



We asked mayor, councillor and school board candidates one question...

What big issue do you think the 2SLGBTQ+ community is facing and what would you do to help?

Below are the responses to help guide your voting decision.

qathet Pride is a non-partisan organization and our aim here is to help the public feel informed and engaged about issues that affect our community members.

Election Day: Saturday October 17th .

Advanced voting October 14.

Details at: [Elections 2026 - City of Powell River](#)

Mayoral candidates:

George Doubt - “To begin with I think members of the 2slgtbq+ community have a far better understanding of what they are facing than I do.

What I can do is continue to listen to peoples concerns and do everything in my power to make the city a better , more accepting, and safer place for everyone. What I can promise is an open door to discussion on how to make those targets a reality.”



Rob Southcott - “Big issue for our 2SLGBTQ+ community?”

You tell me. I’m only partly nonbinary. Though I feel connected, I’m not in our 2SLGBTQ+ community.

What I do see is ongoing prejudice within our community. What the City can continue to do is not tolerate that. We already have policy we can use, so we just need to, proactively. It’s on my personal task list.

My personal commitment is to work that allows us to be more inclusive. It happens as we realize broader identity within our own selves. And then our lives expand and we gain a kind of wealth money can’t buy. “

Councillor candidates:

Eli Leyland: “The biggest issue I see is a growing sense that hard-won safety and acceptance can't be taken for granted. Hostile rhetoric is rising across the country, and in a smaller community like qathet, that can leave people feeling isolated. There are also real gaps in local access to inclusive health care, mental health supports, and safe places to gather.

This is personal for me. My best man at my wedding this summer was Anthony, part of the LGBTQ community and one of the people I love most. I have personally attended many Pride events over the years, locally and elsewhere (for those

who have never been to a large pride event like the one in Vancouver, I go every year and it is the best, happiest, most fun any person can have regardless of who they are). I have seen how much it means to people to be celebrated openly, and I don't want anyone in qathet to feel they have to hide.

As a councillor, I would focus on what is within the City's reach:

1. **Listen first.** I would meet regularly with qathet Pride Society and other groups to hear what is and isn't working.
2. **Support Pride events.** I would back them as a standing part of our community.
3. **Respond to hate.** Council should speak out quickly and clearly, and work with local partners so people feel safe.

Everyone who calls qathet home deserves to feel safe and valued.”



Dustin Silvey - “I think one major issue is discrimination and the effect it can have on people’s safety and sense of belonging. Nobody should face harassment or be excluded from community life because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. I still have more to learn about the specific concerns of 2SLGBTQ+ residents here. I would welcome a meeting with qathet Pride and community members to hear

those concerns directly and identify practical steps council could take.

As a councillor, I would take concerns about discriminatory treatment seriously and speak up against homophobia and transphobia not only in the role, but also as I do in life. I would also follow up on concerns raised and explain what action I could support. Listening matters, but it needs to lead to follow through.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to your members. If any of them have questions, please encourage them to reach out to me directly.”



Matthew Mowbrey - “I am a member of Trans gathet Board, my thoughts flow more in that direction, but they apply globally to the broader LGBTQ2+ community. gathet Pride Parade and PrideFest provide such an important opportunity for community support and engagement, and it has been lovely to see that grow. The biggest issue for me is the same trudge forward towards basic safety, dignity, and both external and internal acceptance. I want to ensure that there is a safe point of access within our remote community for

those that feel vulnerable because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. We have been establishing a safe place to meet-up through our vital partnership with Vancouver Island University (VIU). I hope in 2027 to have an ID Clinic set-up that has all the forms necessary to streamline the gender-marker change process, and I am working on a 'Walk A Mile In Their Shoes' fundraiser to raise awareness and support for trans- and gender-based violence.”



Kieran Fogarty - “I don't claim to understand every experience in the 2SLGBTQ+ community, but I know what it's like to move through a world not built for you. Between being a redhead and having severe eyesight issues, I've spent a lot of time as an outlier. I know that trying to be your genuine self after years of masking is an uphill battle.

My wife is the cookie gal. Selling cookies at the Pride festival gave me a feeling of community and acceptance that I want for everyone. My goal is to make every city festival, fair, and get-together feel like that. That sense of belonging should be the standard when walking around town every day.

The biggest issue is the gap between the city's public image and the actual lived experience of its people. When residents

feel they have to mask who they are to access services or feel safe, the system is failing.

As a councillor, I won't pretend to have all the answers. My job is to keep communication open. We need more than public meetings. We need secure, private ways for people to share their challenges with councillors without having to put themselves on public display.

I am committed to those conversations. I will ensure the machine of city government is steered by the needs of all its residents, not just the ones who fit the default mold.”



Darryl Jackson - “Thank you for including me in this, this is a very important thing to talk about.

