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Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
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November 10, 2021

Dear Premier Ford,

We write on behalf of Queer Ontario to urge both you and your caucus to support MPP Morrison's Bill 17, the [Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act](#). This bill, which would establish an advisory committee for the purpose of making recommendations to the Minister of Health on ways to improve access to gender-affirming care and transition related procedures in Ontario, is long overdue.

2SLGBTQ+ people face significant challenges when accessing both primary and emergency health services clear across Ontario. For Two Spirit, transgender, non-binary, queer, gender diverse, and intersex communities in particular, finding care that is accessible, competent, and gender-affirming is often especially difficult. Despite Canada's universal health care system, the persistence of discrimination, stigma, lengthy wait lists, limited OHIP coverage, and onerous referral requirements continue to limit access to gender-affirming care and transition related procedures in our province. Indeed, as the research team at Trans Pulse Canada outlined in their [report of March 2020](#), 42% of trans and non-binary people surveyed across Ontario reported one or more unmet health care need over the previous year, with 12% avoiding emergency rooms despite needing care. Relatedly, as the same team [reported in July 2021](#), 1 in 3 non-binary people indicated that the medical professionals from which they recently sought care had no knowledge whatsoever about trans and non-binary health needs.

As a 2021 [court case](#) in Manitoba demonstrates, trans healthcare in Canada is effectively a "[postal code lottery](#)." While some forms of care are funded, even those that are widely considered life-changing, gender-affirming, and essential to many people, can entail thousands of dollars of additional medical costs. Top surgery for trans masculine people, for instance, is only partially covered in Ontario. As [Rainbow Health Ontario recently confirmed to Xtra](#), "unlike in other provinces, the entire top surgery procedure is not covered by the provincial health plan," with most Ontario surgeons billing high fees directly to patients, in addition to costs they bill to the province.

The Government of Ontario has been slow to respond to the calls from both 2SLGBTQ+ communities and health care advocates to expand OHIP coverage and reduce barriers to accessing gender-affirming care and transition related procedures in Ontario. Too many people in this province are paying out of pocket, waiting years for care that improves both their mental and physical health outcomes, and saves lives, or are electing not to engage with Ontario's health care system altogether.

Queer Ontario believes in accessible, competent, and gender-affirming care that is free at the point of access. That is why we support The Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act. Bill 17 would create an advisory council that would make recommendations on how to improve access to gender affirming care in Ontario, and consider how to take action to:

- Develop and implement training programs for primary and emergency medical care providers focused on enhancing their knowledge of gender affirming care and, in particular, the specific health needs of Two Spirit, transgender, non-binary, queer, gender diverse, and intersex people;
- Reduce wait times for gender affirming health care;
- Ensure equitable access to a range of health care services to meet the individual needs of transgender, Two Spirit, non-binary, queer, intersex and gender diverse people in Ontario;
- Expand OHIP coverage for gender affirming treatments and transition related procedures;
- And define gender affirming health care procedures as lifesaving procedures.

Queer Ontario urges you to take action to improve access to gender-affirming care in Ontario. Please vote in favour of The Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act and direct your caucus to do the same.

Sincerely,

Leonard Halladay

Leonard Halladay
Secretary, Queer Ontario

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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.