



Youth Health Pulse is your source for all things Planned Parenthood Toronto, reproductive justice, queer liberation, and youth advocacy.

Bill C-64 Passes: One Step Closer to Universal Pharmacare

Canada is closer than ever to providing up to nine million women and gender-diverse people with free access to contraception. Thanks to years of advocacy, the Pharmacare Act is a bold affirmation of reproductive freedom. This victory really belongs to all of you who have fought tirelessly to ensure that healthcare is a right, not a privilege! It was earned through relentless advocacy, the voices of those who refused to accept a system that left too many behind.

The evidence is clear: when contraception is accessible, we reduce the risk of unintended pregnancies among youth, empower individuals to make decisions about their bodies, and take one giant leap toward reproductive justice.

Think about it — we are on the precipice of being able to offer free access to contraception for millions! This decision will reverberate through generations, giving young women and gender-diverse people the chance to decide their futures, on their terms.

As we learned from SisterSong, reproductive justice means having bodily autonomy, including the right to have children or to not have children, as well as the right to parent children in safe and sustainable communities.

So while we've reached a crucial milestone with Bill C-64, there is more work to be done. Full implementation is essential, and we will continue to push for Pharmacare to cover all forms of contraception and ensure that no person, regardless of age, class or insurance is left without the care they deserve. Youth Futures Now!



World Mental Health Day

Today's youth are experiencing unprecedented levels of strain on their mental health, exacerbated by climate anxiety, the undermining of reproductive rights, the relentless attacks on queer and trans youth in schools and so much more.

And yet, all around us at Planned Parenthood Toronto we are able to witness incredible instances of youth activism, strength and joy. Take our neighbours for example: the extraordinary students who founded the Students for Choice, a pro-choice club at the University for Toronto where youth advocate for the right of individuals to make autonomous

decisions about their own bodies and reproductive functions. Instead of allowing the weight of the world to crush their optimism, they are educating students, creating art, encouraging classmates to love their bodies, and ensuring they prepare their peers to fight like hell for their our reproductive rights.

Truly, today's youth continue to amaze us with the good that they're doing in the world as changemakers. And when they don't have the energy to tap into their strength, Planned Parenthood Toronto is there to support them, with two mental health clinicians on staff.

World Mental Health Day reminds us that we must continue to advocate for real changes that will safeguard youth mental health. This means we protect a youth's choice to make their own decisions about their bodies. It means we protect youth in schools from homophobia and transphobia. And, together, we protect the future of youth!

If you're a youth looking for support with your mental health, Planned Parenthood Toronto offers one-on-one counselling, group counselling programs, and case coordination.

LGBT History Month

October is LGBT History Month, a time to recognize the lives, contributions, and stories of Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer individuals. Raising awareness about historically significant people and events ensures not just that crucial information and documents are preserved, but also helps us to become more aware of which stories and people have been intentionally censored, de-prioritized, or attacked. Acts of systemic sexuality- and gender-based erasure throughout Canadian history have included:

- attempts to suppress the existence of Two-Spirit individuals who were revered throughout many Indigenous communities pre-colonization;
- Canada's history of forced sterilization of Indigenous and disabled individuals; and
- raids by police on Toronto bathhouses in 1981 and again in 2000

As Toronto's Youth Community Health Centre, we know that the youth of today become the adults of tomorrow and the elders of the future, and they deserve to know the stories of those who came before them. We are grateful to our community partners – some of which are spotlighted in our “Community Shout Outs” section – who have helped preserve 2SLGBTQ history, provide queer and trans youth with support, and truly shape a positive future.



Lean On Me: PPT's Peer Educators

Each month, we will spotlight a person, a place or thing that will bring to life our mission, giving you a glimpse into all that is happening in our clinic and out in the community. This month, our spotlight finds inspiration in Bill Withers' Lean on Me and uplifts our Health Services Peer Education program – a team of dedicated volunteers that meet with clients one-on-

one, answering questions about birth control, sexually transmitted infections, medical abortions, and more. Whether it's over the phone, in person, or via video call, they create a safe and non-judgmental space where youth can get the answers they need and the care they deserve.

Learn more about how your support ensures youth have someone to lean on.



Join us as we fangirl over these amazing groups doing incredible work in our community!

In honour of LGBT History Month, PPT would like to give a shout out to [The ArQuives](#) – the largest independent 2SLGBTQ Archives in the world. In addition to their mandate of preserving, organizing, and giving public access to materials about and by 2SLGBTQ people, they organize community events in Toronto (where they are based) such as walking tours of the queer village, trivia nights, and button-making workshops. The ArQuives is truly instrumental in preserving Canada's 2SLGBTQ history and creating culture and community for queer and trans people.

In 2024, the LGBT Youthline celebrated their 30th anniversary. In that time, they have been a lifeline to an entire generation of 2SLGBTQ young people by providing confidential, non-judgmental, and informed peer support. In addition to supporting Ontario's queer and trans youth via phone, email, instant message, and text, the Youthline has been a beacon of community-building and activism, initiating petitions, hosting events, and growing a generation of 2LGBTQ youth trained in peer support and active listening.

Pathways to Care is a community-driven and youth-led project committed to transforming the mental healthcare system for Black children, youth and their families. This 5-year project is a collaboration of multiple health services in the city, and is led by goals of empowerment, capacity-building, and self-determination for Black children, youth, and their families. In addition, they are developing clinical standards that are culturally relevant and seek to create a "community of care" to surround Black clients and families.



National Pharmacare: Advocacy In Action

The passing of the Pharmacare Act on October 10, 2024 not only paves the way for a national pharmacare plan, but is also proof that advocacy works! For months, thousands of Canadians have signed petitions,

written to their MPs, and shared posts on social media. Huge thanks are due not only to everyday folks like you for taking action, but also to organizations like [Action Canada for Sexual and Health Rights](#), the [Council of Canadians](#), and [Cover ContraceptiON](#) who have tirelessly advocated for universal pharmacare, including contraception.

As we ride the high of Bill C-64 passing, let's keep the momentum going! Here are two more important ways you can take action!

Write for Student Rights

Recent increases in anti-2SLGBTQ+ hate and violence have targeted the rights and freedoms of queer, trans, and 2-Spirit youth in schools. The [LGBT Youthline](#) is asking Ontarians to contact their MPPs and demand inclusive learning environments and greater protections for 2SLGBTQ+ students. [Write to your MPP](#) or sign the [Pledge for Inclusive Schools](#) if you're an educator! On Wednesday, October 30 they're also hosting a [virtual day of action](#).

[Support 2SLGBTQ Students](#)

Be Election Ready

[Momentum Canada](#) is working to help 2SLGBTQ+ advocates and allies across the country get organized for the next federal election. They've developed a virtual Election Readiness Training Series to give local advocates and allies the tools and skills to organize effectively and build power in 2SLGBTQ+ movements. From political organizing for queer and trans organizations to addressing disinformation and misinformation,

Momentum Canada has a full slate of trainings to get you prepared for the next election.

[**Sign Up For A Training**](#)

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