

# The Occasion

Serving the LGBTQ+ community  
of southern Alberta for three decades

Autumn 2021 Vol. 30, No. 1

## Two Q MPs in Alberta?

Edmonton — Albertans elected one “out” candidate — and possibly two — in the federal election.

In Edmonton Griesbach, NDP challenger Blake Desjarlais was declared the winner by The Canadian Press with a 1,017-vote lead over two-term Conservative incumbent Kerry Diotte.

“Being Two-Spirit is an honour and it’s important to ensure other 2S folks see representation in Canada,” Desjarlais told reporters.

In Edmonton Centre, Liberal candidate Randy Boissonnault had a razor-thin lead of 136 votes over Conservative incumbent James Cumming on election night, with more than 2,200 mail-in ballots still needing to be counted.

Banning conversion therapy was one of the issues he backed during the five-week campaign.

## Four join Pride

Lethbridge Pride Fest has a new vice-chairperson and four new directors.

At their annual general meeting in late summer, members named Cassandra Fayant to the vacant vice-chair position.

They also elected four newcomers to directors’ positions: Lyv Ariella, Victoria Braun, Sarah Peace and Jessica Ross.

Lane Sterr will continue as board chair, along with treasurer Katherine Cully and secretary Tyler Gshaid.

Members also ratified a new set of bylaws, to take effect once they’re approved by Societies Act officials in Edmonton.

Changes include provision for a larger board, and making Pride Fest memberships open to members of the general public who agree with the society’s aims and objectives but are not interested or able to serve on the board.

Lethbridge Pride Fest is hoping to return with a full program of Pride events next year — providing Covid 19 is well under control by then.

## Inside

- More youth ‘non-binary’ today **2**
- Fort Macleod celebrates Pride **3**
- Football is gay, says NFL **4**
- Olympic ‘first’ for Quinn **5**
- Capitalism subsumes Pride **6**
- Europe seeks ‘Q Freedom’ **7**
- Mormon star speaking out **8**

Now online:

[www.theoccasionnewsletter.ca](http://www.theoccasionnewsletter.ca)

# ‘Therapy’ ban back to square 1

Ottawa — Work on a law banning “conversion therapy” is back at the starting line. But with the Liberals returned to office, its success seems assured.

Despite opposition from Lethbridge MP Rachael Harder and other Conservatives, a government bill approving the ban was passed in the Commons earlier this year.

But Conservatives in the Senate decided taking a summer recess was more important than giving it the necessary second approval. So the legislation “died” when the Sept. 20 election was called.

The legislation, Bill C-6, called for changes to the Criminal Code that would effectively outlaw conversion therapy, the widely discredited practice of attempting to change an individual’s sexual orientation to heterosexual or their gender identity to cisgender — identifying with the sex assigned to them at birth.

It would have made it illegal in Canada to subject a person to conversion therapy without their consent, while also making it illegal to subject children to the practice regardless of consent.

The bill reached second reading in the Senate before being referred to the committee on legal and



constitutional affairs.

The Senate was not scheduled to return to work until Sept. 20 at the earliest.

An expert at the United Nations Human Rights Council said in 2020 that the “therapy” can amount

to torture in some cases.

The UN report notes that the practice can inflict severe pain and suffering and has no scientific basis.

“If you are a young person and you see this become law, it sends a very clear message that who you are, who you love or how you express yourself is valid and it is protected under law,” says Nicholas Schiavo, founder of the advocacy group No Conversion Canada.

“Conversion therapy is a confirmed form of torture. And so there’s no time to waste when it comes to protecting Canadians.”

The Liberal legislation came in response to a nation-wide petition launched in Lethbridge. It was tabled in the Commons by an NDP MP.

## Stephen Sondheim, 91

## Another hit in the wings

New York — At 91, legendary gay composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim is working on yet another musical theatre offering.

Sondheim told talk show host Stephen Colbert that a recent reading for the show went well.

“I’ve been working on a show for a couple of years with playwright David Ives and it’s called *Square One*,” he said. “We had a reading of it last week and we were encouraged so we’re going to go ahead with it.”

Sondheim’s hits include *West Side Story*; *Sunday in the Park with George*; *Sweeney Todd*; *Into the Woods*; *A Little Night Music* and many others.

Colbert introduced him as “the greatest composer and lyricist in the history of the American theatre.”

Gay actor Nathan Lane said on *The Today Show* he and Bernadette Peters took part in the reading, and that he’d love to return to Broadway.

“It was very exciting,” said Lane, famous since his role in *Birdcage* alongside Robin Williams.

A gender-swapping revival of *Company*, the 1970 musical by Sondheim and George Furth, is opening in New York this fall, with Marianne Elliott as the director and a woman playing the role of Bobby — now Bobbie.

Sondheim also told Colbert that he’s pleased with Steven Spielberg’s new film version of *West Side Story*, the 1957 musical for which he wrote the lyrics and Leonard Bernstein composed the music.

## Outre, Didi back on stage

After a summer of impromptu backyard events, Theatre Outre and Didi’s Playhaus are ready for their fall and winter season.

On-stage dramas resume Sept. 28, with a five-night presentation of “333,” focusing on the 1981 bathhouse raids in Toronto, leading to mass arrests. They also provided the spark that launched Pride celebrations there and soon, across Canada.

Artistic director Jay Whitehead wrote the drama, which will be directed by Kathy Zaborski and Anastasia Siceac. Designers are Lee Burckess and Deonie Hudson.

Actors Andres Moreno, John Tasker and Garry Williams will bring the shocking script to life.

Curtain time at Didi’s each night is 7:30 p.m. Tickets are online at [www.theatreoutre.com](http://www.theatreoutre.com)

Later this year, Whitehead promises “A Very Didi Christmas Carol. The seasonal musical is being arranged by him and Kathy Zaborski.

Early in the new year, it’s time for the 2022 edition of “Quaint, Quirky & Queer” — previously known as the & Pretty, Witty & Gay” cabaret.

Theatre Outre’s major spring production will be “The Sissy Ducking,” an all-ages show with particular appeal to young audiences. It’s set to run Feb. 26 to March 5 at Casa, followed by school bookings through March.

University of Lethbridge drama prof Nicola Elson has adapted the show from a book by famous gay author Harvey Fierstein.

