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December 16, 2019

**VIA EMAIL:** [Maryam.Monsef@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Maryam.Monsef@parl.gc.ca)

**The Honourable Maryam Monsef**

Minister of Rural Economic Development  
Minister for Women and Gender Equality  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

To The Honourable Maryam Monsef:

**Re: Ministerial Mandate Letter**

Egale Canada would like to extend our sincere congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Rural Economic Development and for Women and Gender Equality. 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 share your belief “that all Canadians, regardless of gender – or political affiliation – deserve an equal and fair chance at success”<sup>1</sup> and applaud the work you, and the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality, have done to advance gender equity and eradicate gender-based violence<sup>2</sup> in Canada and around the world.

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”<sup>3</sup> against the LGBTQI2S community in Canada. During this apology, we were

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<sup>1</sup> Maryam Monsef, “Maryam Monsef: There is no Liberal form of feminism. There is simply feminism”, *Maclean's*, 13 July 2018 online: *Maclean's* <<https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/maryam-monsef-there-is-no-liberal-form-of-feminism-there-is-simply-feminism/>>.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada, *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*, June 2017, online: Government of Canada <<https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/index-en.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, “Remarks by Prime Minister Trudeau to apologize to LGBTQ2 Canadians”, 28 November 2017, online: Government of Canada



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relieved to hear that the Prime Minister understands that “there is still much work to do”<sup>4</sup> 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.”<sup>5</sup> We have read your *mandate letter* and are encouraged by the following priorities that have been identified by the Prime Minister:

- i. Continue to establish and strengthen your important department, including by renewing our commitment to a Federal Plan for Gender Equality, a strategy built on the Gender Results Framework and other international agreements.
- ii. Continue to work with the Minister of Finance and work with the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth to improve the quality and scope of GBA+ in future budgets.
- iii. Make additional investments, with the support of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, to build on the foundation laid by the Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence and move forward to develop a National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, with a focus on ensuring that anyone facing gender-based violence has reliable and timely access to protection and services.
- iv. Work to sustain historic Government funding commitments to Canadian women's organizations and equality-seeking groups, with a particular focus on vulnerable women, including Indigenous women, women with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ2 communities and newcomer, racialized and migrant women.
- v. Support the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development in continuing work on gender equality abroad, including working with the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council and on global feminist initiatives.

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<<https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2017/11/28/remarks-prime-minister-justin-trudeau-apologize-lgbtq2-canadians>>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> 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>>.



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- vi. Continue to collaborate with women's movements, organizations, experts and advocates on matters of public policy relating to women and gender equality.
- vii. Support community action to tackle systemic barriers impeding women's progress, while recognizing and addressing the diverse experiences of gender and inequality across the country.

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*.

We must stress that the G7 Advisory Council Report, *Make Gender Inequality History*, continuously notes that "LGBTQI2 and indigenous women" are particularly vulnerable to experiences of violence, poverty, and discrimination.<sup>6</sup> We urge you to consider how this binary, additive approach to LGBTQI2S inclusion in policy continues to limit our analysis of gender-based violence and discrimination to the experiences of women and contributes to the erasure of gender diversity, both in Canada, and across the world. Mobilizing expansive language to address gender inequity simultaneously provides the opportunity to critically engage with your mandate to consider boys and men, understanding their roles as essential to the eradication of violence and inequity that women and gender-diverse people continue to face in Canada.

We call on you to encourage the use of gender expansive language across your work in the ministry, work with women's movement organizations, and in your global advocacy work. This is not to say that we are asking for you to move away from highlighting women's experiences of violence, as women continue to experience staggering inequalities. We ask instead that your policies, platforms and actions reflect that women's experiences of violence are a grave consequence, but not the only consequence of upholding harmful, binary gendered logics across our societies. If we are to *Make Gender Inequality History*, we must challenge all of the ways that that history, or legacy, is upheld by our limited approach to challenging gender norms.

Your mandate at this time specifically recognizes your engagement with LGBTQI2 people as it pertains to the sustained funding of NGOs. This does demonstrate that your ministry can ensure that work to support LGBTQI2S people in Canada may be undertaken by members of the LGBTQI2S community ourselves.

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<sup>6</sup> See "Make Gender Inequality History", *Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*, 2018, online: <<http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/summit/2018charlevoix/Recommendations-by-the-Gender-Equality-Advisory-Council.pdf>>.



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We do trust that you will consider LGBTQI2S issues across your mandate - from addressing the community's unique experiences of violence and isolation in rural areas, to the meaningful inclusion of transphobic violence and harassment across your work with the National Action Plan on Gender-based Violence. We hope that you consider the unique needs of LGBTQI2S people in Canada across all of your duties and projects. LGBTQI2S people across Canada are relying on you to do work that is reflective of our needs, and that prioritize our safety.

Egale Canada has developed a **National Action Plan** for a more LGBTQI2S inclusive Canada. We urge the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality to consider some of the **recommendations** contained in this plan, namely:

- **Include** a range of gender identity options in the upcoming census and within the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and the General Social Survey (GSS), including non-binary options, so that population level data related to hate crimes will reflect LGBTQI2S peoples' experience. This inclusion should be a key part of the federal government's National Gender Based Violence strategy.
- **Provide** funding for programs and services that specifically address violence experienced by vulnerable members of the LGBTQI2S community, especially racialized and disabled trans and gender diverse communities.

Egale Canada has developed an expertise on LGBTQI2S 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 Women and Gender Equality. **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 "Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helen Kennedy  
Executive Director  
Egale Canada