The big issue I think the 2SLGBTQ+ community is facing is acceptance, and the sense of safety and belonging that should come with that.

I say that as someone who grew up seeing how a lack of acceptance could tear families apart. When my uncle, who has since passed away, came out in his early twenties, my grandfather reacted with anger and, to the best of my knowledge, never saw him again. A cousin experienced a similar reaction from his father, although they eventually

reconciled. In my own family, I saw rejection in one generation and eventual acceptance in the next. Those experiences stayed with me. Nobody should lose their family's love and support because of who they are.

I have friends and family members who are 2SLGBTQ+ and I fully support them. I admire their courage in being themselves despite the prejudices that still exist, but bravery shouldn't be needed. There has been progress toward acceptance and inclusion, but there is still work to do.

As a councillor, I would support welcoming, inclusive city facilities, services and public spaces. I would speak up against discrimination and listen directly to members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, including qathet Pride, about barriers they face and practical steps the city can take to address them.

You will always have my support. Everyone deserves to be who they are, to be treated with respect and to feel safe and welcome in our community. Thank you”



Steve Hunter - “I believe the biggest issue facing the 2SLGBTQ+ community is not being accepted by society. Your community constantly faces harassment, discrimination, bullying, and hate.

It deeply saddens me that there is still so much hatred in society, not only to your population, but towards other populations as well. I do have hope that as the baby boomer and the older Gen X population ages out, the younger generations will be far more accepting and inclusive of everyone.

As an elected official, I can ensure that our mayor and fellow council members lead by example, make council chambers and city hall a safe place for everyone to attend without the fear of being subject to negative behavior. We continue to promote events that

celebrate your population and finally, meet face to face with a focus group periodically to

help us understand the issues you are facing, and advocate for any support council can provide.

Personally, I believe we are all human beings regardless of how we look or define ourselves and I treat everyone with kindness and respect until they prove to me that they no longer

deserve my respect. Bullies are on the top of my list of those who do not receive my respect.

I truly thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and hopefully look forward to collaborating with you all over the next 4 years.”



Paddy Treavor - “As I do not identify as a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community I do not think it is my place to say what the biggest issue this community faces. I have several friends who do identify as members but we rarely, if ever, have conversations about this subject. Our friend group is just that—our friend group—and when we get together, how we identify, our sexual orientation, our race, our religious beliefs are never topics of conversation.

If I were to guess, I would think that discrimination, exclusion and inequity in our society are the major issues the 2SLGBTQ+ community faces. As a City Councillor, I would support this community by ensuring 2SLGBTQ+ events, such as Pride Month, film festivals, and library events, to name a few, receive support and recognition from City Hall. City Council chambers should be inclusive to all in our community including those who identify with the 2SLGBTQ+ community. I can continue to challenge exclusive and bullying behaviours as I do in my personal life. I can continue to respect a person's right to identify as they wish and strive to be non-judgemental. The 2SLGBTQ+ community deserves the right to be heard on an equal footing with any other community group within Powell River.”



Henrietta Johnson - “First off, thank you so much for reaching out and giving me an opportunity to share my thoughts but more-so to connect with you.

I know that it isn't always an easy road for those in the queer community especially and often in smaller rural communities like Powell River. I believe one of the greatest challenges facing the 2SLGBTQ+ community is being able to live openly, safely and with a genuine sense of belonging.

In smaller, geographically isolated communities such as Powell River, the challenges of inclusive housing, safe public spaces and discrimination can be compounded by fewer specialized services and smaller peer-support networks

In a close-knit community, some people may also worry about privacy when seeking help or expressing their identity. I want to understand how these concerns affect people here, rather than assume everyone's experience is the same.

As a councillor, I want to listen to qathet Pride Society and community members, including youth, seniors and Two-Spirit people, to identify local priorities. I would support reviewing city facilities, recreation programs and service practices for barriers to inclusion, and fair access to municipal spaces and grants for community initiatives.

I would also advocate with health and provincial partners for accessible care and support housing partnerships that

recognize people's diverse needs.

I will always continue to speak up against discrimination and maintain dialogue with qathet Pride Society. Everyone deserves to feel safe, respected and able to build a life here. My commitment is to listen, learn and follow through.

But I guess, above all, I want to hear directly from you; what issues are the 2SLGBTQ+ facing and how can I advocate for equity and support in the greater community?

I am here to ensure your voice is at the table.

Connect anytime.”



Jordie Yow - “Thanks for reaching out.

I was initially thinking of your question through the lens of Powell River and queerness in a small community and the struggles necessarily associated with being different in a small community, but on re-reading you were asking as a whole and I think it made me change what I was going to talk about.