The cast will include Erica Barr, Rylan Kunkel, Shannon Murphy and Greg Wilson.

Meanwhile at Didi’s, Saturday evening events have resumed, including “Drunken Improv,” drag shows and new episodes in the long-running “Gomorrah” soap opera.

Dates and times are listed on the Outre website. Annual memberships are sold at the door.

## Czech president slams trans folk

Budapest — In a tirade against LGBTQ rights, Czech President Miloš Zeman called transgender people “disgusting” during a television appearance here.

“If you undergo a sex-change operation you are basically committing a crime of self-harm,” Zeman said. “Every surgery is a risk and these transgender people to me are disgusting.”

His comment came during discussion of a widely condemned anti-LGBTQ law passed in Hungary — banning LGBTQ content in schools and on television for children under 18. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is taking legal action against Hungary’s law, calling it “a shame.”

As well, 16 out of the EU’s 27 member states have publicly voiced opposition to the law. The Czech Republic has not.

## Arrested in raid

Hartford, Va. -- Four men arrested in a book store raid are facing charges under Maryland’s sodomy law. Police raided a book and video store in Abington, arresting eight men accused of engaging in sexual acts with other men.

Three are facing a charge of perverted sexual practices and another is facing a charge of perverted sexual practices and a charge of indecent exposure. The others are facing charges of indecent exposure or solicitation of prostitution.

The store rents locked rooms where men can watch adult video content. According to the Harford County Sheriff’s Office, there were complaints from area residents and other patrons about the store.

## Babies become citizens

Washington — The Biden administration has ended a Trump-era policy that denied American citizenship to same-sex couple’s children born abroad via surrogacy or in vitro fertilization. The Trump administration ordered officials to brand the children “born out of wedlock” and denied them citizenship.

Parents of a child born abroad to a U.S. citizen can go to a U.S. embassy and get their child’s U.S. citizenship recorded. For straight couples, only one parent has to be a U.S. citizen, even if the father on the birth certificate has no biological link.

# Chalking response in Hamilton

Hamilton — A box of sidewalk chalk spurred a neighbourhood into action during Pride month here.

That was all Kimberly Garrod needed to transform the drab sidewalk in front of her Hamilton, Ont. home into a rainbow. The vivid display became a visible celebration of Pride Month.

It ran for at least 15 metres through the neighbourhood. “We wanted to show support,” Garrod said. “There’s a lot of kids in the neighbourhood and it shows them that there’s a safe space, if need be.”

“And it’s fun and it’s bright and it’s Pride Month!” Garrod moved to Hamilton about a year ago with her wife. When the couple saw a Pride flag go up in their neighbourhood this summer, they began to fly their own.

Then Garrod got creative. Using sidewalk chalk, she began coating each square of cement in a layer of red,

blue, orange and green — all the colours of the rainbow.

Neighbours living on either side of her home soon joined in, covering the pavement in a kaleidoscope running down the block. The work took them a full afternoon and was still there a week later.

“So far all of the reactions we had were positive,” she said.

“A lot of honking, waving, cheering. People come by just to see it, so it’s been really good.”

Garrod said she loves the idea of more-permanent rainbow displays being added across the city to show support for the LGBTQ community.

The neighbours were planning to carry out weekly touch-ups each throughout the month in order to keep the rainbow bright.

## More youth now ‘non-binary’

New York — A new report from The Trevor Project shows LGBTQ youth in the U.S. are increasingly identifying outside the gender binary.

Conducted last fall, the study surveyed almost 35,000 LGBTQ youth ages 13 to 24 and found that 26 per cent identify as non-binary, with an additional 20 per cent reporting they are still questioning if they are non-binary.

Rates were similar across all ages and ethnicities. The study also found that LGBTQ youth view “transgender” and “non-binary” as two separate identities, with only 50 per cent of non-binary respondents stating they also identify as transgender.

Twenty per cent of non-binary respondents stated they are still wondering if they are transgender.

“Young people are using a variety of language to describe the nuances of their gender identity outside of the binary construction of gender,” said Jonah DeChants, a Research Scientist for The Trevor Project, in a statement.

“These data emphasize that, while there is certainly an overlap, youth understand ‘transgender’ and ‘nonbinary’ as distinct identity terms — and you cannot assume one’s identity simply based on the pronouns they use.”

“It’s clear that non-binary young people are not a monolith — they use a wide variety of labels and pronouns to express the nuances of their gender identities,” said Amit Paley, CEO and executive director of The Trevor Project.

“Understanding this will help promote the acceptance and inclusion of non-binary youth at every level of society.”

The increasing prevalence of they/them pronouns is especially important to note because most of the non-binary youth who participated in the survey reported that using their correct name and pronouns is the number one way their loved ones can make them happy.

# Rights reforms ordered in India

Madras -- A court in India has ordered state and federal officials to draw up plans for sweeping reforms to respect LGBTQ. The ruling went far beyond the narrow terms of a case brought by a lesbian couple who said they had been harassed by police.

Judge Anand Venkatesh of the Madras High Court ruled in favour of the couple, who had complained that police had subjected them to harassing questioning after their parents filed a missing persons report.

But the judge also used the opportunity to issue a broad ruling that called for the elimination of what he described as illegal discrimination against members of the LGBTQIA+ community. He ordered state and federal government departments to report back with steps they intend to take to comply.

Among his recommendations: police and government

officials should be given awareness training to ensure they respect LGBTQ rights. And medical practitioners who claim to be able to “cure” homosexuality should have their licenses revoked.

Schools and colleges should make gender neutral restrooms available, he said, and gender-nonconforming or trans prisoners should be housed separately if needed to protect them from sexual assault.

“Ignorance is no justification for normalizing any form of discrimination,” Venkatesh wrote in his order. Educators should reach out to parents, to help “sensitize parents on issues of LGBTQIA+ community and gender nonconforming students, to ensure supportive families.”

Activists hailed the order as a major step towards equality for marginalized groups. But the court can’t impose such widespread change with a single ruling,

## Church official outed, quits

Madison, Wisc. — A high-ranking Catholic official has resigned after a website revealed he has sex with men. Monsignor Jeffrey Burrill was general secretary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

A conservative Catholic website obtained data from Grindr and found out that he was likely having gay sex for years.

