

2SLGBTQIA+ Questionnaire for Waterloo Region Municipal Candidates



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

No

What role are you running for?

Waterloo Region District School Board Trustee, representing Waterloo/Wilmot

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?

There is a well-organized global backlash aimed at overturning protections won by the 2SLGBTQIA+ community over many decades. We've seen examples of that in Waterloo Region and have also seen the price of standing up against that movement. But, human rights are not optional; they are universal and they must be protected, whatever the political cost.

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

Yes

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?

I can proudly say that the WRDSB has been very active in supporting students and families who are queer, trans and non-binary as well as those who are from racialized communities. As a specific example, we are in the process of hiring System Navigators to help students from traditionally marginalized communities overcome barriers to their success. We were also the first school board in Ontario to offer free menstrual products in girls and gender neutral washrooms in all schools. When I talk to parents and caregivers of 2SLGBTQ+ kids, they are incredibly grateful that their children are in a safe environment when they attend class or other board activities. I am happy to talk to those who are concerned that such inclusiveness somehow marginalizes those from traditional families to explain how this is not the case and how everyone benefits from a school environment that protects marginalized students from hatred or bullying. Kids of all ages learn better when they are accepted for who they are and feel safe at school. And, it's not just about students themselves; many students have caregivers who are 2SLGBTQ+. Creating a welcoming environment does not detract from learning fundamentals; it enhances it.

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

Homelessness is not primarily an issue for the school board, but I'm proud of how the WRDSB has welcomed A Better Tent City as a neighbour and built bridges with those experiencing homelessness and the community that supports them.

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 don't have a specific motion in mind at the moment. Since I currently serve as Chair of the Board, I can't move or second motions. Once my term as Chair is done, I will take my lead from the community as to which issues are most important to bring to the table and collaborate with them in developing the motions. That's what I did, for example, when moving the motion to create a committee that eventually recommended the end of having police officers in schools, and it's typical of my approach to developing motions.

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?

Curriculum is established at the provincial level and delivered at the local level. Fortunately, after a long delay, an appropriate sexual health curriculum is finally now in place. Our role as a school board is to implement it and reject any calls to water it down. We need to ensure that all educators are supported in their work, including those who are delivering sexual health education. That means ensuring that they have the appropriate books and resources available to assist them in delivering the provincially-mandated curriculum.