

On International Day of Older Persons, Egale Canada and The 519 Call for Immediate Action and a Commitment to Improve the lives of Older and Ageing LGBTQI2S People in Canada

Toronto (October 1, 2018) – Today, on [International Day of Older Persons](#), [Egale](#) and [The 519](#) are coming together to mark the occasion by shedding light on the unique issues impacting [LGBTQI2S seniors](#) across Canada. More than that, **Egale** and **The 519** are using the occasion to host a **Call To Action signing ceremony** in the **Ballroom at The 519** to encourage the Canadian government, as well as others, to recognize the needs and hear the voices of older and ageing LGBTQI2S people. By signing the [International Older LGBTQI People Call to Action](#), developed by Egale alongside the [International Federation on Ageing](#) (IFA) and [SAGE USA](#), **governments and industry leaders will be pledging to acknowledge that we can do more and we can do better to support older and ageing LGBTQI2S people in Canada.**

There is no doubt that throughout Canada we recognize older and ageing people as being marginalized - older and ageing people face issues of abuse, homelessness and poverty among other challenges. It is less often that we focus on the additional unique issues and barriers impacting older and ageing LGBTQI2S people. Due to a lifetime of experiencing different forms of oppressions including homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia, biphobia, sexism, racism, and ageism, older LGBTQI2S people are less likely than heterosexual and/or cisgender (non-trans) peers to access support from non-LGBTQI2S health service providers, and other types of social support programs.

“Today, generations of 2SLGBTQIA communities and allies gather to celebrate International Day of Older Persons in honour of queer histories of struggle and liberation, and to affirm gender and sexual diversity,” says **Kate Hazell, Coordinator of Seniors Programs at The 519**. *“The lives of 2SLGBTQIA older adults have been subject to erasure and are not well represented within general older adult programming and supports. Let’s change that, together.”*

The most notable challenges faced by older LGBTQI2S people are revealed in [Egale’s National LGBTQI2S Seniors Community Consultation](#) which was led by Egale’s [National Seniors Advisory Council](#) (NSAC). In the community consultation, it was found that over half of senior respondents and two-thirds of service providers agreed **the top issue with the largest perceived impact on older LGBTQI2S people is the fear of being re-closeted in residential care**. Other priority issues raised by older LGBTQI2S people included **barriers to making end-of-life decisions**; having a **limited legal and medical definition of “family”**; and **connecting with residential care staff who are open about their own identities**.

“Every day we witness the struggles of our ageing 2SLGBTQI peers and as representatives of these communities, it’s incredibly important to us that the voices of all older 2SLGBTQI people in Canada are heard,” said **LeZlie Lee Kam** and **Robert Nelder, NSAC members**. *“In order to begin to see real change for older 2SLGBTQI people, it is imperative that we are collectively included in the decision-making process – it cannot be about us without us.”*

The concerns raised by service providers and allies who work with older and ageing people also reflected a need for change and included: the **institutional impacts of homophobia, biphobia, lesbophobia, and transphobia**; a **lack of designated spaces for trans and Two Spirit seniors**; **difficulty accessing knowledgeable and accepting health services**; and **discriminatory intake and sign up forms**. These were considered to be top issues impacting the wellbeing of LGBTQI2S seniors in Canada.

“Older LGBTQI2S people in Canada are even further marginalized than their non-LGBTQI2S peers, and in addition to facing all of the same issues, must deal with the many unique challenges that come with ageing as an LGBTQI2S person,” said **Helen Kennedy, Executive Director at Egale Canada**. *“On International Day of Older Persons, we are calling on all levels of government to step up and pledge to do better in our efforts to support older LGBTQI2S people.”*

The [International Older LGBTQI People Call to Action](#) was developed as way to give a voice to older LGBTQI2S people. By signing the pledge, organizations, governments and long-term care providers are agreeing to prioritize the needs of older and ageing LGBTQI2S people as well as provide them with the necessary supports and resources by implementing policies, programs, and services that protect their rights.

The [pledge](#) emphasizes among other things, the need to **recognize the full enjoyment of all human rights of older LGBTQI persons without any form of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, diverse bodies, sex characteristics, and HIV status**. It also outlines the necessity of **pursuing collaboration** with agencies and organizations that serve and address the needs of communities that intersect with the older LGBTQI person population.

About Egale Canada

Egale Canada works to improve the lives of LGBTQI2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and Two Spirit) people in Canada and to enhance the global response to LGBTQI2S issues. Egale achieves this by informing policy, inspiring cultural change and promoting human rights and inclusion through research, education and community engagement. Egale also works to provide the LGBTQI2S community in Canada with access to essential services including counseling through Egale Youth OUTreach and crisis as well as transitional housing through the Egale Centre. Egale’s vision is a Canada, and ultimately a world, without homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and all other forms of oppression so that every person can achieve their full potential, free from hatred and bias.

About NSAC

Egale’s National Seniors Advisory Council (NSAC) is a group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and Two Spirit older and ageing people and allies from across Canada working to improve the quality of life of older LGBTQI2S people. The council oversees the Community Engagement Consult for LGBTQI2S seniors and holds the organization accountable to the diversity of the LGBTQI2S community. By fostering nationwide partnerships, NSAC provides opportunities for Egale to identify and support on-the-ground work of local organizations across Canada.

About The 519

The 519 is a City of Toronto agency, a registered charity and an LGBTQ2S community centre with an innovative model of Service, Space and Leadership. We are committed to the health, happiness and full participation of LGBTQ2S communities in Toronto and beyond through our programs, services, capacity-building initiatives and advocacy.

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