Burrill was “the highest-ranking American cleric who is not a bishop,” according to the Catholic website *The Pillar*. As a spokesperson for the bishops, he opposed LGBTQ equality and worked against the development of an LGBTQ suicide hotline and tried to prevent same-sex couples from

adopting children.

Burrill repeatedly criticized President Joe Biden for supporting LGBTQ rights, and supported anti-trans legislation.

The Catholic website also said Burrill’s alleged phone sent a GPS signal from inside a Las Vegas gay bathhouse, as well as other bathhouses in cities that he traveled to for his work.

That he was using Grindr was enough to show *The Pillar* that he “engaged in serial and illicit sexual activity” because members of the Catholic clergy are not supposed to be having sex at all.

He is not accused of sex with minors.



CATWALK  
salon ^ spa

618 3rd Ave. S.

403-327-4555





## Fort Macleod celebrates Pride

Warm sunshine and smiling crowds greeted organizers of Fort Macleod's second Pride celebration — being introduced here — in late summer.

Afternoon events included local musicians, a jingle dress dance and a presentation on the history and evolution of LGBTQ flags. Local and regional groups and vendors added to the event, held in spacious Centennial Park.

Pride board members also returned to the stage to share some of their experiences coming out in southern Alberta communities.

Then in the evening, an appreciative audience attended the historic Empress Theatre to enjoy an elaborate drag show featuring entertainers from Lethbridge, Edmonton — and as far distant as New York City!



## Inclusion saluted at flag-raising

Mayor Chris Spearman joined community members earlier this summer for a quiet flag-raising to celebrate LGBTQ Pride.

The mayor, not running for re-election this fall, has attended many such events at City Hall over his years in office. He praised efforts to make Lethbridge an inclusive, supportive community and shared his desire to see the city become "a gateway to opportunity for all."

This year's honoured flag-raiser, drama professor and Didi's Playhaus founder Jay Whitehead described how events like the Pretty, Witty & Gay cabaret and many other events have grown to make southern Alberta more accepting of diversity — and queer culture in particular.

"We need to make everyone welcome here," he said — but many trans people, individuals from different races or religions, homeless people, those with addictions and others, don't feel that welcome.

Lethbridge Pride Fest chair Lane Sterr was invited to participate in the event, which was shared via social media.

## College, U of L raise Pride flags

The new Progressive Pride flag was raised for the first time at Lethbridge College

"This is our sixth annual Pride flag raising and it's incredible to see how our own community has embraced this event this month and the other 364 days a year," said college provost and vice-president academic Samantha Lenci.

The new flag, she pointed out, represents marginalized people of colour, the trans community and those who have HIV.

"It also represents people who have been forgotten and overlooked," Lenci said.

"As well, it's a reminder that the work is not done. We must continue to learn to listen and to change. We must ensure education remains accessible for all."

At the University of Lethbridge, the flag flew proudly as a visual acknowledgement of the importance of the LGBTQ+ members who find a home at the university, and within the Lethbridge community at large.

"I think it is important for our broader community to celebrate, but the university as a main pillar of our community can demonstrate leadership by celebrating and embracing Pride," said U of L Board of Governors chair Kurt Schlachter.

He helped raise the Pride Flag alongside Graduate Student Association president Gregory Robinson and "out" Student Union representative Cayley Fleischman.

"And seeing those symbols can have a great impact."

## Park honours pioneer activist

Calgary — A new park has been named to honour the legacy of a prominent leader in the city's LGBTQ community.

Lois Szabo Commons — at 936 16th Ave. SW. — features a curved space for gatherings and performances, lots of seating options and a concrete ping-pong table.

The park is named after Lois Szabo, one of the founders of Calgary's first gay bar, Club Carousel, which opened in 1970.

"I never thought I'd see the day when a park would be dedicated to our city's LGBTQ community," Szabo said at the park dedication ceremony.

"We have overcome many obstacles and now we are very much a part of the mosaic of Calgary.

"Today's dedication is a wonderful milestone and a huge step forward for the LGBTQ rights."

Mayor Naheed Nenshi said Szabo was courageous during a time when many didn't accept those in the LGBTQ community.

"The best citizenship is someone who plants a tree under whose shade they will never sit," Nenshi said.

"That's what we're doing here. That's what Lois did in 1970. That's what Lois has done her whole darn life.... And ultimately, that is the shade that we continue to build every day."

## Virus limits Calgary, Edmonton events

Pride event organizers came up with a mix of virtual and in-person events, as the Covid-19 virus continued to hobble events in Calgary and Edmonton.

The Calgary festival ran from Aug. 27 to Sept. 6, after many difficult decisions.

The parade, on Sept. 5, was streamed online so Calgarians can watch from home. There were also plans for five days of free drive-in events.

"We wish we could do an in-person parade but right now is not the time because we want to keep our community safe, and everyone who attends our events safe as well," said spokesperson Hasina Juma,

Earlier, the Pride Centre of Edmonton took Pride Month online during June.

With pandemic restrictions, the group had to scale back plans — but still wanted to celebrate.

Jamelie Bachaalani, communications manager for the Pride centre, said there is a public perception that it was responsible for planning the Pride Parade — but that has never been the centre's project.

"This year, for us, we really wanted to get the word out first and foremost about what the Pride centre is and what we do."

The centre offers counselling, resources and programming to 2SLGBTQIA+ people of all ages across the city.

## Boy amazed by crowd's support

Calgary — A crowd full of strangers filled a city park to celebrate a boy's rainbow-themed birthday during Pride Week.

Leah O'Donnell says when her son Brody Neville came out as gay this spring, the 12-year-old lost many of his friends. That made the prospect of celebrating his birthday this year a sad one.

"I was asking him what he wanted to do for his birthday and he was in tears and said since he came out as gay he lost all his friends, so he didn't even have people who could come," O'Donnell says.

So she put a call out to the community to show him love, posting about his situation on Facebook.

Dozens of friends, family, strangers — plus some drag performers strutting to *Born This Way* — filled the park near Ranchlands Community Centre.

When Neville arrived in the park, he initially thought it was an unusually large crowd waiting for the ice cream truck. When he realized he was the guest of honour, he wrapped his mom into a giant hug.

"Thank you everybody for this, this is the best day of my life," a grinning Neville told the crowd.

O'Donnell said it was an opportunity to show her son that there's a supportive community waiting for him outside of the schoolyard bullies.

