



Letter from the Board of Education
December 11, 2023

RE: Board Correspondence – LGBTQ2S+ support

Dear Andréa Coutu,

Thank you for taking the time to express your concerns regarding what was to be a second One Million March for Children protest on October 21, 2023. Your letter dated October 16, 2023, was shared at a public meeting held on November 22, 2023.

As you are aware, the protest did not take place largely to do with the global unrest that precipitated in the Middle East. While it is fortunate that the protest did not take place, it remains essential for us to remain vigilant in our efforts to promote inclusivity and protect the rights of our LGBTQ2S+ students, staff, and community members.

As stated in our letter to the public on September 15, we are firmly dedicated to fostering an inclusive and equitable school district that celebrates diversity. Upholding the principles of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) rights is not just a commitment, but a core value that guides our actions every day.

We understand the profound impact that anti-LGBTQ2S+ campaigns can have on our students, staff, and families. Such conversations can be hurtful and divisive, and they run counter to the safe and welcoming environment we strive to provide in our schools. We remain resolute in our stance against disinformation and actions that seek to undermine the progress we have made in establishing safe spaces within our educational institutions. Furthermore, the provincial government is considering implementing protest-exclusion zones around schools in the province. No decision has been made at this time.

We encourage open dialogue within our community, and your concerns are important to us. If you have any further questions or if there are specific actions you would like us to take to reinforce our commitment to inclusivity, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Your input is invaluable in shaping the future of our school district.

Once again, thank you for your unwavering support for inclusivity and diversity within our school district. Together, we will continue to make progress toward a more equitable and welcoming educational environment.

Sincerely,

Greg Keller
Board Chair

From: [Karen Matthews](#)
To: [Karen Matthews](#)
Subject: A Coutu FW: ANVI Letter to Council
Date: November 1, 2023 7:14:52 PM

From: Andr ea Coutu
Sent: October 16, 2023 10:23 PM
To: Trustees <Trustees@sd68.bc.ca>
Subject: Fwd: ANVI Letter to Council

CAUTION: External Message

Trustees,

I was sent this letter (below) presented to Council by ANVI, LGBT2S+ Advocacy Nanaimo and Vancouver Island. Someone from the group reached out to me to ask if I could help reach the District. They asked if I know what steps the Board will be taking to create safety and stand up to hate and they shared this letter sent to Mayor and Council.

I know the Board, NDTA and CUPE have all been very vocal. But I did wonder about immediate plans from SD68. I am a member of several Facebook support groups, where parents and students from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community have shared that they were very afraid for their safety during hate rallies. As an individual, parent, business owner, instructor, community member, and education advocate, I share these fears.

I heard this evening that Mayor and Council will be making a statement tomorrow and raising a flag over the weekend. I hope the District can also bring forth a voice of celebration, as it has before.

I'm not affiliated with ANVI, other than having been invited to the Facebook group today, but they asked for my help and I know the District is firm on inclusion of this community.

Thank you.

Andr ea Coutu
(Wellington '91)

—

Andr ea Coutu, MBA

LETTER ANVI SENT TO COUNCIL

Dear Mayor and Council Members

Leonard Krog

Sheryl Armstrong
Tyler Brown
Hilary Eastmure
Ben Geselbracht
Erin Hemmens
Paul Manly
Janice Perrino
Ian Thorpe

Thank you, Hilary, for your response and for dedicating some your time to follow up on my previous correspondence. Your commitment to addressing this issue is highly appreciated, and we hope to see our other elected officials step up as well.

I'm grateful to hear that you've inquired about raising the Progress Pride flag and share our disappointment with the city's apparent lack of response thus far. Your efforts to show solidarity are truly commendable. However, it seems like the situation isn't merely facing delays but, regrettably, appears to be overlooked by both the Mayor and other council members.

I'd like to reiterate that there is a new 1MM4C protest scheduled for October 21, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community is once again prepared to stand up for human rights and against unlawful hate. We earnestly hope that the city can take concrete actions to support the queer community throughout the entire year, rather than confining its support to just one month.

Considering the potential arrival of violent hate protesters from areas like Chilliwack, Surrey, and Victoria, with a threat of aggression and harm towards the queer community, it is paramount that we understand the city's plan to respond to these hate rallies. The safety of our community members during this event is of utmost concern.

Furthermore, we are deeply troubled by the city's tolerance of hate speech, especially given that the Human Rights Commission has identified this group as promoting hate. It is imperative to know what actions the city is taking to prevent such hate speech and actions within our community. We firmly believe that taking a stand against hate and safeguarding the rights and safety of our residents is crucial.

We are also distressed to learn that this hate-fueled Freedom Convoy gang is planning to occupy Nanaimo's city park. The potential arrival of individuals with weapons and intentions to commit acts of violence on Nanaimo citizens is a grave concern. Recent events in the cities mentioned, on September 20, have demonstrated that this group is not peaceful and is solely promoting hate and violence. There were physical assaults on Nanaimo citizens on Sept 20 where RCMP did nothing, even when asked. It would be devastating if someone got hurt or worse in the upcoming hate convoy and our elected officials did nothing to prevent it.

Once again, we hope to see some attention to this matter, and we eagerly await information on the actions the city will take to support the queer community and combat hate within our city.

Sincerely,
Ash Horner

Take a minute to think about what you* would do if your right to exist was being challenged and threatened. What would you do? And what would you do if your allies weren't actually your allies and left you alone on the hill?

There is No Space for Hate in Nanaimo. Would you not agree?

Key questions from this letter that require urgent attention:

1. What actions is the city taking to prevent hate speech and actions within our community, especially given the identification of this group as promoting hate by the Human Rights Commission?
2. What is the city's plan to respond to the hate rallies scheduled for October 21, particularly regarding the safety of the queer community, considering the potential for violence from protesters coming from other areas?
3. How is the city going to stop the hate-fueled Freedom Convoy gang from occupying Nanaimo's city park, especially considering the potential threat of violence and harm to Nanaimo citizens?
4. What steps will the city and its elected officials take to ensure the safety of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community during the October 21 event and to combat hate within the city?
5. When will the Progress Pride flag be raised?

These questions highlight the urgent concerns and need for action to protect the rights and safety of the community.

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