

Open Letter: All Levels of Government in Canada have a Responsibility to Combat the Rise in Anti-2SLGBTQI Hate

March 28, 2023

Around the world, societies are bearing witness to an unprecedented and exponential rise in anti-2SLGBTQI, hate-fueled, and gender-critical movements. Unfortunately, Canada has been no exception in this regard. There is a growing reactionary movement in Canada threatening the safety, freedoms, and rights of 2SLGBTQI people, especially those who are Two-Spirit, trans, nonbinary, and/or gender non-conforming (2STNBGN).

From coast to coast to coast, 2SLGBTQI community events such as drag story times are being protested, disrupted, and even cancelled. Transphobia and homophobia are spreading through secondary and post-secondary schools from board meetings to on-campus speaking engagements; at one school, the Pride flag was set on fire. The message could not be more clear – our 2SLGBTQI communities are under attack.

It's no longer acceptable to stand by and watch as the safety of 2SLGBTQI people dissipates under the weight of rising anti-2SLGBTQI protests, discrimination and hate across Canada. The time has come for all levels of government to take concrete actions to protect the safety, rights, and freedoms of 2SLGBTQI people.

Recommendations for Municipal Governments

- 1) Engage with local 2SLGBTQI communities and with the people organizing 2SLGBTQI events in public spaces like libraries, parks, and community centres. Recognize that 2SLGBTQI people in every single municipality in Canada are affected by the rise in hate.
- 2) Use your government's authority to pass bylaws that promote the safety and well-being of residents to create protections for 2SLGBTQI community events, particularly for drag performances. Be aware that large Pride events like annual marches have been the target of threats of violence.

- a. Enact a buffer zone for anti-2SLGBTQI protests that keeps them at least 100m away from 2SLGBTQI community spaces and events.
 - b. Consider enacting a street harassment or similar bylaw to deter harassment based on protected characteristics in public places.
 - c. Enforce existing bylaws when the municipal right of way is being blocked by protesters.
- 3) Employ a multi-pronged approach in combatting hate, including through public awareness campaigns on homophobic and transphobic misinformation.
 - 4) Ensure that bylaw enforcement is equitable and proportionate. Counter-protesters and people defending their communities should not be punished under laws meant to deter hatred.

Recommendations for the Federal Government

Every level of government is responsible for protecting the people and communities in its jurisdiction. In response to the last several years' rise in hatred of marginalized groups, the federal government promised to develop a National Action Plan on Combatting Hate. On International Women's Day 2023, Egale Canada along with hundreds of other civil society organizations from across the country signed a [statement](#) calling on the Government of Canada to ensure the inclusion of trans communities in the National Action Plan on Combatting Hate and to allocate resources to fight transphobic hatred.

In addition to the calls in the statement, we also urge the federal government to:

- 1) Provide an update on the progress to date and the timeline for launching the National Action Plan on Combatting Hate.
- 2) Involve 2SLGBTQI and other community organizations in the implementation strategy for the action plan.
- 3) Allocate funding for 2SLGBTQI and community organizations to support the implementation of the action plan.

For very good reason, members of 2SLGBTQI communities and allies across Canada are afraid, and they are frustrated by the pace of the government response to what is already a dire situation. It's time for all levels of government in Canada to take action both to counter the rise in anti-trans and anti-2SLGBTQI hate as well as to protect the safety, rights, and freedoms of 2SLGBTQI people and communities.