"I just wanted him to feel support."

Here, there . . .

## Sprinter earns first medal

Tokyo — Just 18.68 seconds! That's all the time Australian Robyn Lambird needed to make history at the 2020 Summer Paralympics.

With that time — a season-best for the wheelchair sprinter — Lambird became the first out non-binary Paralympian to win a medal, securing the Women's 100m T34 bronze in their first Paralympics appearance.

Lambird's third-place finish adds another entry into what has already been a monumental Olympics/Paralympics season for gender-diverse athletes. Lambird is one of three out non-binary/neutral Paralympians competing in Tokyo.

They join American skateboarder Alana Smith and Canadian soccer star Quinn, the first out non-binary Olympic gold medalist ever, as the first round of out non-binary athletes to compete at the top level of international sports.

"It is my first (Paralympic) Games," Lambird told reporters. "It's been almost a 10-year dream so to be here and to win a medal among the best in the world... it's awesome."

## Couple competes in team dressage

Tokyo — Edward Gal and Hans Peter Minderhoud, who have been in a couple for years, came to compete together again in the team event for dressage at the Summer Olympics.

"Competitions are a way of life and it is so much fun if you are with someone who precisely understands that and knows what you are doing, dedicating all your time to horses," Minderhoud says.

He won a silver medal at the 2008 Olympics with the Dutch team. Gal got bronze in the team event in 2012.

The men have been together for over a decade and both enjoy competing in dressage events.

"We only need one hotel room now," joked Gal in an earlier interview about how they were traveling together to events.

While it's rare for a couple to compete in the same team event together at the Olympics, they explain dressage is a very LGBTQ+ friendly sport — and some of the best competitors are gay.

# Q athletes shine

## Diver 'incredibly proud' to be gay

Tokyo — After earning fans during four Olympic Games, out British diver Tom Daley has finally collected Olympic Gold. Daley and his teammate Matty Lee won the 10-metre synchronized platform diving competition during the Tokyo games.

"I feel incredibly proud to say I am a gay man and also an Olympic champion," he said afterward.

Daley already had six World Champion medals, including three gold, eight European Champion medals

(including five gold), four Commonwealth Games gold medals, and one silver. He's also won three Olympic bronze medals, but until now the gold had eluded him.

Daley is married to Oscar-winning filmmaker and screenwriter Dustin Lance Black, and they have a son, Robbie together.

These were Lee's first Olympics, but he won a gold medal in 10-metre platform at the 2015 European Games as well as the mixed 10-metre synchronized platform at the 2017 European Diving Championships. Lee was also the European junior champion on the three-metre springboard twice before.

Daley and Lee won the Olympic Gold at this Olympics with a final dive (out of six) that earned a 101.01 score, making their complete diving performance score 471.81.

"When I was younger, I always felt like the one who was alone, and different, and didn't fit in and there was something about me that was always never going to be as good as what society wanted me to be," Daley told reporters.

"I hope that any young LGBT person out there can see that no matter how alone you feel right now, you are not alone, and that you can achieve anything, and there is a whole lot of your chosen family out here ready to support you."



Tom Daley (left) with British teammate Matty Lee

## Meanwhile, in pro sports . . .

## Football is gay, NFL declares

Washington — The National Football League has partnered with the Trevor Project after NFL player Carl Nassib's coming out to "redefine" football as "inclusive of all different types of fans, coaches and players."

"Football is gay," the new film opens. Dubbed "Football Is For Everyone," the league shared the video on social media today noting, "If you love this game, you are welcome here. Football is for everyone."

"The NFL stands by the LGBTQ+ community today and every day."

The video shows text reading "football is gay," then, the last word is replaced, first to say that "football is lesbian," followed by "beautiful," then "queer."

The video encourages viewers to support or seek the support of those at the Trevor Project, a non-profit advocacy group for LGBTQ youth.

Nassib, a defensive lineman for the Las Vegas Raiders, came out recently as gay in an Instagram post. He also announced a donation of \$100,000 to the Trevor Project and encouraged his fans and supporters to do the same. Nassib said in his announcement, "Studies have shown that all it takes is one accepting adult to decrease the risk of an LGBTQ kid attempting suicide by 40%. Whether you're a friend, a parent, a coach, or a teammate — you can be that person."

The NFL would later match his donation, and reiterated that message by sharing the 40 percent statistic in their ad.

Former NFL players such as Ryan O'Callaghan, Colton Underwood and Wade Davis have come out after their playing careers.

## San Fran Giants sport Pride colours

San Francisco — The Giants became the first team in Major League Baseball to wear Pride colours on the field on for their Pride Day game against the Chicago Cubs.

The team also updated its logo colours to include Pride

"I think it's an important step, and I think we're all standing behind the community."

Giants veteran Evan Longoria also wore Pride wristbands on top of the uniform

Team executives received overwhelming support from the Giants locker room when they made the decision. They note that the ability to have that conversation was made possible thanks to the attention brought to the Black Lives Matter movement in the last year since the murder of George Floyd.

"I think having some of these more uncomfortable, difficult conversations that we're all having because of what's happened in the last year allowed us to really get honest input and increase the comfort of some of our employees to come forward and tell us: 'Okay, you're going to do this? This is how we think it should be done,'" Giants senior vice president of public affairs Shauna Daum, told reporters.

## The Occasion

Serving the LGBTQ+ community of southern Alberta for three decades  
Publisher: Dave Mabell

Available on-line, by mail\*  
and at selected Lethbridge locations

Political or sexual orientation of persons named or pictured cannot be assumed on the basis of mention in The Occasion

Changing contact info? Let us know at dmabell@telusplanet.net

\* Mail subscriptions are available at \$10 per year

in its uniforms and caps. And now the event has become sports history.

The new cap worn by Giants manager Gabe Kapler was sent to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York.

"I think it's an exciting moment for our team, for our organization," he said.



# at '2020' Olympics Gold in women's soccer

Calgary — "To be honest, I'm pretty chill about it," admitted Georgia Simmerling as her partner, Stephanie Labbé prepared for the gold medal game in women's soccer.

"I know her so well, so if she gets hit or knocked down, I'm just sending her good vibes. I know she'll get back up."

But Labbé, goalkeeper for the Canadian team, proved better than that!