I think the biggest issue facing the 2SLGBTQ+ community is the growth of anti-trans hate that reminds us that despite all

the victories that have been won in recent memory by the queer community that there's still a lot of intolerance, fear and misunderstanding out there. As a councillor I would do my best to platform those who stand for creating safe spaces in our community and encourage events that promote acceptance, education and love between people of all backgrounds. Some specifics would be ensuring the Pride Parade has continued support by council, as well as events run by organizations like qathet pride society and Trans qathet.”



Cindy Elliott - “Safe spaces, safe events and inclusive City services would be key concerns for Council to provide. My plan is to show up, be a visible and vocal ally and support events that celebrate and raise awareness for the 2SLGBTQ community.

Other issues would include affordable living, safe transit services, inclusion in community engagement for city lead engagement processes. Accessible gender neutral washrooms in our public facilities. Recreation programs that are inclusive and accessible. Increased advocacy with provincial partners to raise awareness for the specific needs of your community in social services including shelters and

housing projects. The need for consultation with the 2SLGBTQ community when planning projects for our community.

Thank you for including me in your questions. I hope you all come out to vote. Early voting is at City Hall on October 10 & 14, General voting day is October 17th. I would appreciate your support.”



Diana Collicutt - “Hello, thank you for your question. I appreciate the opportunity to respond. I understand stigma, harassment and bullying would be a big issue for 2SLGBTQ+ citizens.

I do not support harassment, bullying and stigma for any citizens. We

live in a free and democratic society and people are free to be who they want to be.

If elected on Council, my door would always be open to hear your concerns, your ideas and current initiatives. The City recognizes Pride

Week/Month and would continue to do so in my view. The City has a grant-in-aid program offered to organizations for a wide range of activities and functions, so would encourage your organization to access grant-funding, such as facility rental rebates.

With any special projects requested to be funded by the City, as a Councillor making important decisions on funding, I would need to have all the information: the costs, who pays, how it is maintained in the future, the costs to the taxpayer, and if funds are readily available before making any final decisions. That is the responsible action to take by any councillor regarding spending of tax dollars.

Thanks for reaching out and I hope this answers your questions.”



Cathy Korolek - “I have been mulling this over; honestly, I'm not sure of all the issues. I am aware of the flag being taken down at City Hall which is unacceptable. I respect the choices made to embrace 2SLGBTQ+ life. It's not an easy road.”



Trina Isakson - “I think the 2SLGBTQ+ community is facing many of the same issues we are all at the moment, but with extra challenges. For example, finding an affordable rental, a decent job, or timely health care is hard enough in our community, but then layering possible discrimination makes it even more challenging, time-consuming, and energy-draining.

Council doesn't have specific jurisdiction in these areas I listed, but one specific action that Council can take as it relates to lower-barrier services for queer and trans youth is to continue to support the development of Foundry qathet. I also feel we can continue to model inclusive behaviour, speak out when discrimination happens, and help people make connections to services in our community that can help queer and trans people thrive. I personally choose to show up whenever I can at ally-inclusive events to maintain the connection between 2SLGBTQ+ and Council.

Thank you for writing Council candidates and providing an opportunity to share!”

School board candidates:

Maureen Mason - “I believe one of the greatest challenges is a lack of understanding. So much of the noise surrounding 2SLGBTQ+ issues is fuelled by misinformation, fear, and assumptions.

Recently, I shared a position statement on SOGI through social media, including with organizations I knew held strong opposing views. I anticipated pushback. Instead, I received positive responses, including from people who acknowledged that they had previously misunderstood the issues.

We are living in a time when our sense of “otherness” seems to be expanding rather than

diminishing. As the parent of a trans child, I know firsthand how challenging it can be to keep

pace with evolving language, identities, and the complexities of intersectionality. I also recognize

a community that has had to fight hard for respect, recognition, and fairness.

Looking at the bigger picture, we are all products of systems shaped by colonial thinking, where

conformity has historically been valued over difference. This creates a particular tension in public education. While our language celebrates inclusion, many of our structures remain linear, standardized, and inherently exclusionary.

As a trustee, I can help create the conditions where difference is not simply accommodated but genuinely understood, respected, and imbedded in culture.



Lynn Price - “I believe the biggest issue for the 2SLGBTQ+ community in the context of the school trustee election is the misinformation about SOGI 123.

Here is my understanding of the issue:

- “SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) education and inclusive policies are

legally protected and mandated in schools across Canada, particularly anchored by

provincial human rights legislation and the Canadian Human Rights Act.” *

- SOGI 123 is an important resource created by the ARC Foundation, and was developed to support the Canadian Human Rights Act that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in public institutions, such as schools.
- The resource allows students the opportunity to form awareness of the “diversity that exists in humanity”^{*} — and that will allow students to become more respectful and empathetic towards others in all aspects of human rights.
- The resource, SOGI 123, helps teachers incorporate SOGI-inclusivity into their practice, and I see this as important.

