

May 16, 2018

Brandon Rhéal Amyot
President
Fierté Simcoe Pride

Dear Brandon,

Thank you for your email. New Democrats want to congratulate Fierté Simcoe Pride as well as the Gilbert Centre and Barrie Pride for the important work being done to advocate for, and advance the rights, of LGBTQIA2S+ community members in Simcoe County and across Ontario.

Thanks to strong community activism, the LGBTQIA2S+ community has won many important victories over the past 15 years. Access to safe, inclusive, and equitable environments, however, continues to be a struggle.

The Wynne government has largely failed to recognize the needs of Trans Ontarians and aging members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Access to vital medications remain largely inaccessible for those between the ages of 25-65, and access to primary gender affirming surgery remains elusive, particularly for those living outside of Toronto. Secondary gender affirming surgeries are viewed as cosmetic and are not covered at all by the Wynne Liberals.

Members of the LGBTQIA2S+ communities should not have to fight for these things. Access to the care needed, delivered in a respectful way, should be something every Ontarian can expect from an NDP government.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will work with advocates and health care providers to reduce barriers to care as well as improve access to transition-related surgeries and gender-confirming surgeries provided here in Ontario. We will also ensure that health care decisions respect the internationally-accepted standards of care established by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. Furthermore, through our universal pharmacare program, we will ensure the necessary medications are accessible to everyone who needs them. This includes fully covering the cost of all transition drugs and medications.

Our pharmacare plan will also improve access to medications required to treat and prevent HIV, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) medications for the purposes of preventing HIV. Further, we will ensure greater and more meaningful involvement of people living with HIV in every government decision that impacts people living with and at risk of HIV, in line with the principle of “nothing about us without us”. It is also important to note that along with Canada’s New Democrats, we will continue to push for the end of the one-year MSM (“men who have sex with men”) blood ban – which is highly discriminatory. We look forward to working with the federal government to advance the issues of the LGBTQIA2S+ community.

For seniors in LGBTQIA2S+ community, the reality is that they feel they must return to ‘the closet’ when they move to long-term care facilities. An NDP government will ensure that LGBTQIA2S+ people have access to long-term care that is fully affirming and inclusive. Moving into long-term care should never mean having to move back into the closet.

New Democrats recognize that several barriers exist in accessing adequate mental health supports, particularly for the youth in the LGBTQIA2S+ community. As a result, we will hire 2,600 new mental health care workers to provide better, faster access to mental health care for 28,000 more Ontarians every year – and make sure every high school has mental health supports for students. Further, we will cut children’s mental health wait times to a 30-day maximum, with a \$590 million investment. Andrea and the NDP believe it’s time for mental health and addictions services to get the focus and funding they deserve.

As part of our affordable housing strategy, an NDP government will make the necessary investments in affordable housing to build 65,000 new affordable housing units over 10 years, working with partners such as the federal government and the not-for-profit and co-op housing sectors. We will also build 30,000 new supportive housing units over the next 10 years and expect to have dedicated spots for the LGBTQIA2S+ community – particularly LGBTQIA2S+ youth, who we know are overrepresented in the homeless youth population. New Democrats strongly believe that housing as a human right.

Furthermore, New Democrats have said all along that the physical- and health-education curriculum needed to be upgraded. We need to keep our kids safe and we need to make sure they are aware of what’s happening in the world around them. We will continue the long overdue curriculum update currently underway.

Under an NDP government, we will also ensure that our school curriculum reflects the full, rich story of Indigenous peoples, the lasting impacts of colonialism and residential schools, as well as the need for reconciliation. The reality is that it has been nearly three years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission delivered its report, and its 94 calls to action to heal the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples. Yet First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Ontario continue to face systemic barriers to basic rights enjoyed by others in Ontario — dirty water, unsafe housing, gendered violence, unfair treatment by the justice system and more. Reconciliation demands a lot more than ceremonies and symbolic gestures. It demands good faith — and it demands action. We will take action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, setting priorities in consultation First Nations and others, with a desire to move first on the recommendations related specifically to provincial jurisdiction

We know that Doug Ford and the Conservatives are not allies of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Their record speaks for itself: they have voted against several important pieces of legislation, including against gender identity and gender expression in Ontario's Human Rights Code (Toby's Act, 2012), against Gay-Straight Alliances (Accepting Schools Act, 2012), and against recognizing LGBTQIA2S+ parents (All Families Are Equal Act, 2016). They also have candidates running in this election who continue to be critical of Ontario's ban of conversion therapy.

Conversely, New Democrats strongly believe in promoting equity and inclusion, including introducing policies and practices that are affirming of gender and sexually diverse people. In fact, our candidate in Ottawa Vanier, Lyra Evans made history as the first openly transgender person to represent a major party in an Ontario election. Once again, we thank you for reaching out with your important questions and New Democrats look forward to getting to work.

Best,

Ontario's New Democrats