

Expression of Support for Motion 22-4 Re: 2SLGBTQIAP+ Families in Regina

June 15th, 2022 City Council Meeting

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Statement:

I want to first caution that this statement mentions suicide. I hesitated to include this content, but being uncertain of what other delegates might bring up, I wanted to be sure that it was addressed at least once so the gravity of this issue can be understood.

I was working as a teacher in Regina Public Schools in 2019 when a motion to allow schools to autonomously and individually plan Pride celebrations was defeated at a Regina Public School Board meeting. The handling of that motion, the discussion surrounding it, and its ultimate defeat in front of a room full of hopeful community members, families, and school staff was devastating. The defeat of that motion hurt kids, families, and the larger community.

This is a charged motion before you. It has agency. It proposes exciting opportunities to make Regina better, and for us all to learn and benefit from the actions proposed within it. In preparing this, I read a 2022 Australian study (Lyons et al.) that found, consistent with 5 other peer-reviewed research articles the authors reference, that LGBQ+ community members were 37.2% more likely to consider suicide compared to the general population estimates at 2.3%. LGBQ+ community member suicide attempts were 3.9% within only one year, compared to 0.4% of the general population. This places suicide ideation at 16 x higher, and attempt at 6x higher within the community that this motion proposes to support. My understanding is this is relevant within the Canadian context. Notably, the authors found both community support and being accepted at work as important and ultimately life-saving factors for LGBQ+ members. I want to point out that the motion on the table directly implements both of these interventions and more. I want to thereby position this motion as life-saving. The authors of the study found that LGBQ+ youth are at the greatest risk. I do not want you to underestimate the weight of what is in your hands.

Besides that it is simply humane, I offer support of the motion before you from several perspectives.

As a community-based organization leader who implements children and family programming, I appreciate how this motion makes it easier to offer family play programming that is 2SLGBTQIPA+ welcoming and inclusive. It recognizes the unique needs of this community. Our major program is intensely collaborative and takes place at different locations and facilities around the city, and it is important that the facilities we use are affirming, accommodating, safe, and respectful to everyone. As this motion involves, having members of the 2SLGBTQIAP+ community advising and informing City-run facilities and programming will point out gaps in access and safety that are

critical to eliminate. I am confident that many of the insights gained from ensuring this community is involved in strategic, structural decision making would benefit the community-at-large and offer more dignified and respectful spaces and programs for other marginalized communities. As someone in charge of hiring, I can also see the positive impact that queer and trans inclusive employment processes and policies would have on hiring practices.

As someone who has worked with children for over 12 years and is a parent to two, I appreciate how what is being proposed has the capacity to help children feel understood, safe, and that they belong.

As someone with a special research interest in play, I appreciate that this motion protects who people are, who they choose to love, and who they may choose as companions, lovers, and family. Homophobia and transphobia make it difficult for people to do these things freely, openly, and safely. Transphobia and homophobia are play-depriving. They limit where people go, what programs they participate in, and where they might feel safe to be who they are. They limit the very important human and child right to play, explore, express, and experience joy in this city. This motion protects child and human rights.

I understand that this motion is proposed after direct consultation with 2SLGBTQIAP+ community members, who have put their trust in Counsellor LeBlanc, and ultimately in you, and all of us to do right by the generosity of their time and the seriousness of their words. That they have directly expressed both that their members do not feel safe, celebrated, and welcomed throughout the city and that there is hope that Regina can materially improve the lived experience of this community should compel us all to action. I want to see these recommendations come to life and feel that each of them – the research, the jurisdictional scan, the advisory community or consultant, the gender-based analysis in all matters appearing before City Council, the safe and affirming employer and service provider recommendations, and funding recommendations will benefit our entire community. I want to live and participate in a city that demonstrates its investment in the safety of children, the protection of human rights, and the celebration that is love.

Reference:

Lyons, A., Hill, A., McNair, R., Carman, M., Morris, S., & Bourne, A. (2022). Demographic and psychosocial factors associated with recent suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and asexual (LGBQ) people in Australia: Correlates in suicidality among LGBQ Australians. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 296(1), 522-531.
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2021.09.105>