

## **Proud Vote Questionnaire**

### **Policy Questions**

- 1. What do you believe are the main concerns of gender and sexually diverse people in Ontario? What specific actions will take to improve the lives and wellbeing of gender and sexually diverse communities?**

Gender and sexually diverse people have many concerns overlapping with those of Ontarians as a whole, such as ensuring affordability, eliminating poverty, and fighting discrimination. However, because of their socially and historically unique position in Canadian society, people in the LGBTQIA2S+ community are disproportionately affected by many of these problems; higher than average homelessness, poverty, and mental illness are indicative of the institutional discrimination that these groups have faced, and thus they have a special role to play in finding solutions to these problems which are both effective and equitable, treating fairly those groups who have been marginalized by past and ongoing prejudice.

The NDP has a long history of advocacy for the interests of LGBTQIA2S+ movements. In government, we will reform aspects of the healthcare system to better cater to the unique needs of gender and sexually diverse individuals. This will include steps such as covering the cost of PrEP and transition drugs under our universal pharmacare plan, ensuring that long-term care facilities are inclusive for the benefit of LGBTQIA2S+ seniors, and ensuring that all government decisions on policy and budgetary matters are conducted with an intersectional lens in mind.

- 2. Many gender and sexually diverse youth haven't seen themselves reflected in the curriculum. Where do you stand on the current elementary and secondary health and physical curriculum, and how will you ensure that youth get the information they need?**

I fully support and endorse a comprehensive curriculum for health education in schools, and believe that it should include robust education on LGBTQIA2S+ issues. It's crucial for young people to be adequately informed of the existence of non-traditional sexual and gender orientations, and of their acceptability. Canada must not return to the days when youths had to suppress their true identities, only to struggle with them throughout their adolescence and later in life. When people are free to express who they are, they flourish--and our province will be a better place as a result.

- 3. Trans and gender diverse people lack quality, accessible healthcare in Ontario. In what ways do you think the Government can better support access to medical services and specialists for trans patients in the province? In what ways will you bolster access to trans-inclusive healthcare?**

The NDP pharmacare plan will address the cost of transition drugs so that people with gender dysphoria can fully express their inner selves, regardless of socioeconomic status. Trans-inclusive healthcare is a priority for our party, as we seek to eliminate institutional discrimination and prejudice from the delivery of all government services, in particular those which are as crucial as our healthcare system.

- 4. The gender and sexually diverse community are disproportionately affected by mental health and addictions due to various social and economic factors. What steps will you take to improve the overall mental health and wellness of our community?**

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; by working to eliminate discrimination and prejudice in different areas of society--the school, the workplace, the hospital, or the home--we can try to relieve the mental health pressures that affect the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Meanwhile, we must also address those problems which currently affect members of the community. That's why the NDP is going to create a centralized Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions to replace the current patchwork system which operates across 11 different ministries, hire 2,200 new mental health professionals to expand the province's capacity to provide mental healthcare, and hire 400 more mental healthcare workers to be stationed throughout secondary schools in the province, upgrading our patchwork system to a comprehensive network of care for addiction.

- 5. Gender and sexually diverse people are less likely to be hired or secure stable employment, and experience wage disparity in comparison to their cisgender (non-trans) and heterosexual peers. What initiatives do you believe the Government can develop or support in order to reduce the rate of unemployment and underemployment in the gender and sexually diverse community?**

Employment and wage protections are important mainstays of any overarching strategy to create economic opportunity for historically disadvantaged groups. I look forward to being part of an NDP government which would expand and protect the human rights of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, and which would work to eliminate professional discrimination and sexuality or gender-based disparity in the workplace.

- 6. What will you do to help end the one-year MSM (“men who have sex with men”) blood ban?**

I believe that the MSM blood ban is based on outmoded stereotypes of gay and bisexual men. While I don't claim any particular familiarity with the bureaucratic procedures of the CBS, I would support any effort at the provincial or federal level to review this ban.

- 7. What will you do to help end the criminalization of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ontario?**

I'm not sure that the NDP has a policy on this, so I wouldn't presume to speak for them. That said, the legal guidelines around the appropriateness of charging HIV-positive individuals for insufficient disclosure of their condition are unclear. While malicious or negligent transmission of the HIV virus is inexcusable, the current prosecutorial guidelines for determining culpability and punishment do not make sense, and must be revised.

- 8. The principles of Truth and Reconciliation are important to addressing the impact of colonialism on Two-Spirit/gender and sexually diverse Indigenous peoples. What does your plan for Truth and Reconciliation look like? Will you fully implement the 94 Calls to Action, and how will you address the impacts of colonialism?**

The NDP platform contains a section dedicated exclusively to reconciliation with Ontario's Indigenous peoples. We would commit to implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, implement a revenue-sharing system for royalties derived from Ontario's natural wealth. We would also expand health programs for Indigenous Ontarians, support the investigation into MMIW, earmark public funds for procurements from First-Nations-owned businesses, and upgrade our network of Friendship Centres across the province.

