

December 7th, 2021

Re: QS4.3: A Preliminary Service Plan for Transgender and Non-binary Youth

As a City Agency committed to the health, happiness, and full participation of 2SLGBTQ community members, we are writing to this committee to provide additional comments to the presentation regarding the development of a preliminary service plan for non-binary, trans and Two-Spirit youth. We appreciate the intent of this plan and the comprehensive work that City staff and partnered agencies have done in order to ensure that diverse and equity-deserving voices have been included in its creation.

We look forward to working in collaboration with the 2SLGBTQ Advisory Committee and our colleagues in Social Development, Finance, & Administration to ensure that this plan meets the needs of 2S, trans, non-binary and gender queer communities and it reflects a holistic understanding of community needs by incorporating lived experience throughout the next phases of development. We provide the following comments in the spirit of collaboration and partnership.

The experience of trans and non-binary people continues to go under represented in research. To-date we have no solid evidence of how many people identify as trans or non-binary in Canada, but a number of studies put the estimate between 0.06% to as high as 0.1%. Regardless the population size, trans and non-binary people continue to face incredibly high levels of systemic discrimination, harassment, and physical violence. These statistics help ground the reality of systemic violence faced by trans communities and demonstrate the continued barriers individuals feel, which is further compounded when the intersectional realities of individual lives are taken into consideration.

A 2006 study collected information from over 400 trans identified Ontarians, this is considered the largest study to date. This study explored the experiences of trans people navigating aspects of their daily lives and demonstrated the barriers faced by trans people. In terms of accessing employment, it was found that 58% of participants were unable to access academic transcripts in order to support them in accessing employment (Bauer, G. Et al, 2011). The study also showed 13% of participants believed that they were fired for being trans, while 15% were fired from their jobs but where unsure why (Bauer, GR. et al, 2011).

The data from this study was further used to discuss experiences of trans people in accessing public spaces. It was found that 97% of participants avoided some public spaces due to fear of transphobic violence and 21% avoided the emergency room



specifically (Schiem, A. et al., 2013). Finally, there is a direct correlation of trans people who have experience sexual or physical violence and their experiences of suicidality, the researchers “found evidence that discrimination and violence had strong adverse impacts on mental health” (Bauer GR & Schiem, A., 2015, pg. 6). These numbers demonstrate the vulnerability of trans communities in regards to the very basic functioning of how to live day to day.

The study also discusses trans communities experience of violence and found that 56% of participants had “seriously considered suicide” who had experience physical or sexual violence and 29% had attempted suicide. The researchers concluded that “interventions to improve the social and human rights situation of trans people have the potential to reduce depression and suicide” (Bauer GR & Schiem, A., 2015, pg. 6).

When taking into consideration the experiences of youth who identify as a trans, a 2018 study of LGBTQ youth in Canada, found that “[trans] 14–18 year olds had 5 times the risk of suicidal thoughts, with almost two-thirds having seriously considered suicide in the past year” (Veale, J. et al pg. 46). This study also found that 3/4 of the same population reported self-harming in the past year, compared to fewer than one in five students in their non-trans peer group (Veale, J. et al. 2018).

As this plan progresses, The 519 echoes the plans for guidance from the Indigenous Affairs Office and further consultation with Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary communities with regards to validating the approach and next steps. We suggest that this guidance is formalized through a consultative committee of Two-spirit, trans, and non-binary youth that includes meaningful leadership and accountability with regards to next steps, and that this committee is reflective of the diversity of lived experience, geography, and identities that make our communities unique.

We also suggest that any plan with regards to services for Two-spirit, trans, and non-binary youth incorporates a broad lens in relation to gender-based violence, one that contemplates violence as not just an act between individuals but one that happens at the systemic and structural level. Building vibrant communities for youth is predicated not just on the absence of violence, but on the presence of abundant opportunities for self-determination, leadership, safety, resources and the fostering of community belonging. We are encouraged by the initial thematic areas identified through the 2017-18 consultation process and the further engagement with Native Youth and Sexual Health Network, BlackCAP, and SOY. In order for this holistic approach to supporting youth is properly supported, we encourage the development of a plan that embeds this work as a priority within SDFa as well as across all relevant City divisions.

We look forward to being an active partner in the further development, refinement and implementation of this plan, and to working with the 2SLGBTQ Advisory Committee and



City staff in creating a more affirming, safe and welcoming City for Two-spirit, trans, and non-binary youth.

Sincerely,

Maura Lawless