



May 17, 2009

International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

On May 17 th, the Canadian Labour movement stands in solidarity with lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities and affirms our ongoing commitment to fight against homophobia and transphobia.

2009 marks the 40th anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada. Until 1969, it was a crime to be gay or lesbian in this country.

Over the last forty years, we have seen significant progress in Canada. After decades of political and legal battles, gays and lesbians won important protection against discrimination in human rights law and legal recognition of same-sex couples and equal marriage. The Canadian trade union movement has been a strong and solid supporter of the lgbt community's struggle for equality.

Despite these important victories, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans members of our communities still face the reality of homophobia and transphobia in their daily lives. Gay and trans bashing is still a frequent occurrence. Trans people have yet to win clear protection in human rights law. They face overt discrimination in the workplace and society. Their right to access necessary medical procedures is precarious at best.

We recognize that legal rights do not ensure the full dignity and equality that Canadians in all our diversity deserve. We know that other communities have won legal rights over the years, yet continue to face discrimination. Women won the vote in 1918, but still face a .30 cents per dollar wage gap compared to men. Aboriginal peoples still struggle to enforce treaties and for housing, jobs, health care, and water. People of colour experience racism on the job and in our communities. Immigrants are relegated to the lowest paid, most precarious jobs regardless of work experience or education.

These are tough times. We need to ensure that human rights are not put on the back burner with the economy in crisis. The economic downturn has very real repercussions for marginalized groups. Women, Aboriginal people and people of colour are often the first to be laid off and can't find new jobs. People with disabilities find it even more difficult to find work and the struggle for workplace accommodation is harder. Lesbians, gays, bisexual and trans people face increased harassment at work. When tensions run high, we know who gets targeted.

On this May 17th as we fight against the devastation of the economic downturn, we also firmly challenge homophobia and transphobia. Now and throughout the year, we must work together in solidarity against all forms of discrimination because we truly understand that an injury to one is an injury to all.

SG:gna*cope225

V:\2-Operations\05-Human-Rights-and-Equality\20505 - Womens and Human Rights\09 - Solidarity and Pride Working Group\2009\May17Statement-EN.