After giving up a first-half goal, the Canadian team came from behind to tie the game and then endured numerous, dangerous-looking Swedish attacks in extra time, but ultimately emerged victorious in a six-round penalty shootout.

Both teams put on an outstanding display of goal-keeping in the shootout, but Labbé was just that much better than her Swedish counterpart, preventing four of Sweden's six attempts.

In the sixth and decisive round, Labbé denied Jonna Andersson's attempt and then Julia Grosso delivered the dagger for Canada.

Though Simmerling — an Olympian who had just returned from Tokyo after competing in track

cycling — was able to steel her nerves, there was pandemonium all around her in the Calgary bar where friends had gathered.

There may have been no crowd at the stadium in Japan, but the team's fans in Calgary erupted in cheers, hugs and high-fives.



Georgia Simmerling (left) with Stephanie Labbé

## Olympic 'first' for Quinn

Tokyo — Canadian midfielder Quinn became the first openly transgender and non-binary athlete to win an Olympic gold medal.

The Toronto soccer star, 25, came out as transgender in the fall of 2020, changing their pronouns to they/them and going by one name. Quinn was instrumental helping Canada claim gold as the team's starting centre midfielder, alongside Desiree Scott.

"I think it's important younger folks can see they can be themselves and they can always have a place, and can be Olympic champions, so I think that's exciting," Quinn said following the gold medal win. "I think for me, I was really proud to get here and of the performances I put out on the pitch."

"For me, it's getting back to why I love the sport, because I know there is a lot of external stuff going on all the time. I think once I step on the pitch, it's finding the joy that I found as a kid. I'm trying to take all the pressure away and just experience the moments."



Quinn has played for Canada since 2014, with 69 international appearances and five goals. Quinn was also a member of the 2016 Olympic team where Canada won bronze in Rio.

"The Olympics is wild, it's games back-to-back to back-to-back," Quinn said. "It's been really incredible."

"This team has been working so hard together for so long, these are my best friends, my best mates, and honestly, it's been a blast."

## Silver for Canadian cyclist

Tokyo — Kate O'Brien, an out Canadian cyclist, won silver at the Tokyo Paralympic Games. Her achievement is all the more stunning considering that she nearly died in a 2017 biking accident.

O'Brien won the Women's C4-5 500m Time Trial in 35.439 seconds.

"Some days, I amaze myself. Other days, I put my keys in the fridge," she joked in an Instagram post celebrating her victory.

"I never imagined that I would get to compete in the Paralympic Games," she wrote. "I wouldn't have believed anyone if they told me that I would. I don't do well with change. But, after 33 years on this planet, I am realizing that change is inevitable, and oftentimes, amazing."

Her partner is fellow cyclist Meghan Grant.

O'Brien competed at the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. However, the following year, she got into an accident that almost killed her and could have left her paralyzed.

During a 2017 cycling demonstration, the back tire of her bike blew out, sending her crashing into a motorbike. She suffered cracked ribs, a broken collar bone, a punctured lung and a serious head injury.

After an operation to relieve pressure on her brain, she stopped breathing on her own. Loved ones came to say goodbye to her in the hospital and arrangements were made to donate her organs.

When she finally regained consciousness, doctors told her she'd never speak or walk again.

But after a tough year of rehabilitation, she regained the ability to cycle. When someone suggested she compete in the Paralympics, she disregarded the idea, considering herself an able-bodied athlete. But her accident left her with epileptic seizures, making her eligible.

"It easily became the best sporting experience I have ever had," O'Brien said. "I was welcomed with open arms."

and everywhere

## Players support WHL defender

Nashville — Western Hockey League defenceman Luke Prokop says he's now concentrating on his hockey future after the Nashville Predators prospect became the first "out" player under contract to an NHL team.

Earlier this summer, Prokop announced on social media that he's gay — receiving immediate support from the NHL, the Predators and multiple NHL players. He said he also received messages of encouragement from players in the Western Hockey League, where he played the past four seasons for the Calgary Hitmen.

"The guys here have been fantastic," he says.

"I've had a few guys come up to me and just talk about it and say they were really proud of me."

The 19-year-old's announcement went well beyond the hockey world, with Rock & Roll Hall of Fame icon Elton John calling the day after he came out.

"We just had a really good conversation," Prokop says. "He congratulated me, just asked me how the day was, how the support was, and then he thanked me for being brave and coming out. It was a really cool conversation."

Prokop says he also has gained great insight from Brock McGillis, a former Ontario Hockey League and semiprofessional goalie who came out as gay in November 2016.

"He was really good in lending me some advice to do with media, what's going to happen the day of, the day after, the month after, the year after," he explains.

## Canada's Olympic body launches 'inclusion' site

Toronto — The Canadian Olympic Committee (has partnered with many other sport groups to launched a new sport inclusion website.

It's a support and resource space for national, provincial and territorial, local and club sport organizations who are working to make their spaces more equitable and inclusive for those who identify as LGBTQ.

"Making sport truly inclusive and accessible for all takes education, resources, expertise and concerted effort from all levels in the system," says David Shoemaker, the organization's chief executive officer.

The new website was created by the LGBTQI2S+ Sport Inclusion Task Force. That group was founded during the 2015 Pan Am Games in Toronto and is guided by the COLympics committee, the Professional Golfers Association of Canada, Canadian Women & Sport, the faculty of kinesiology at the University of Calgary and Challenge Accepted Collective.

The project has four key objectives:

- \* making sports organizations at all levels in Canada aware of how LGBTQI2S+ inclusion is part of making sport safer and free from mistreatment;
- \* making sure sport organizations have the capacity to make sport safer and more welcoming;
- \* ensuring groups take meaningful action to make sport safer;
- \* and generally making sure sport is safer and more welcoming for all who are LGBTQI2S+.

## Now easier for Queer athletes — in Canada

For decades, athletes from around the world have gathered at the Olympics and Paralympics to compete in the largest sporting event — a celebration of athletic achievement laced with messaging around hope, inspiration and inclusion.

But it hasn't always been safe or acceptable to be LGBTQ and to compete. Instead, hiding your truth was part of the game.

Alberta's Mark Tewksbury won a gold medal in swimming in Barcelona in 1992. But it wasn't until six years later that Tewksbury felt comfortable enough to publicly acknowledge he was gay.

Then he immediately lost a six-figure contract as a motivational speaker.

