**News Release June 22, 2017**

**Queer Ontario**

**Provincial Government Remaining Year to Election LGBTQ Issues**

**‘Clock Runs on Liberals Known for Running the Clock’**

Toronto: The next Ontario provincial election is slated for June 2018 and the provincial Liberal government led by out lesbian Premiere Kathleen Wynne can do much to address the following issues affecting the LGBTQ communities during the time remaining in their current term of office. Queer Ontario highlights seven (7) issues (in no particular order) that the provincial Liberal government known for ‘running the clock’ can work on as their clock runs down.

**1. Defunding of the Catholic School Board System:**

While the provincial government is planning to close 121 schools and is faced with up to $15 billion in repair backlogs, it has yet to justify why we still have a separate Catholic School Board in this secular province. It is estimated that the cost of publicly funding this particular religious school system is between $1.5 - $2 billion a year. Besides these savings it would eliminate a school system that to this day flagrantly ignores legislation protecting LGBTQ students.

**2. Updating Policies on Blood Donations for Gay Men:**

Federal policy issued by Health Canada is complex, confusing and ultimately out of touch with current science regarding men who engage in sex with other men donating blood. The provincial Liberals are urged to pressure their federal cousins to update this policy.

**3. Decriminalization of HIV Non Disclosures:**

The Ontario Attorney General needs to cease the unjust prosecution of people living with HIV by ending the criminalization of HIV-positive people for nondisclosures. This over extension of criminal law needs to be replaced with prosecutorial guidelines.

**4. Special Investigations Unit (SIU):**

We call on the provincial Attorney General to implement all 129 recommendations of the Independent Police Oversight Review led by Court of Appeal Justice Michael Tulloch. We also urge that the names of officers under investigation be released and that demographic data collected by oversight agencies also include sexual orientation and gender identity and/or expression.

**5. Gender Pay Gap:**

The gender pay gap in Ontario between women and men has stagnated at 30% over the past three (3) decades. Lesbian and bisexual women can be particularly impacted by this pay gap and trans women even further challenged by the gender binary in work settings. Greater enforcement of pay equity laws is required along with a broader more inclusive understanding of gender variance.

**6. Reinstating Employment Equity Legislation:**

The short-lived Ontario Employment Equity Act under the provincial NDP government, repealed in 1995 by the provincial Conservative government is long overdue for reinstatement. Employment equity legislation is a tool to redress systemic barriers in employment settings to assist marginalized groups such as women, Indigenous, visible minorities and the (dis)Abled (as recognized through federal legislation) in attaining, sustaining and flourishing in a level playing employment field. Employment equity legislation can and should be extended to gender and sexually diverse groups.

**7. Ontario Basic Income Pilot:**

A basic income for Ontarians is supported in principle. Nevertheless, care must be taken to ensure sustainability of universal programs and a social service support system to assist those who may fall through the cracks.

Queer Ontario is a provincial network of gender and sexually diverse individuals — and their allies — who are committed to questioning, challenging, and reforming the laws, institutional practices, and social norms that regulate queer people.

- 30 -

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