



Statement

May 17, 2021

For Immediate Release

As we mark the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, we are entering a time of hopefulness that the global pandemic – a period of hardship and sometimes despair – of more than a year is nearing an end. While it has been a difficult time for everyone, the mass availability of vaccines allows us to be optimistic about a future together, rather than apart.

I am carrying this optimism about the future forward today as we recognize the LGBTQ2S+ community, which includes individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and two-spirit, as well as a range of other gender and sexual identities. I am particularly concerned about LGBTQ2S+ young people, who have experienced hardship in the form of discrimination and judgment that has no place in our society. All youth deserve unconditional respect, and LGBTQ2S+ youth are no exception. It is important to recognize the challenges young people are confronted with right here in B.C., simply because of who they are – but it is also important to listen to the stories of these youth and to feel their strength as we find the path to progress.

Canada's human rights law includes protecting gender diverse youth from discrimination in every province and territory. It is every person's right to be who they are without fear and stigma. It can be difficult to understand marginalization or discrimination unless you have experienced this harassment yourself, but the reality is that LGBTQ2S+ people continue to face stigma and discrimination, putting them at risk for much higher rates of violence and mental health issues, among other challenges.

To further understand the well-being of this cohort of young people, my Office has begun taking a close look at our available data as well as what we have been hearing from youth. Data from both our Advocacy and our Research and Investigations program areas provide some insight into the experiences of youth who identify as transgender or non-binary, and we will be doing work in this area over the next year, including engaging directly with young people.

We already know that trans and non-binary youth in Canada continue to experience targeted discrimination; however, we also heard in the [2019 Canadian Trans and Non-binary Youth Health Survey](#), coordinated by the Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre at UBC, that, despite the bullying experienced, a majority of these young people are doing well. For example, a majority reported feeling safe at home, felt that their teachers cared about them, and/or planned to go on to post-secondary education.

The survey also found that trans and non-binary adolescents – just like all youth – are more likely to thrive when families and schools are supportive, when they have increased representation in mainstream media and when they have strong associations with role models.

It is easy to take for granted that everybody gets acceptance everywhere all the time, but that simply is not the case. Clearly, we need to commit to creating safe and inclusive environments for trans and non-binary youth.

There are many organizations that do great work in this area and they are worth noting. I am so grateful for these organizations and others that are working to support LGBTQ2S+ communities:

- Trans Care BC has several resources for supporting children and youth, including support for parenting gender-creative children and youth, that can be found here: www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/child-youth.
- QMUNITY, B.C.'s Queer, Trans and Two-Spirit Resource Centre, offers a wealth of support, including youth services: www.qmunity.ca/get-support/youth.
- 2-Spirit Collective at the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) also offers valuable resources for Indigenous young people and their families: www.unya.bc.ca/programs/2-spirit-collective.

I'd like to conclude with a reminder that RCY advocates are available for all young people to provide support. We're here to help you learn about your rights and options – whatever the situation. We can be reached via text message at 1-778-404-7161, through chat on our website www.rcybc.ca, via phone at 1-800-476-3933, or by email at rcy@rcybc.ca. On this International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, you should know that we honour you and we respect you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J Charlesworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth