



## **OPEN LETTER**

July 2, 2020

# **Egale Canada demands the removal of LGBTQI2S exhibits from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights**

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault,  
Minister of Canadian Heritage  
Email: Steven.Guilbeault@parl.gc.ca

Pauline Rafferty,  
Chair of the Board, Interim President and CEO  
Canadian Museum for Human Rights;  
Email: pauline.rafferty@humanrights.ca

Dear Minister and Chair:

In recent weeks, there have been many terrible and unthinkable events uncovered at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR), all of them equally excruciating for Canadians to witness and experience. One of these events extended beyond museum staff and the internal workings at CMHR to impact the community and Canada's human rights history in a very visceral manner. The covering up and hiding of exhibits about LGBTQI2S human rights is shameful, disgraceful, and is blatant discrimination toward sexual, gender identity and expression minorities.

The CMHR was established to give a voice to those who have suffered and who continue to suffer discrimination and human rights violations in Canada. It was created to share our truth, stories of success and the rights that our community, and many of you reading this here today, have fought for and achieved.

Last year marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the partial decriminalization of homosexuality. Since 1969, our community has won many court battles and strived to create a more inclusive culture. From ending discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation to achieving marriage equality Canada-wide in 2005, adding gender expression and gender identity as protected grounds to the Canadian Human Rights Act, and the Federal Apology for years of state-sponsored systemic oppression targeting LGBTQI2S public servants and military personnel. We have collectively fought for every right our community has today, and we are still fighting.

It is unthinkable that our highest institution for human rights has been hiding our truth for almost as long as it has existed and that they have gotten away with it for so long. Having only opened in 2014, the CMHR has admitted to hiding LGBTQI2S history upon

request until 2017 (and likely longer). If we know anything about discrimination, it's that it doesn't end with policy, that is merely a starting point.

The recent [apology](#) from CMHR executives and proposed actions are a starting point. However, given the displays of discrimination that have come out of CMHR, Egale is demanding the immediate removal of all LGBTQI2S content. The CMHR, in our eyes, has lost the privilege of hosting exhibits on behalf of the LGBTQI2S community and lost our trust when it comes to ensuring our history and our voices are justly shared

The lack of leadership and shameful behaviour from this institution has left us with the painful reminder of just how much work our community has left to do – from courts to culture – If we are to create a Canada and a world where everyone can achieve their full potential free from hatred and bias.

**We will not be silenced.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kennedy". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Helen Kennedy  
Executive Director  
Egale Canada