



Rev. Dr. Cheri DiNovo, C.M.

Minister

1971

Only woman to sign *We Demand*, first gay rights demo in Canada. Marched in Toronto's first Pride.

2001

Performed the first legalized same-sex marriage in Canada

2006

Elected MPP – passed most private bills in Ontario's history and most LGBTQ bills in Canadian history

2019

Appointed to the Order of Canada

2020

Minister at Trinity-St. Paul's United Church and Centre for Faith, Justice and the Arts

Windsor

Religion and faith have a place in the LGBTQ community, says former Toronto MPP

Cheri DiNovo performed Ontario's first same-sex wedding in 2001

[Sanjay Maru](#) · CBC News · Posted: Apr 24, 2018 3:24 PM EDT | Last Updated: April 24, 2018



Cheri DiNovo recently received an apology from the federal government for their response to Ontario's first same-sex marriage, which DiNovo performed in 2001. (Windsor Morning/CBC)

'Radical reverend' NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo is leaving politics for the church

[thestar.com /news/queenspark/2017/09/20/radical-reverend-ndp-mpp-cheri-dinovo-is-leaving-politics-for-the-church.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2017/09/20/radical-reverend-ndp-mpp-cheri-dinovo-is-leaving-politics-for-the-church.html)

19/09/2017

By [Kristin Rushowy](#) Queen's Park Bureau

Wed., Sept. 20, 2017

Cheri DiNovo is leaving politics for her own parish.

The well-known NDP MPP, who has represented Parkdale—High Park for 11 years, said that as of Jan. 1, she will be minister at Trinity-St. Paul's Centre for Faith, Arts and Justice in downtown Toronto.

"I'm in fact returning to my true love: theology, advocacy and ministry," said DiNovo, a United Church minister, who wore her white clerical collar for the announcement at Queen's Park.

DiNovo has been a champion LGBTQ rights and a supporter of improvements to the minimum wage, and was successful in pushing the Liberal government on legislation and introducing her own private member's bills.

Before making the move to politics, she said she was "privileged to perform the first legalized same-sex marriage," and later became the only LGBTQ critic in the history of the Ontario legislature.

"Trinity-St. Paul's is, and will be, a centre for all non-binary, queer, lesbian, bisexual, trans and gay people," she said, adding the centre will focus on "queer theology and spirituality for all those fleeing oppression based on race, class, immigration status and poverty as well.



20/09/2017

Parkdale—High Park MPP Cheri DiNovo will return to her “true love,” the church, when she leaves Queen's Park as of Jan. 1 to become minister at Trinity-St. Paul's United. (Bernard Weil / Toronto Star) | [Order this photo](#)

“I’m thrilled. It is a place, one of the few, where women’s leadership is extolled and encouraged.”

While DiNovo is leaving Queen’s Park, she’s not going far — and pledged to be there for her political colleagues and their spiritual needs.

The Legislature “will be a part of my parish and I intend to continue fighting for those who are marginalized, but also provide pastoral care for those who are in need in the political sphere, both here and in Ottawa,” she said.

“Political work is non-stop, exhausting and demanding. I intend to be here and there for anyone who needs someone who can listen and someone who can pray.”

DiNovo will continue her “Radical Reverend” radio show on CIUT.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said the MPP’s career has been stellar. “She has really made a difference in the lives of all kinds of people from the work she’s done.”

DiNovo had, many years ago, put forward a massive bill on employment standards, Horwath added, containing “things the government is just getting around to now.”

During Wednesday’s question period, Premier Kathleen Wynne lauded DiNovo for her work “on so many social issues. She has always been a champion.”

In 2016, DiNovo decided not to pursue the leadership of the federal NDP because she needed time to recover after [suffering two mini-strokes](#).

Late last year, the province passed the [All Families are Equal Act](#), updating parentage laws and giving same-sex parents legal recognition, legislation that was inspired by a private member’s bill put forth by DiNovo.



