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December 16, 2019

VIA EMAIL: Melanie.Joly@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Mélanie Joly

Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

To The Honourable Mélanie Joly:

Re: Ministerial Mandate Letter

Egale Canada would like to extend our sincere congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages. We believe that this Ministry has tremendous potential to positively impact the LGBTQI2S community in Canada.

Egale Canada is the only national LGBTQI2S organization in Canada. We work to improve the lives of LGBTQI2S persons and to enhance the global response to LGBTQI2S issues by informing public policy, inspiring cultural change, and promoting human rights and inclusion through research, education, and community engagement.

We understand that you have personally advocated on behalf of sexual and gender minorities in Canada. As the former Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, you made it clear that diversity and inclusion is a top priority for the Government of Canada:

Our LGBTQ2 communities contribute to making Canada one of the most open and welcoming societies in the world. This initiative will solidify Canada's position as a leader in LGBTQ2-friendly tourism by improving business practices and teaching the benefits of LGBTQ2 inclusion. The diversity of Canadians has shaped our country into a strong and inclusive society.¹

We want to thank you for supporting our community and for advocating on behalf of the human dignity and equality of LGBTQI2S persons in Canada and around the world.

¹ Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, "Canada continues to be a leader as one of the world's most inclusive destinations", *Cision*, 08 February 2019, online: *Cision* <<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/canada-continues-to-be-a-leader-as-one-of-the-world-s-most-inclusive-destinations-837574996.html>>.



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We are encouraged by this Government's commitment to work with the LGBTQI2S community. As I am sure you are aware, in November 2017, the Prime Minister formally apologized for nearly four decades of "systemic oppression, criminalization, and violence"² against the LGBTQI2S community in Canada. During this apology, we were relieved to hear that the Prime Minister understands that "there is still much work to do"³ to eradicate LGBTQI2S discrimination in Canada.

We applaud the Prime Minister's decision to disclose *mandate letters* to the public. We agree that by doing so, this Government has taken steps to ensure "the most open and accessible government possible."⁴ We have read your *mandate letter* and are encouraged by the following priorities that have been identified by the Prime Minister:

- i. Lead the development of a renewed framework for regional economic development that is aligned with our Government's overall economic plan and responsive to the unique opportunities and challenges of Canadians and communities across the country, including supporting the RDAs as conveners of federal departments and agencies and as trusted resources for businesses, entrepreneurs and community organizations.
- ii. Build on the new Federal Tourism Growth Strategy that encourages tourism as an economic driver for the regions, including Indigenous tourism. This includes the creation of a Tourism Community Infrastructure Fund to invest \$100 million in the local needs of communities that rely on tourism, over the next four years.⁵

We welcome the initiatives undertaken by the Government of Canada to develop an economic plan that is mindful of the "unique opportunities and challenges of Canadians and communities across the country".⁶ But we are mindful of the fact that an economic development plan must be structured in a manner that is inclusive and equal for all Canadians. We urge the Government of Canada to adopt an intersectional approach toward economic development that is considerate of the multiple elements of identity

² Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, "Remarks by Prime Minister Trudeau to apologize to LGBTQ2 Canadians", 28 November 2017, online: Government of Canada <<https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2017/11/28/remarks-prime-minister-justin-trudeau-apologize-lgbtq2-canadians>>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, "Prime Minister releases new ministerial mandate letters", 28 August 2018, online: Government of Canada <<https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2018/08/28/prime-minister-releases-new-ministerial-mandate-letters>>.

⁵ Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, "Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages Mandate Letter", 13 December 2019, online: Government of Canada <<https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/minister-economic-development-and-official-languages-mandate-letter>>.

⁶ *Ibid.*



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that contribute to people's experience of violence and discrimination. The Government of Canada must recognize that sex, race, ethnicity, attraction, gender identity, gender expression, class, and ability play an important role in whether a person will be included in the workforce, and by extension, whether they will be considered as part of an economic action plan. We trust that your Ministry will ensure that its Regional Development Agencies are equipped with the tools needed to ensure that Canada's economic development plan does not leave anyone behind.

We believe that human rights protection requires constant and diligent supervision, and we feel responsible to ensure that the Government of Canada does not waver from the commitments made in November 2017, nor those stated in your *mandate letter*.

Egale Canada has developed an expertise on LGBTQI2S human rights issues. Since our inception in 1986, we have intervened in 13 applications before the Supreme Court of Canada and more than 25 equality-seeking legal proceedings in lower courts.

We believe strongly in equality and inclusivity for all Canadians, and would kindly request to be consulted on the LGBTQI2S issues that fall within your mandate as Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages. **Please take this letter as a formal request for a meeting with you, and members of your Ministry, to discuss Egale Canada's National Action Plan for a more LGBTQI2S inclusive Canada.**

We hope to work closely with you, and your Ministry, on the issues that matter deeply to us all.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Helen Kennedy'.

Helen Kennedy
Executive Director
Egale Canada