to address these issues?**

Mental health associated with homophobia, discrimination and being marginalized by society. Public safety in smaller communities with a public that is unfamiliar with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. In Woolwich Township I have made the commitment to require mandatory inclusivity, diversity and equity training for staff and Council. I have made the commitment to start an official inclusivity, diversity and equity committee of council. I have made the commitment to support symbols of inclusion in our communities.

**Have you ever participated in 2SLGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training?**

No. But will make that part of training for council members and senior staff at the township.

**Systemic homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are still prevalent in our community, resulting in significant socioeconomic disparities within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. If elected, how will you combat homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia?**

Creating a committee of council including the resources to create education and opportunities for residents to learn about 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Required training for staff and council and supporting symbols of inclusivity in our communities. I have spoken to many parents of young families that want to raise their children in an accepting and inclusive community. I support that 100%.

**If elected, how would you address the ongoing issues of homelessness and mental health, especially as they disproportionately affect members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?**

The Region of Waterloo was slow to act on homelessness issues until it became a humanitarian crisis. I was disappointed in how they approached the encampments in Kitchener. I am supportive of sanctioning encampments rather than evictions. The 2SLGBTQIA+ are disproportionately affected by homelessness and mental health. One option would be for the Region to directly support grassroots organizations that provide upstream support for 2SLGBTQIA+ to ensure that those funds will directly impact affected people. Government's prescriptive approach to aid is often bogged down in bureaucratic roadblocks that end up helping fewer people.

**Do you agree with the statement that "trans rights are human rights, and must be protected as such?"**

Yes.

**What is one motion would you bring to council that you think will improve the lives of specifically queer people, racialized individuals and/or marginalized residents and why?**

I currently have a motion before Woolwich Township council that addresses recent inappropriate comments from a Woolwich councillor. The motion speaks to mandatory training for staff and Council. The formation of a new inclusivity, diversity, and equity committee of council and committing to symbols of inclusion like rainbow crosswalks.

**When thinking about our schools, do you agree that 2SLGBTQIA+ representation in books and lessons is critical at all grade levels? How would you support 2SLGBTQIA+ students in schools?**

It was important to my wife and I to raise our two boys knowing that families are not just a mom and a dad. They knew from a young age that, no matter who they loved, they had two parents that supported them. I think that is a lesson that can be shared at an early age. Learning about different ways that people live their lives is good to start young. Kids should grow up learning to be inclusive and accepting isn't that what we all want as parents: to raise kind, empathetic people that are happy and productive. I want to start Woolwich Township's first youth council and would hope to attract a variety of students that includes everyone.