“I’m in fact returning to my true love: theology, advocacy and ministry,” said [@CheriDiNovo](#)



‘Radical reverend’ NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo is leaving politic...

Parkdale-High Park representative, well-known advocate of LGBT rights, will be minister at Trinity-St. Paul's Centre for Faith, Arts and Justice in downtown Toronto.

[thestar.com](#)

4:35 PM - 20 Sep 2017

CHERI DINOVO ERECTS NEW STEEPLE

Outgoing NDP MPP tells NOW why she's returning to her true love - and supporting Niki Ashton for leader

By SAMANTHA EDWARDS



Cheri DiNovo hopes to turn Trinity-St. Paul's into Toronto's version of NYC's Riverside Church.

Donning a white clerical collar and a gold cross for the occasion, long-time NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo officially announced on September 20 that she's leaving politics for her "true love: theology, advocacy and ministry."

As of January 1, DiNovo will become the minister of Trinity-St. Paul's Centre for Faith, Arts and Justice, where she says she'll continue her work on LGBTQ+ issues, climate change, affordable housing, labour rights and animal advocacy.

When I meet with DiNovo at her constituency office in the Junction two days later, she's sans collar, wearing her broad-rimmed black glasses and eager to talk about her vision for Trinity-St. Paul's as Toronto's version of Riverside Church in New York City, the famous activist space where Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela preached. She sees it as a home for queer theology and to a spiritual school for kids, where a new religion is taught every month, as well as a sanctuary for activists exhausted from the hurly-burly nature of politics.

"You're beating your head against the wall and eventually your head gives in, not the wall," DiNovo says. "That's why it's so important to be part

of a supportive community."

Looking back at her 11 years as the MPP for Parkdale-High Park, DiNovo recalls why she initially left the United Church for politics.

"I hoped I could make more change in those green seats at Queen's Park than I could at the pulpit," she says. "I think we've accomplished that. We've changed lives."

Indeed, DiNovo's legacy includes work on increasing the Ontario minimum wage; Toby's Law, an amendment to Ontario's Human Rights code to include trans rights; Cy And Ruby's Act, which ensures parental equality for LGBTQ families; and legislation that recognizes PTSD for first responders. That last effort was inspired by a young, queer paramedic who came to DiNovo's office because she couldn't get coverage for PTSD.

"She's been phenomenal," provincial NDP leader Andrea Horwath tells me during a phone interview. "She's worked diligently and passionately to make changes that make people's lives better. That's a very important piece to what motivates Cheri."

Horwath and DiNovo haven't always seen eye to eye, an understatement to some. DiNovo was an outspoken critic of the NDP's last campaigns both provincially and federally for what she describes as "pan-

**"I haven't
always agreed
with the NDP
leadership.
I'm happy to
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again."**

dering" to right-wing voters with pocketbook priorities rather than pushing issues that speak to the party's social democratic roots.

"People are sick of politics as a game," DiNovo says, which is why she's endorsing Manitoba MP Niki Ashton and her "clear, bold vision" for federal NDP leader to replace Tom Mulcair. (Results from the first round of voting

will be announced on October 1 at the Westin Harbour Castle.)

Ashton says DiNovo has been an inspiration and role model ever since she met her a decade ago at an NDP federal council meeting.

"The fact that she's so outspoken, a gutsy feminist, a champion for LGBTQ rights and has an unwavering commitment to democratic socialism... is something I share," says Ashton in a phone interview.

When I ask DiNovo about Jagmeet Singh, currently considered the front-runner for the NDP leadership, her eyebrows raise ever so slightly.

She says she's concerned about the MPP's original stance opposing the updated sex ed curriculum and calling for more parental input, which to DiNovo comes off as "code for religious fundamentalists who objected to the pro-queer content."

"He's now sounding very positive, so I hope that continues. I live in hope that people can change."

For the NDP, DiNovo's departure means not only the loss of its strongest voice, but as of the last election, one of its only voices from Toronto in the Legislature - the NDP lost two seats to the Liberals in Toronto in 2014 - not to mention its first-ever critic of LGBTQ+ issues.

