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News Release

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Queer Ontario Outlines Provincial Government Election LGBTQ Issues

Toronto: The provincial Liberal government, led by out lesbian Premier Kathleen Wynne, can do much to address LGBTQ issues affecting these communities prior to the next provincial election. Queer Ontario highlights seven (7) issues, non-prioritized that the Liberal government can work on before the next election.

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 is not equitable to have a publicly funded separate Catholic School Board system in this secular province. Estimated costs of publicly funding the Catholic school system are between \$1.5 - \$2 billion a year. Apart from transition costs, savings will still be had by eliminating a school system that to this day flagrantly ignores legislation protecting LGBTQ students.

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

Current policy issued by Canadian Blood Services and Health Canada now requires one year of abstinence, which remains 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 by completely removing the one (1) year deferral.

3. Decriminalization of HIV Non Disclosures:

Recently, the Ontario Attorney General and Minister of Health announced ending prosecution of people living with HIV who have suppressed viral loads for six months for nondisclosure. The provincial government needs to broaden and deepen its reforms to align with those of the federal government. The province should outline sexual activities that do not pose significant risk of transmission, and limit criminal prosecutions to cases of actual, intentional transmission of HIV.

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 Ontario Court of Appeal Justice Michael H. Tulloch. We also urge that the names of officers under investigation be released and include under Recommendation 11.1 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 and trans women are 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. The proposed 'transparency legislation' falls short as it only captures medium to large-size employers, whereas 95% of Ontario employers are small businesses, many of which employ women in low-wage positions without benefits.

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. In addition to the four targeted groups (women, Indigenous, visible minorities and the disabled) in federal employment equity legislation, provincially this should be extended to gender and sexually diverse groups.

7. Ontario Basic Income Pilot:

Queer Ontario supports a basic income in principle. Nevertheless, care must be taken to ensure sustainability of universal programs and a social service support system to assist those who may require specified and/or ongoing supports.

About Us: 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.

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Interviews:

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