

In response to Mr. Chan's letter sent on Saturday November 11 2023:

Thank you for your response Mr. Chan. I appreciate your forth right explanation as it provides us an opportunity to have further dialogue. I'll be copying members of council here as well in case the opportunity to educate on the issue isn't just limited to you. I how you'll take what we have to share to heart. A commitment to DEI means a willingness to learn, to grow, and to fully understand the nuances at play on an issue like this.

There isn't a province in Canada that currently allows minors to seek surgical interventions to support gender changes without parental consent. If that is what Mr. Poilievre has led you and others in that room to believe, they are mistaken. The issue though is much more nuanced than a one liner. One liners like the one you applauded are not just positions to agree with, they are intentional statements currently used to mislead the public around the nuances of understanding and supporting trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming folks. There was dangerous intention behind that statement.

Parents have a legal duty to affirm their child's gender identity. Suicidal ideation amongst trans, non-binary, and gender non-confirming youth in some studies is as high as 60%. That rate is halved when youth have access to trusted adults and spaces in their life that affirm their gender identity. There are cases, most recently in British Columbia involving the custody of a child in a divorce proceeding, where parents have lost their rights because they don't affirm the gender identity of their child. It is legally a parent's responsibility under the law to provide the necessities of life. The courts so far have determined that includes affirming a child's gender identity or sexual orientation as part of providing the necessities of life.

Every parent has a duty to make informed medical decisions alongside their children. That includes proceeding with medical support for transitioning when it decided in collaboration with a doctor. Transitioning however has a number of different steps. Most often, folks are encouraged to begin to socially transition, then move onto interventions and treatments like hormone blockers or hormone replacement therapy depending on their individual situations always under the supervision of an endocrinologist or physician who is familiar with supporting.

The issue of surgical interventions on minors is used by the political right as an extreme example that does not apply to the vast majority of youth who begin to discover their true gender identity. It is an issue that is used to completely discredit the lived experiences of trans folk. Statements like Mr. Poilievre are blanket statements which miseducate and mislead the public and leave no room to discuss or share just a fraction of the nuance I have shared. There is much more to the

issue of transitioning that I have shared, but its certainly more than what was offered on that stage.

One of our board members the parent of a trans child, Stephen Scott also sent you a letter with a few resources linked. I highly recommend you continue your education there as well.

In light of all of these nuances, I want to further impress upon you the impact of your action. Your head nod, your applause, wasn't just an approval of that discriminatory statement from Mr. Poilievre, it was incredibly dangerous. Your applause and nod of approval provides legitimacy to the generalized and frankly bigoted statement from the CPC, from someone running to be the next Prime Minister of our country. It further legitimized his position in front of the residents of Richmond hill, people who could very well be neighbours of mine who went home thinking there's something wrong with how we approach so called "gender ideology" in our country. Who will associate that term with trans folks and think this is just a phase for them. Who may impart that feeling onto members of their family, their kids who may come out to them.

Statements like this do not set parents up for success, do not provide them with the tools and resources to better educate themselves and seek the support they need as caregivers and learn how they can support the well-being of their children.

This may all seem like an elaborate extrapolation, but it's a reality for many. I know that because I've seen it in my experience with many families who have found Pflag and who have sought support to unlearn and reeducate themselves. Others will listen to Mr. Poilievre, see your nod of approval, and seek to suppress their loved-ones identity. We've met those individuals at Pflag and they are suffering daily. There are youth who feel they have no where else to go and are forced to stay at home. Listening to them share their experiences every month at our support meetings, year after year is absolutely heartbreaking.

Further to that, the NightStop Program at 360Kids regularly supports youth experiencing homelessness. At times, the queer-identified youth involved in that program have been as high as 60% of its service users. Queer youth who took the brave step to flee their unaffirming and unsafe homes; some of them trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming.

Your head nod, your applause, legitimizes the actions of the parents behind these lived experiences. These are very real experiences taking place today, as you read this in your very city. Your actions on that stage are not too distant from impacting and further influencing others in your city, in your ward.

I strongly recommend you reflect on the learns we've provided you to better understand the nuances involved. Your commitment to championing DEI items frankly requires it of you. Allyship is all about reflecting and sometimes learning lessons the hard way. Many of us have been there, myself included. What you do moving forward and how you position yourself is what will define your growth and how you support your work as deputy mayor, as regional councillor.

I would love to hear your reflections. The explanation you have provided is not enough. Until then, our position remains the same and we will continue to call for your resignation as deputy mayor, as regional councillor, and as a councillor in the city of Richmond hill. We highly recommend a public apology which demonstrates an understanding of the nuances involved.

Tristan Coolman
President, Pflag Canada York Region