Although Horwath is already work-

ing to fill that position, community activist Susan Gapka, founder of Canada's Trans Lobby Group, worries the role will be hard to fill.

"The NDP has a sloppy record on electing LGBTQ [people]. We've done poorly and we need to do better. There have been no trans people elected in Ontario or anywhere in Canada yet. When Cheri leaves, who will take over the file?"

Yet the NDP's loss could very well be a gain for DiNovo's own social justice agenda.

"I like not having anybody to answer to other than the congregation," DiNovo says. "I'm happy to answer to the electorate, but it's no secret that there have been times that the NDP leadership and myself have not agreed. I'm happy to be my own gal again."

Gapka says DiNovo's new role is actually clever political strategy. "Cheri's going to be able to advocate on the things that are important to her outside of the political confines. She'll be able to do better on a number of issues she's been fighting for."

So, yes, DiNovo may be leaving her official position as MPP but she isn't retiring from politics. "I'm taking a step back so I can, in a sense, have a louder voice from the outside than one can even have from the inside." ☺

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Cheri DiNovo's Private Member's Bill Seeks To Ban SoCalled Conversion Therapy In Ontario

CP | ByAllison Jones, The Canadian Press

TORONTO During her formative years as a transgender woman — or girl, really — Erika Muse says she was subjected to conversion therapy, which left her depressed, suicidal and with a mere lingering shred of selfesteem.

The treatment is roundly condemned, but still practised by some, says an Ontario New Democrat seeking to make the socalled therapy illegal. Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill would ban any attempt to change the sexual orientation or gender identity of someone 18 and under.

Muse, now 26, came out as trans at age 16 and sought treatment to both work through associated issues and get medication to help her become a woman. She was sent to someone billed as an expert in trans issues, but for the next eight years he refused to prescribe medication, leaving her in a body she hated, and did not treat her trans identity as real, she says.

"The sessions were not therapeutic but abusive," Muse says. "They led to trauma about my body and a lack of faith in myself. I often left feeling violated and hurt."

Muse says her therapist billed under OHIP — the province's health insurance plan — not specifically for conversion therapy but for general therapy. DiNovo wants to ban conversion therapy for anyone 18 and under, and delist it from OHIP for those over 18.

But Health Minister Eric Hoskins said there is no OHIP coverage for that type of therapy.

He spoke in supportive terms of DiNovo's efforts, but said there are already measures in place to crack down on inappropriate practices.

"I would encourage any patient or individual that is aware of a healthcare provider providing this type of intervention that they report that individual to the (College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario)," he said last week.

"CPSO would see it as almost certainly an act of professional misconduct."

Dr. Joey Bonifacio, an adolescent medicine specialist at the Hospital for Sick Children's transgender youth clinic, said doctors play a very important role in the lives of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) youth, who face elevated risks of depression, substance abuse and suicide.

"Very often the first people who are involved when a child or teen identifies as LGBTQ is their primary care provider," he said.

"We readily see these families with children who identify as transgendered desperately looking for guidance. I



THE CANADIAN PRESS 

see the young adults who have depression and are cutting after meeting a homophobic therapist."

The bill, which is up for second reading at the legislature on April 2, would allow someone like Muse to bring a complaint forward and the therapist could be charged, DiNovo said.

"Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, twospirited or queer is who one is," DiNovo said. "To tell a child that who they are is wrong, we consider abusive."

Trinity-St. Paul's United Church & Centre for Faith, Justice and the Arts presents:

"When the living creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. Wherever the spirit would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels."
Ezekiel 1:19

The 7th Annual
Blessing of the Bikes
(a spiritual aspect of bicycle safety)

All are welcome!

Sunday, May 29, 2016 from 12:15pm ~ 1:15pm

Trinity-St. Paul's United Church
427 Bloor Street West, Toronto
www.trinitystpauls.ca