There is still a price to pay for being gay in sports today. There are many places around the world where it's not safe and in some cases even illegal to be openly gay. In Iran, for example, LGBTQ people are sometimes killed for being gay, lesbian or trans.

But in Canada, where athletes are pushing boundaries and creating inclusive spaces, it has never been easier to be out, proud and authentic in the field of play.

The story of Olympic cyclist and skier Georgia Simmerling and soccer goalkeeper Stephanie Labbé is a powerful example of how far being LGBTQ has come over the years.

They first met at the 2016 Rio Olympics, where both won bronze medals, and just months later they entered a relationship and have been together ever since.

"It's been unbelievable to come to the last part of my career with her and to have the support that I have from her every day," Simmerling told a CBC Sports reporter. "She's amazing. She gets me. She understands what I'm going through."

While Simmerling was with the cycling team in Ontario, Labbé was in Sweden playing with her club team. The two have spent most of their relationship apart, finding pockets of time together — the life of elite athletes in a relationship.

"She's been an incredible addition to the already crazy life I've lived," Labbé says. "From the moment I met her, she's brought inspiration. The strength of that girl's character and mind is something I aspire to."

"She is so confident in who she is and has taught me so much about self-worth."

Simmerling, 32, was born and raised in Vancouver, a city that was more accepting of LGBTQ people compared to where Labbé grew up in rural Alberta.

"I'm extremely lucky that I've always been supported by my family, teammates and coaches," Simmerling says. "I never really had a coming-out story. I told my parents and family and friends, but it wasn't a big deal."

## Editor's view

# One election down, 1 to go

Well, it's over. And not everyone is happy. But if nothing else, Canada's federal elections give us an opportunity to debate many of the issues that aren't otherwise paid as much attention as they might deserve.

Racism, gender bias against women, the dangers of a "gig" economy, the need for action to follow all those words about truth and reconciliation: They're all on the line when Canadians vote to choose their next MPs and governing party.

And now, after plenty of talk during the five-week election campaign, Canadians will expect action on such high-profile issues as affordable, quality day care for children. This will allow working and single moms — straight and queer — to have a career while providing for their kids.

Reintroduction of the bill banning "conversion therapy" will provide protec-

tion for our next generation of teenagers, however they self-identify.

And support for growth of a "green" economy while Canada reduces its carbon footprint will foster confidence that ordinary citizens can take steps to ensure there will be a liveable world for future generations.

No doubt many more crucial decisions will be made by our incoming MPs.

But now it's time to listen to all those who want a seat on city or town councils. In Lethbridge, will they continue to work for inclusion and against discrimination? Will they support our queer community?

Or will some councillors want to roll back our progress in southern Alberta?

With our civic elections set for Oct. 18, we have time to ask candidates where they stand. Will we make the effort to do so?

## Capitalism snares Pride

By Aimee Langer  
Master of Public Policy candidate  
University of Calgary

This year's Pride Month is starting with a Lego set.

Pride Month is celebrated every year in honour of the Stonewall Inn riots that took place in June 1969. . . Pride reminds us of the violence endured, the progress made, and the hardships yet to come.

(Now) Lego is releasing a 346-piece LGBTQ+ themed set titled "Everyone is Awesome," a clear nod to the massively popular song written for the 2014 *Lego Movie*. . .

It's one of the signs of how June 1 has become the start of a rainbow-themed marketing onslaught from every corner of the capitalist system. Companies of all types and sizes use Pride Month to market pride-themed consumables, decorate their stores with rainbow regalia and hammer customers with lacklustre slogans — only to pack it all up after June 30.

This phenomenon is known among the queer community as "rainbow capitalism." It's pandering, pure and simple.

Every year, rainbow capitalism is met with a range of responses, from outright disdain to excited cheers. The two camps that tend to form around this phenomenon represent a sort of "chicken or the egg" paradox.

One camp argues that companies are simply using queer existence and exploitation for profit, often without any form of support for the queer community. In doing so, they say, these companies perpetuate inequality and oppression. . .

The second camp acknowledges that, while profiting from queer peoples' open existence is not ideal, it's inevitable; everyone needs to buy things, queer people included. Many LGBTQ+ people experience barriers to full economic participation due to hiring discrimination or hostile work environments, leaving them disproportionately represented in low-income categories.

Being picky about whether companies are genuinely committed to LGBTQ+ welfare leaves even fewer options. . .

This camp also argues that explicit representation, such as rainbow signage (on) storefronts during Pride Month, can be encouraging, even if shallow.



with more  
corporate  
support for  
Pride events

The other camp perceives the phenomenon of rainbow capitalism as being a self-interested reflection of the public acceptance and normalization that has accumulated over decades of activism. . .

You can be frustrated about irresponsible and disingenuous pandering, but still acknowledge the inevitability of capitalist participation. And this is the sweet spot for change.

Real change necessitates that companies do their pandering in good faith. This means consequential engagement, support, and policies not just during Pride Month, but year-round.

It also means that we, queer and straight people alike, need to demand that the pandering be done in good faith. This can include putting pressure on companies to truly embrace meaningful change by:

- \* Demanding workplace policies to develop inclusive work environments;
- \* Hiring LGBTQ+ people at all levels, including high-level corporate positions;
- \* Planning and running community events that promote LGBTQ+ interests, arts, and businesses
- \* Creating partnership and mentorship initiatives with queer businesses;
- \* Providing internships through universities and high schools;
- \* And creating capital grant programs for queer entrepreneurs.

There are a million ways that companies can sincerely engage with queer folk and communities year-round that will help our community become more normalized and accepted. . . (and keep on spending!)

(Excerpted from a CBC feature)



# Still facing many issues 'Queer Freedom' proposed

Berlin — Nearly 65,000 revelers marched for LGBTQ rights at Berlin's annual Christopher Street Day celebration — three times more than expected. It was the biggest demonstration in Berlin since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

The parade started with a call from Klaus Lederer, Berlin's senator for culture, to make the city a "queer-free zone" in response to deteriorating safety for gays and lesbians in Hungary and neighboring Poland.

"LGBT-free zones" have been declared in parts of Poland, while Hungary recently passed a law banning the depiction of homosexuality or gender reassignment to minors that has been denounced as discriminatory by human rights groups.

