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OPEN LETTER

May 4th, 2017

In today's Bill C-16 Senate hearing, Senators Donald Plett and Denise Batters quoted Egale as not supporting the addition of gender expression, alongside gender identity, within Bill C-16.

This is untrue.

Bill C-16 is a landmark piece of legislation that looks to add both "gender identity" and "gender expression" as protected grounds to both the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Criminal Code*. By adding gender identity and gender expression as explicitly protected grounds, the federal government will be taking a significant step toward recognizing trans and gender diverse communities as worthy the respect and dignity.

Prior to Bill C-16, several other bills seeking to protect the rights of trans and gender diverse people living in Canada failed to pass successfully into law. Many of the objections at the time claimed that "gender expression" was an ambiguous ground which weakened the legal strength of the bill. As a result, trans and gender diverse activists and LGBTQI2S organizations – including Egale – put their support behind these bills, which solely included gender identity. This was a strategic position in order to gain the strongest human rights protections possible at the time.

As provinces and territories across Canada have implemented gender identity and gender expression as protected grounds, federal MPs and Senators have come to recognize that having both categories does not weaken human rights protections. Bill C-16 therefore includes both gender identity and gender expression, and Egale fully supports the passing of this bill into law with both protected grounds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Helen Kennedy", written in a cursive style.

Helen Kennedy
Executive Director
Egale Canada Human Rights Trust
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Egale works to improve the lives of LGBTQI2S people in Canada and to enhance the global response to LGBTQI2S issues. Egale will achieve this by informing public policy, inspiring cultural change, and promoting human rights and inclusion through research, education and community engagement.

Égale travaille à améliorer la vie des personnes LGBTQ+ en éclairant l'élaboration des politiques publiques, en inspirant le changement culturel et en promouvant les droits de la personne et l'inclusion grâce à la recherche, à l'éducation et à la mobilisation communautaire.