



March 12, 2024

The Honourable Pierre Poilievre
Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Poilievre:

"That all may be one" is the motto of the United Church of Canada, and we believe that this principle is particularly pertinent in the context of practicing politics in Canada. As a leader of a political party, we are writing to you to express our profound concern about the proliferation of wedge politics aimed at polarization - casting individuals or groups as the "other". We urge you to transcend this divisive approach and instead foster a political discourse that addresses critical policy issues with respect and open debate.

As an Affirming Church committed to inclusivity, we are deeply troubled by the use of transgender people as a wedge issue, often framed under the guise of parental rights, women's safety, or fairness in sports. We implore you to refrain from perpetuating this divisive tactic. Transgender Canadians constitute a vulnerable group, and categorizing them as the "other" is not only irresponsible but also places them at greater risk. A study by Statistics Canada/Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics revealed that "Transgender Canadians were more likely to have experienced violence since age 15, and also more likely to experience inappropriate behaviours in public, online and at work than cisgender Canadians." A recent survey of 2SLGBTQI+ people indicated that transgender women and transgender men reported being denied employment opportunities due to their gender identity at a higher rate than their cisgender peers.

Calls for the delay or cessation of gender-affirming treatments for transgender youth are particularly irresponsible, given their vulnerability. A study in the June 6, 2022 issue of the Canadian Medical Association Journal highlighted that transgender adolescents have 5 times the risk of suicidal ideation and 7.6 times the risk of ever having attempted suicide compared to cisgendered, heterosexual adolescents. However, the study noted that gender-affirming care has been shown to improve mental health among transgendered youth so much so that their rates of suicidal ideation were similar to their cisgendered peers.

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For the betterment of our country, we implore you to reject wedge politics and prioritize the common good through respectful dialogue. We also request that you refrain from casting transgender individuals as "others" and, instead, support their right to live safely, without discrimination as their authentic selves.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wanda Baker - Hayward".

Wanda Baker-Hayward
Board Chair, Grace United Church

1. *Experiences of violent victimization and unwanted sexual behaviours among gay, lesbian, bisexual and other sexual minority people, and the transgender population, in Canada, 2018* found at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00009-eng.htm>

2. *SLGBTQI+ Action Plan Survey - Quick Stats* found at <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/free-to-be-me/federal-2slgbtqi-plus-action-plan/survey-findings/quick-stats.html>

3. *Suicidality among sexual minority and transgender adolescents: a nationally representative population-based study of youth in Canada* found at <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/194/22/E767>