Lederer said the situation in the two EU members "sends shivers down my back." He also noted that the pandemic had been particularly hard for some gays and lesbians at home as shelters were closed. "There is still much work to be done," he added.

There was no parade last year due to the pandemic so many people took advantage of the warm sunny weather and relatively low rate of infections to take part in the last major gathering for Berlin's Pride month.

Nearby, the United States embassy flew a rainbow flag under the American flag.



The parade was led by five trucks that were spaced apart to give demonstrators more room as they danced their way to techno beats past the city's iconic Brandenburg Gate. Organizers made repeated calls for revelers to put masks on and keep their distance — though it wasn't always possible due to the sheer number of people.

Earlier in the week, Bishop Christian Stäblein asked during a service at Berlin's Marienkirche for forgiveness from the LGBTQ community for the suffering caused to them by the evangelical church.

## Pride 2021 Hungarians protest new draconian law

Budapest — Thousands of Hungarians joined the city's annual Pride march to support their LGBTQ neighbours and protest against a law that limits teaching about homosexuality and transgender issues in schools.

Hungary's nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orbán, in power since 2010, has introduced social policies that he says aim to safeguard traditional Christian values from western liberalism, stoking tensions with the EU.

The European Commission has launched legal action against Orbán's government over the law, which came into force this year, saying it is discriminatory and contravenes European values of tolerance and individual freedom.

Demonstrators at the march through the streets of central Budapest said the legislation was dividing the former Soviet-bloc nation and now member of the EU.

More than 40 embassies and foreign cultural institutions in Hungary issued a statement backing the Budapest Pride.

"The law is an outrage. We live in the 21st century, when things like that should not be happening. We are no longer in communist times, this is the EU and everyone should be able to live freely," Istvan, 27, said at the march with his boyfriend.

Orbán's Fidesz-Christian Democrat government, which faces a tough election next year, says LGBTQ rights and other such social issues are matters for national governments to decide. It says the law aims to protect children, not target LGBTQ citizens.

## Flag flies at Vatican

Rome — The U.S. Embassy to the Vatican flew the rainbow flag for Pride month — upsetting a group of Republican politicians, religious right leaders, and far right media figures.

"The United States respects the dignity and equality of LGBTQI+ people," the embassy tweeted with a photo of the flag. "LGBTQI+ rights are human rights."

Brent Bozell, president of the rightwing Media Research Center and publisher of a far-right "news" site that regularly spread election misinformation, quickly took the opportunity to attack the president over his faith, calling Biden the "most anti-Catholic president in history."

President Joe Biden is a Catholic. "This is a direct slap at the Catholic Church from a so-called 'devout' Catholic," Bozell said. "As a Catholic," he tweeted, "I'm curious to know if the Biden-Harris Embassy in the Holy See will promote respect for Catholic teaching on family and freedom of conscience."

## First Pride parade at BYU

Salt Lake City -- About 1,000 people made history this year by taking part in the first-ever Pride event at one of America's most conservative Mormon universities.

Current and former students of Brigham Young University gathered in Provo's Joaquin Park before walking a mile to Kiwanis Park, a grassy expanse just east of campus. They were joined by members of the surrounding LGBTQ+ community and allies, who marched with signs reading "All Are Alike Unto God" and "You Are Loved."

One Provo mother brought her entire family to the march, while another Pride-goer attended with his goat. The march was not formally sponsored by BYU, which has a tortured relationship with its LGBTQ+ student population.

Owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, BYU ran a conversion therapy program for 24 years and banned gay students from attending until 2007 — when it clarified that "one's stated same-gender attraction" would not be grounds for expulsion under its Honour Code.

BYU still continued to prohibit same-sex dating even after an Honor Code update appeared to remove the prohibition last year, eliciting both widespread celebration from LGBTQ+ students and fierce backlash from more right-wing factions

of the Mormon community.

The school quickly clarified that queer relationships would still be barred and said language on the subject had merely been removed from its official guidelines. Many LGBTQ+ students dropped out or transferred to other schools following the reversal.

Alumnus Stacey Harkey said seeing so many people come to support Utah's LGBTQ+ community in the wake of that controversy was an "absolutely exhilarating experience."

"I worry about the queer kids and young adults growing up in intensely religious communities, but seeing that turnout let me know things are changing, and it'll be different for them," he added.

Students behind the event chose to remain anonymous to avoid retaliation from administrators, which meant that advertising was minimal.

But despite the structural problems with holding an LGBTQ+ event at a religious campus, the sea of marchers is a likely illustration of what researchers have already found: the Mormon Church is queerer than ever.

A June survey conducted by Nationscape, a partnership between the Democracy Fund and the University of California at Los Angeles, found that nearly 1 in 4 Gen Z members of the LDS faith identify as queer or transgender.

## Boston Pride splits, disbands

Boston — After more than 50 years, Boston Pride has decided to stop operating and dissolve. One of the oldest Pride organizations in operation in the U.S., it decided the Boston community "needs and wants change without the involvement of Boston Pride" and they "care too much to stand in the way."

Just weeks after holding a Boston mayoral forum, it postponed all their events — including their annual parade, which had been rescheduled

from June to sometime in the fall. Issues Pride faced were exacerbated by thousands attending the Trans Resistance Massachusetts March held in June, separately organized by activists who said Boston Pride continually failed to represent or include trans people and people of colour.

Community members hoped that Trans Resistance Massachusetts and the Boston Dyke March would step up to fill the void this year.

**Want to enjoy reading  
in COLOUR?**  
**Download your copy of The Occasion**  
**from our new web link:**  
**[www.theoccasionnewsletter.ca](http://www.theoccasionnewsletter.ca)**

## Breaking NEWS

### Pete and partner become dads

Washington — Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg and his husband Chasten have announced the birth of their two children.

They made the announcement, including revealing their children's names, with social media posts. The Buttigieg family shared a black and white photo of Pete and Chasten each holding one of their children, as the proud parents look lovingly at one another.

Pete and Chasten "are beyond thankful for all the kind wishes since first sharing the news that we're becoming parents. We are delighted to welcome Penelope Rose and Joseph August Buttigieg to our family," the family announced.

"For some time, Chasten and I have wanted to grow our family," Pete posted on Twitter.

"We're overjoyed to share that we've become parents! The process isn't done yet and we're thankful for the love, support, and respect for our privacy that has been offered to us."

