

## 2SLGBTQIA+ Questionnaire for Waterloo Region Municipal Candidates

**Name:** Laurie Tremble

**Email Address:** TrembleForTrustee@gmail.com



**Do you identify as a member of a 2SLGBTQIA+ community?**

No

**What role are you running for?**

Trustee of WRDSB (public board) in Kitchener

**What do you believe are the most critical issues for the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community? If elected, how would you work with the local community to address these issues?**

Safety & mental health. Rhetoric in politics of late has been very harmful to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. At the WRDSB we have experienced that at our meetings. The hate and discrimination can be very subtle and I admit that I missed it during a meeting earlier this year. That is why education from an early age is necessary. Our provincial curriculum addresses gender and sexuality in appropriate ways and teachers are well-trained to deal with questions that arise. We have to support that in our schools. In addition, we need to ensure all students, including those who identify, openly or not, as 2SLGBTQIA+ feel safe and welcome in our schools. We can do this by celebrating Pride month, having representative books in our libraries, by sharing and using preferred pronouns and names, by having representative staff, and more. Connecting youth in our schools with community resources like those offered by Spectrum is also important. We are being very intentional at the Board table now to try to prevent harmful statements from being made and are purposefully reaching out to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community when we are requesting feedback. We will also be using our Student Census data in our decision-making going forward to help us identify and dismantle barriers that prevent 2SLGBTQIA+ students from succeeding and to identify where more supports are needed.

**Have you ever participated in 2SLGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training?**

Yes. Through our Board, The Ontario Public School Boards Association and on my own, I have participated in a number of sessions on this topic. Most recently I attended an online session in July called Proud After Pride hosted by the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region that discussed the disproportionate number of 2SLGBTQIA+ identifying people who experience sexual violence in the workplace and how to prevent that and support survivors.

**Systemic homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are still prevalent in our community, resulting in significant socioeconomic disparities within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. If elected, how will you combat homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia?**

Education is key and it needs to begin with the youngest children. Our curriculum and educators are well-placed to do this work but they need our vocal support during a time when homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are so publicly displayed. We need to see and hear our 2SLGBTQIA+ community, provide the support and safety they need to walk in our schools as their authentic selves, and call out the harm caused by those who misuse concepts like "age-appropriate". We need to use our Student Census data in our decision-making at the Board table to find and dismantle the barriers and to provide the necessary supports for our 2SLGBTQIA+ students and staff.

**If elected, how would you address the ongoing issues of homelessness and mental health, especially as they disproportionately affect members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?**

I think a strong public education system is our best long-term tool to improve outcomes for all including the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. In the short term, we need to ensure that all students can attend school, even if they or their families are currently unhoused. This could include flexible schedules for students who need to work, links to addiction-support services, and the ability to attend a school outside their home school boundaries as needed. We are also working on the possibility of creating a free bus pass program with the Region. More mental health support is needed in our schools, but in addition we need to strengthen our connections to community organizations that specifically support 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.

**Do you agree with the statement that "trans rights are human rights, and must be protected as such?"**

Yes, unreservedly.

**What is one motion would you bring to council that you think will improve the lives of specifically queer people, racialized individuals and/or marginalized residents and why?**

Trustee Jayne Herring recently introduced a Notice of Motion that I supported to investigate the feasibility of a free bus pass program for students. That motion will come to the Board soon and I will be happy to be the seconder. This is one way to reduce barriers to secondary students who want to attend a specialized program offered at a school outside of their home school. As we begin to review all our policies with an equity lens, I think we will see other opportunities to remove barriers to our 2SLGBTQIA+ students (e.g., participation of trans students in school sports).

**When thinking about our schools, do you agree that 2SLGBTQIA+ representation in books and lessons is critical at all grade levels? How would you support 2SLGBTQIA+ students in schools?**

Yes. Our library and classroom staff do an excellent job of ensuring the books in our schools represent all students' identities and we need to ensure they have our support at the Board table to continue doing that. The curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education acknowledges the need to discuss gender and sexuality at all grades. I feel we may need to do more to educate office staff and those who are interacting with 2SLGBTQIA+ family members on how to support them in their interactions with the school to ensure they feel safe when speaking with teachers, navigating the system, attending school councils, volunteering in the school etc. I would like to see what support and training we can provide to our school councils on support the 2SLGBTQIA+ families in their communities. Since we know that engaged parents are one predictor of student success, we need to ensure we are reaching out to them as well.