

Pride Toronto Board of Directors Candidate Profile

Name/Pronouns

Grant Gonzales (he/him)

Biography

Grant is the Co-Chair of Pride Toronto's Board of Directors, serving since February 2021, and has served as a Director on the Board since September 2020. He is a government and stakeholder relations professional, with over 10 years of experience. An active community member, Grant is a former President of the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre and has served on the Board for over 8 years, and was a 2021 CivicAction DiverseCity Fellow. He participates in several 2SLGBTQI+ athletic leagues, including Downtown Dodgeball, Dodgeball Society, and the Toronto United Flag Football League.

Questionnaire

Why are you interested in joining the Board of Pride Toronto?

My role as a volunteer Director is challenging and takes an incredible emotional toll. Over the past seven years, only one racialized Director completed their first term, and none have run for re-election. However, I'm running again because I am deeply committed to continue making Pride Toronto an impactful 2SLGBTQI+ organization.

As Co-Chair, I helped to bring stability to Pride Toronto and addressed past mistakes by prioritizing financial transparency, strengthening governance and oversight practices, and building meaningful partnerships – especially with Two Spirit and Indigenous communities. If re-elected, I would be focused on putting our new multi-year strategic plan into action.

How will your experience, talents, and skills contribute to advancing Pride Toronto's Mission, Vision, and Values?

I bring over 10 years of experience in government and stakeholder relations, and in not-for-profit governance. My track record demonstrates my commitment to advancing Pride Toronto:

- Providing strategic oversight and coordinating governance with the Executive Director.
- Amending Pride Toronto's by-laws and approving over 50 operational and governance policies.
- Building accountability in our financial management practices.
- Active participation in the strategic planning process.
- Advocating on key 2SLGBTQI+ issues and drafting advocacy statements.
- Engaging with stakeholder and communities, and lobbying government for increased support.
- Managing both internal and external conflicts and issues.
- Planning and chairing Annual General Meetings and Special General Meetings.

Pride has had a history of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, and we are working to address and combat this. What is your experience in working against racism, particularly anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism? What is your vision for Pride's external work in combating racism?

As a Filipino person, I often navigate around systemic barriers. In previous roles, I challenged problematic workplace practices that adversely impacted Indigenous, Black, and racialized folks. At my community health centre, I helped establish the Black Identified Residents Community Advisory Committee, empowering clients to inform and guide our work.

At Pride Toronto, I supported efforts to create spaces for Indigenous and Black folks to thrive. This included hosting the first ever in-person Global Black Pride and partnering with 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations to host the first ever 2-Spirit Powwow in 2022, and continuously ensuring a deeply diverse lineup of artists and performers during the Pride Festival.

What is your experience in addressing and combating transphobia, transmisogyny and transmisandry?

Trans people are among the most marginalized people within the 2SLGBTQI+ community, especially racialized trans folks. Trans people experience heightened physical and sexual assault, and harassment, and are likelier to fall under the low-income bracket, face discrimination when accessing services, and experience addiction and mental health problems.

During my time on the Board, I encouraged Pride Toronto to use our platform to shed light on issues faced by trans folks and advocate on their behalf, and to support intentional efforts to include trans people in senior governance roles, including on the Board.

Pride's membership has voted to ban instruments and symbols of policing, including uniforms, cars and weapons, from participating in the Pride Parade and Streetfair. If elected to the Board, how would you ensure that this commitment is upheld?

I upheld the membership's decision with respect to the participation of uniformed police officers in the Pride Parade and StreetFair. Any change must be made by the membership, however, now is not the time to reopen this debate given the ongoing policing issues impacting BIPOC and trans communities.

Additionally, Pride Toronto directly challenged the City of Toronto and Toronto Police Services about the significantly escalated costs of policing during the Pride Festival. I support our efforts to partner with harm reductions agencies to deliver a safe Festival by offering alternatives to policing in response to addictions and mental health emergencies.

Accessibility is a crucial aspect for Pride's celebrations, but we still fall short in providing a completely accessible Festival, especially for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing community. What experience, resources, and knowledge do you have in engaging and supporting these communities?

In previous roles, I ensured that my workplace complied with *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) requirements. As Treasurer of the Arts and Science Students' Union at the University of Toronto, my responsibilities included ensuring that club events were accessible to all students and fulfilling requests for ASL interpretation services.

I fully support Pride Toronto's efforts to go above and beyond minimum AODA requirements, with the guidance of D/deaf and Hard of Hearing folks who are directly impacted. This includes taking tangible actions to expand the availability of ASL interpretation, including during some performances at the Pride Festival.