### Out candidate runs for president

Rio de Janeiro — Brazilian governor Eduardo Leite was met with a mixed reception after coming out as gay amid his 2022 presidential run. A candidate representing the centrist Brazilian Social Democratic party (PSDB) in next year's elections, Leite opened up about his sexual orientation during a TV interview.

"I have never spoken about a subject related to my private life," he said. "But during this moment of low integrity in Brazil, I have nothing to hide, I am gay."

Leite currently serves as governor of Rio Grande do Sul, a populous state located at the southernmost tip of Brazil along the Uruguay border. At 36, he is the nation's youngest governor to be currently serving in office, and his coming out makes him the first openly gay man to be governor of a Brazilian state.

But Leite says he sees himself as "a governor who is gay, not a gay governor." He likened himself to former President Barack Obama, who he referred to as "a president who was Black, not a Black president."

### Q history included

Las Vegas — Nevada has become the sixth state to require school curriculum to include history lessons on LGBTQ people and events.

Gov. Steve Sisolak (D) signed the legislation into law during a Pride festival in Henderson.

"It is so important that we bring these bills to the community, to this center to help you understand how important this is," he said.

One bill requires public and charter schools to provide instruction from kindergarten through graduation "on the history and contributions to science, the arts and humanities" from multiple minority groups, including "persons of marginalized sexual orientation or gender identity."

A second requires local governments to collect demographic information that includes LGBTQ people. And another allows LGBTQ-owned businesses to be designated as "minority-owned" when applying for grants or public contracts.

# Mormon star speaks out

Salt Lake City — A celebrated Mormon musician is speaking out for greater understanding. Former *American Idol* contestant David Archuleta revealed he came out to his family in 2014 — but he's now unsure of how to label his sexuality.

He's calling for people to have compassion for "those who are LGBTQIA+... like myself."

Now 30, Archuleta was raised in Utah and started to sing at competitions at the age of 10.

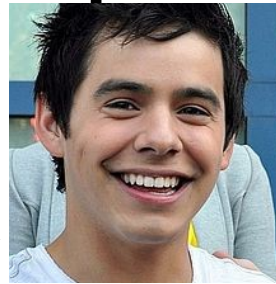
At 12, he competed in and ultimately finished as the Junior Vocal Champion on *Star Search 2* in 2003.

The teen became a worldwide sensation when he competed in the seventh season of *American Idol* in 2008. He went on to win six Teen Choice Awards, including one for "Best Tour" for opening up for then-Disney star and fellow out entertainer Demi Lovato, by the time he was 20.

But then he went on a two-year LDS mission, as his denomination expects. He's since been a soloist with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

In his statement, Archuleta explains in detail how he has been unsure of his sexual orientation, although he's had sexual feelings for one or multiple genders. He does not say if he's had same-gender romantic inclinations or any same-gender relationships.

"I don't feel comfortable sharing it, but felt I



needed to bring more awareness to people in my same situation and let you know you're not alone," he says.

"You can be part of the LGBTQIA+ community and still believe in God."

"I've tried for almost 20 years to try and change myself until I realized God made me how I am for a purpose," he says. "And instead of hating what I have considered wrong I need to see why God loved me for who I am and that it's not just sexuality."

"I think we can do better as people of faith and Christians, including Latter-day Saints, to listen more to the wrestle between being LGBTQIA+ and a person of faith."

"There are more than you may realize going through that wrestle after all the misunderstandings that come with it."

"I don't think it should come down to feeling you have to accept one or the other."

## We're now 1 million in Canada

Ottawa — Canada is now home to about one million people who identify as members of the LGBTQ community, with people under the age of 25 accounting for a disproportionately large share of the LGBTQ population.

That's according to a new report by Statistics Canada which seeks to paint a "statistical portrait" of the country's LGBTQ population.

The data, which Statistics Canada has been collecting since 2003, show that Canada's LGBTQ population is skewed heavily toward young people.

Around 30 per cent of LGBTQ Canadians are between the ages of 15 and 24 — an age group that accounts for just 14 per cent of the non-LGBTQ population.

Only seven per cent of Canada's LGBTQ population is 65 or older. People in the same age group make up 21 per cent of the non-LGBTQ population.

The report details a number of momentous develop-

ments and legal changes that have affected the lives of LGBTQ Canadians since the start of the 21st century, including the legalization of same-sex marriage and new protections for gender identity and expression written into the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Statistics Canada says those policy changes contributed to the growth in the number of same-sex couples.

From 2006 to 2016, the number of same-sex couples grew by 60.7 per cent.

"This increase may be reflective, at least in part, of growing awareness and acceptance of sexual diversity in Canada," says the report.

But while many trends suggest Canada's LGBTQ population is growing, the report also cites threats facing LGBTQ Canadians — such as the recent spike in hate crimes targeting people for their sexual orientation.

## Methodists approve marriage

London — The Methodist Church in the U.K. will now offer same-sex marriages. With members' approval, the historic Protestant denomination becomes the U.K.'s first major church to do so.

Delegates voted overwhelmingly this summer to change the definition of matrimony, just as its Canadian partner — the United Church of Canada — did 15 years ago.

At the same time, the delegates sought to appease members and clergy who believe that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, by affirming that definition as well.

In effect, the Methodist Church now has dual definitions of marriage — the previous definition and the new broader one.

Under a "Freedom of Conscience" clause, no minister or congregant will be required to conduct or otherwise participate in a marriage service for a same-sex couple "should it be contrary to the dictates of his or her conscience to do so."

Church leaders said they hope the dual definitions will help persuade conservative members and

of disagreements about same-sex marriage.

"The debate today and our wider conversation has been conducted with grace and mutual respect," said Rev. Sonia Hicks, who became the first black woman elected as president of the Methodist Conference in Britain.

The long-awaited decision was welcomed by many in Britain's LGBTQ community.

Rev. Sam McBratney, chair of the church's Dignity and Worth campaign group, called it "a momentous step on the road to justice" after years of "painful" conversations.

"Some of us have been praying for this day to come for decades and can hardly believe it is now here," he said, according to the BBC.

"We are so grateful to our fellow Methodists for taking this courageous step to recognize and affirm the value and worth of LGBTQ+ relationships."

A similar debate over same sex marriages has been underway and remains unresolved within the United Methodist Church in the U.S.