Statement

UNIFOR
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Recognizing the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

May 12, 2016

Unifor calls on everyone to join in recognizing May 17th as the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. This annual equity day serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggles of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified and queer (LGBTQ) communities and it offers an opportunity to renew and strengthen our commitment to the struggle for justice.

Homophobia and transphobia continue to take hold in both explicit ways, and in ways that are subtle, discreet and often invisible. Although in Canada we have made tremendous gains in legal, societal and workplace rights, homophobia and transphobia continue to prevent LGBTQ people from living full and equal lives. This is why Unifor calls on all members to speak out and stop the hate towards LGBTQ workers, and communities.

Despite the legalization of same-sex marriage and various global initiatives that promote equality for LGBTQ people, homophobia and transphobia are still deeply ingrained in our everyday behaviours, language and policies, and LGBTQ people's access to equality and equity continues to be undermined.

Trans people in Canada continue to be at the forefront of the struggle for equality. Currently the only provinces and territories that explicitly protect gender identity and gender expression in their human rights codes are Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Prince Edward Island. Gender Identity is explicitly covered Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. In all other provinces trans rights are implicit, but not explicitly covered in Human Right Codes. Federally the Charter or related human rights legislation does not explicitly cover gender identity or gender expression. The current Liberal Government has indicated support for bill C-204, that would amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to include gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds of discrimination. A majority of Conservative Senators have been opposed to gender expression being included. Now is the time to speak out and demand inclusion of trans rights at the Federal level.

While there are some countries around the world that are regrettably choosing to re-criminalize homosexuality, Canada can be proud of the steps taken to make the lives of LGBTQ Canadians better. Even though the steps sometimes are small, each one is a means to advance human rights. With the continuing support of allies we can end homophobia and transphobia.

On May 17th, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer communities, along with allies, will take a public stand in support of the rights of LGBTQ people. