

2SLGBTQIA+ Questionnaire for Waterloo Region Municipal Candidates

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

Prefer not to answer

What role are you running for?

Waterloo Region District School Board Trustee

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?

I believe the most critical issue is still homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Most issues evolve from bias. Education is the best way to combat these damaging beliefs. If we can teach children to accept and be kind to all people, there would be less bullying and violence and bias in classrooms and in our society as a whole. I would also liaise with educators and the experts - members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community - to see what their needs are and the ideas they have to address them.

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

Yes, as a Child and Youth Worker for the WRDSB, I have had the opportunity to take courses and webinars in this area. As well, I have members of my family who I love very much who are part of the Rainbow Community so I have personal knowledge of what they have experienced. I also have a B.A. in Psychology with minors in Women's and Religious Studies so I have had many courses touching on the topic from different perspectives. In my role as a Child and Youth Worker for the WRDSB, it is my job to support and assist students in many ways such as running GSAs, safe spaces, groups, anti bullying initiatives such as Kindness Week culminating in Pink Shirt Day as well as supporting individual students through any tough times they are having and I help connect them to critical community resources such as OK2BME.

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?

Every vote I make will be supportive of the Rainbow community. I don't believe any child or youth should feel less than for any reason, especially their sexual or gender identity. I have worked to provide GSAs and individual support for 2SLGBTQ+ students and their families as a CYW in the WRDSB. I have been doing this work for years and if elected I plan to continue to bring a strong voice in support of all students to a much larger stage. I plan to connect with stakeholders for ideas on how we can continue to ensure student needs are addressed. Also, keeping a focus on equity and well being as trustees are tasked to do is something I take very seriously and will keep those concepts at the forefront when I am voting.

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

I support the Equity team at the WRDSB as a resource. I also think Child and Youth Workers should be in every school and available to students in order to support, connect families and students to supportive community resources and advocate when help is needed. Homelessness is a city/regional government responsibility so I would be connecting with government and community supporters to assist and liaise wherever I could on behalf of students. I have had two of my student families lose their homes and the children had to live with relatives while caregiver/s went to Tent City. Supporting these families is paramount to equity and the success of marginalized students.

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

Absolutely.

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 would bring a motion to have Child and Youth Workers present in every school and to increase the hours of CYWs so that all students have a person trained in mental health and well being available right there in the school. The motion would include training and a person dedicated to overseeing CYWs specifically due to their important front line mental health roles. I would also motion that CYWs could not be taken out of their mental health positions to be used in other areas which leave deficits in available and, more importantly, properly trained front line mental health workers.

As a CYW myself, I have reached out to your organizations multiple times for help and support for students and families. I've been involved in a high school Diversity Club and feel that racialized and marginalized students would also be assisted through these motions.

A GSA club I ran in 2020 won 'Best GSA Club' in the Region and two of my students won Leadership awards as well, all through OK2BME. If my motions passed, every school could have a GSA and Diversity Club run by the CYWs and training could be provided through the Equity Department to ensure positive delivery of programming. I believe that if we have identified well being and equity as focus points then we need to ensure that those resources are in place in schools where the students have access to them.

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?

Yes, absolutely. As a CYW working with teachers, I have read *The Red Crayon* and other books, and led class discussions on gender and sexual identity. I have supported students individually by reading them books, showing videos, listening, encouraging and connecting them with community supports. Through all school initiatives such as anti bullying week, Pride Month activities, Pink Shirt days, creating and providing curriculum connected activities for teachers at all grades within my schools, having announcements, contests and bulletin boards, running GSAs and talking about equalization to students who are bullying are all concrete actions I have been doing for years. As a trustee, I'd love to support 2SLGBTQ+ students on a much bigger platform. Thank you for the opportunity to continue to support the 2SLGBTQ+ community!