**9. Organizations working with or for the gender and sexually diverse community struggle to gain or maintain long-term, sustainable funding. How will you support organizations, specifically ones that provide important health and social services and ones that work in arts, culture, and heritage?**

The Better Ontario Fund will supply \$300 million over 3 years to provide grants for community initiatives to improve the lives of people across Ontario. I will personally advocate for the equitable distribution of these funds such that LGBTQIA2S+ organizations receive their share to support programs targeted towards maintaining the vibrance of their respective communities.

**10. How do you intend on increasing support to HIV/AIDS organizations in Ontario?**

The NDP is committed to ensuring that policy decisions and partnerships with private organizations are made with an eye toward intersectionality, equity, and the elimination of institutional barriers to marginalized groups. Support for HIV/AIDS organizations is an important way to help reduce the stigma around these ailments, and I will support any move by an NDP government to provide increased funding to support their cause.

**11. What steps will you take to end invasive, medically unnecessary operations on Intersex children?**

These procedures are traumatic and have lasting, often catastrophic consequences for the children who undergo them without being of an age to give informed consent. The practice of performing such operations on children has been condemned by the United Nations. I would support any bill to ban involuntary and medically unnecessary surgery on Intersex children.

**12. The rights of sex workers are important to the gender and sexually diverse community, with our community being well represented within the workforce. What will you do to help end the criminalization of sex work in Ontario, ensuring full labour rights and protections?**

The NDP platform does not touch on the issue of sex work legalization, so I'd prefer not to speak for them on that. However, I agree that the criminalization of sex workers is a problem; legal reforms to mitigate that problem would gain my full endorsement, and I believe that addressing the root causes of the proliferation of sex work -- particularly poverty and marginalization -- will free up more resources to allow for greater scrutiny to be directed at exploitative employers in the sex industry.

**13. Gender and sexually diverse youth are overrepresented in the homeless youth population. What specific steps would you take to address the gender and sexually diverse youth homelessness crisis in Ontario?**

Homelessness is a blight on our society, and the fact that we allow it to exist at all is an indictment of the people in power who have sat idly by and allowed the problem to fester instead of solving it. The fact that some of society's most victimized groups have their difficulties compounded with above-average homelessness rates adds insult to injury. In addition to broadly addressing the housing crisis by building more affordable homes, enacting a speculation tax, building supportive housing, and freeing up municipal funds to invest more in shelters, the NDP is committed to addressing the overrepresentation of LGBTQIA2S+ individuals in the homeless population through fighting the root causes of prejudice, mental illness, and economic discrimination faced by gender and sexually diverse communities.

**14. Many gender and sexually diverse people are concerned about moving into retirement communities, care facilities, or having at home care out of fear of having to “go back into the closet” or because they fear they won’t receive sensitive, informed care. How will you ensure long-term care will competently accommodate and work with the gender and sexually diverse community? What steps will you take to improve long term care for our community?**

The NDP addresses this exact issue in our platform; no senior moving into long-term care should have to return to the closet. It will be a goal of the NDP, upon forming government, to ensure that long-term care facilities will be inclusive spaces which allow for the gender or sexual expression of all their inhabitants.

**Party Questions**

**1. Does your party have any openly gender diverse and/or sexually diverse candidates? If comfortable answering: How many, and in what ridings? Also, what concrete steps will your party take to increase representation of gender and sexually diverse people among candidates?**

I'm not sure about the demographic composition of all the NDP's candidates in this election, but our candidate in London North Centre, Terence Kernaghan, is London's first-ever openly gay candidate, and Lyra Evans in Ottawa Vanier is the first trans candidate to run with any major party in Ontario. I'm proud that our party is able to foster a culture of tolerance that allows members of the gender and sexually diverse community to feel comfortable carrying our banner in this important election. It's my hope that this atmosphere of tolerance, and of lifting up people who belong to underrepresented communities, will lead many more candidates from diverse backgrounds and orientations to run for office as members of the New Democratic Party.

**2. Does your party have policies and practices that are affirming of gender and sexually diverse people? If so, what are they? If no, will you commit to adding them?**

The NDP has internal policies which disavow bigotry and enshrine our common belief in ending prejudice and discrimination against sexual and gender minorities. Our code of conduct and rules against harassment in NDP workplaces both explicitly condemn gender or sex-based violence.

**3. Have your staff and volunteers been through training on gender and sexually diverse topics and issues? If yes, please explain. If no, will you commit to participating in training on an ongoing basis?**

Our volunteers have been briefed on our workplace harassment policy, and we encourage them to help maintain an atmosphere of acceptance, tolerance, and professionalism.

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Change for the Better!

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