

Where Do the Leadership Candidates Stand on LGBTQ Issues in Schools?

The leadership candidates for both the BC NDP and BC Liberals were asked by the Pride Education Network to answer the following questions about LGBTQ issues in schools. None of the Liberal leadership candidates responded to the survey. All of the NDP leadership candidates, with the exception of Dana Larsen, responded as follows:

	Adrian Dix	Mike Farnworth	John Horgan	Nicholas Simons
If elected leader, will you introduce legislation that requires all school boards in B.C. to develop discrete LGBTQ policies to provide anti-homophobia education to all students?	I am committed to ensuring that all students receive anti-homophobia education, whether on a legislated or regulatory basis.	Yes	Committed to collaborating with all stakeholders in education to find anti-bullying policies that are working well and to promote them province-wide.	Yes
Do you believe that government has a role in providing concrete supports for LGBTQ youth to thrive in schools? (i.e. Funding for anti-homophobia teaching resources, accurate and inclusive sexual health education resources, in-service training for principals and teachers.)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Should the School Act be amended to explicitly prohibit discrimination against students based upon their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity?	This would be examined and considered.	Yes	Is open to examining how legislation can further prohibit all forms of discrimination.	Yes
If elected, would you require school boards in B.C. to annually document and publicly report that their district and schools are in compliance with Ministerial Order 276/07? (Code of Conduct Legislation)	Yes	Yes	Did not comment on this issue.	Yes
Do you believe that LGBTQ teachers should be supported to be out at school with colleagues, parents, and students at all grade levels. If so, would you speak out publicly about this?	Yes	Yes	Did not comment on this issue.	Yes
If elected, will you work to add the term "gender identity" to sections 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14 the B.C. Human Rights Code?	Will strengthen human rights legislation and mechanisms, and examine this proposal in that process.	Yes	Is open to examining how legislation can further prohibit all forms of discrimination.	Yes

If elected, how will you be a leader on LGBTQ issues in education? Please be specific as to your plan of action.

Dix: First, I would want to see a review of the current situation and outstanding issues, including what is working and what is not working in education and including the issues outlined in this questionnaire. Secondly, I would ensure that all stakeholders, ranging from students to teachers to parents to principals, would be represented in such a review. Finally, I would ensure that actions followed the review so that outstanding issues and problems are addressed and the school environment improved.

Farnworth: There are many steps I would take as Premier to address ongoing LGTBTQ issues in education. PEN has already outlined a number of them in this survey. One of the first steps we need to do is ensure school boards comply with the government's codes of conduct order and explicitly state homophobia and transphobia in those codes. The government needs to act as a leader on LGBTQ issues by bringing education partner groups together to improve the lives of students and staff in our education system. I also believe school boards and the provincial government can do a better job of promoting and supporting courses like Social Justice 12 across the province.

Horgan: I would commit to: 1) Incorporating LGBTQ themes appropriately in a school's curriculum and providing educational materials to explore and discuss the issues of sexuality, gender identity, and safety for students. This is a good place to begin raising awareness. 2) Supporting Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) that are emerging throughout our province's schools. 3) Training and supporting educators and administrators who aren't already well versed in these complex issues. If staff are approached by a student who is feeling victimized, the matter needs to be handled in a manner that is respectful and sensitive. Teachers and staff also need to provide consistent and effective intervention on the school ground to put these types of policies into action.

Simons: A good leader would combine their experience and expertise with their commitment to consultation to pursue important social policies that benefit society. As a gay man who has worked in the social services sector for many years, I am familiar with the problem facing young people struggling with issues related to their sexuality –the marginalization, the bullying, the suicide, social pressures, and the absence of a sense of safety. I have spoken on this issue in the Legislature, and believe it is incumbent on decision-makers to ensure that "social justice" takes a central role in the education of our children.