It is clear that 2SLGBTQ+ students are vulnerable to bullying and are at risk for poor mental health outcomes. A recent UBC study ^{**} identifies school connectedness is critical for 2SLGBTQ+ students. I fully support the following recommendations outlined in the UBC report:

- Ensuring schools are safe, caring and inclusive

- Implementing sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI)-inclusive education
- Establishing firm codes of conduct with zero tolerance for discrimination
- Creating well-articulated procedures for reporting bullying and victimization
- Supporting the use of chosen names and pronouns
- Implementing stigma-reducing initiatives like gender-neutral bathrooms
- Allowing students to join sports teams based on their preferred gender identity
- Providing school-wide social and emotional learning programs
- Training staff to respond to family inquiries respectfully
- Ensuring curricular and library materials contain inclusive language and content

* <https://www.sogieducation.org/>

**<https://spph.ubc.ca/school-connectedness-critical-for-transgender-and-gender-diverse-youth-mental-well-being/>



Dave Stirling - “Thank you for your question. I think for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, the big issue for schools is making it safe and inclusive for all sexual orientations and gender identities. All students and staff should be free of discrimination and harassment, no matter how they identify. Trustees can help by supporting initiatives that originate from the human rights acts mandated from district level to international. I support: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN Designation of Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, BC Code of Human Rights and SOGI123 as a starting point.

Kind Regards,
Dave Stirling (he/him)”



Gretchen Conti - “Thanks for the opportunity to connect with your membership.

What big issue do you think the 2SLGBTQ+ community is

facing and what would you do to help?

Today, like in history, the 2SLGBTQ+ community can experience, hate, aggression and violence from the broader community. I believe this can be addressed through understanding, experience and connection. This is the power I see in education, hope for the future. Teaching students about difference, and the strength and beauty in a diverse community has already shaped how young minds think about each other.

As a Board we ensure that policies exist to raise the bar of understanding and acceptance for all folks. We also direct funding to support student programs and groups that support student voice. In the Secondary School context, I think it's important that students and staff understand reporting mechanisms that are anonymous and result in consequences. We also need to ensure that 2SLGBTQ+ students feel valued and supported in all classes, even those that present practical challenges (ie. changing to PE strip).”



Heidi Jackson - “Thank you for reaching out, and my apologies for the delayed response. I was away visiting

family.

I believe one of the biggest issues facing the 2SLGBTQ+ community, particularly young people, is feeling safe, accepted and respected.

As a school trustee candidate, my focus is on ensuring that every student has the opportunity to learn in an environment where they feel safe and supported, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or background.

I believe schools have a responsibility to address bullying and discrimination, provide appropriate supports for students who need them, and ensure everyone is treated with respect.

Listening is also important. I don't pretend to understand everyone's personal experiences, but I believe we need to be willing to listen, learn and have respectful conversations, even when we don't always agree.

At the end of the day, my goal is the same for every student: to feel safe coming to school, receive a quality education and have the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Kind regards”



Rachel Harriman - “From what I observed at one of the monthly public board trustee meeting I attended, one of the biggest issues facing the 2SLGBTQ+ community is feeling unsafe at school. A 2SLGBTQ+ community high school student presented an annual report on the challenges students face, including active bullying, discrimination, and being judged for who they are. In the presentation it was reported worse than the previous year. Every student deserves to feel safe, respected, and accepted, regardless of their identity.

Schools and school districts have a responsibility to take student safety seriously and respond to discrimination. Trustees play an important role in creating district policies, developing strategic priorities, and making budget decisions that support safe and inclusive learning environments. Addressing these issues requires reviewing and updating policies, ensuring schools follow them, and providing education that promotes respect, understanding, and inclusion.

What stood out most to me during the presentation was the apparent lack of response from the trustees. A student had taken the courage to speak about feeling unsafe, yet I did not observe even an acknowledgement of the harm being experienced by that student and their peers. As a parent and

active PAC member, I find it concerning that student safety does not appear to receive the attention and accountability it deserves at the policy level. Frankly, it is embarrassing and harmful to the very students our schools are meant to protect.

If given the opportunity, I would advocate for stronger, enforceable policies, meaningful follow-through, and clear accountability when safety incidents need to be reported and addressed. Current policy encourages school leaders to listen directly to students, these policies lack ensuring their experiences lead to meaningful action. I would push for that to change.

Most importantly, I want every student to feel they can be themselves without fear. School should be a place where students feel safe to learn, grow, and belong—not somewhere they must hide who they are to fit in. The opposite of simply fitting in is authenticity, and I want every student to feel empowered to be their authentic self.”



(END)
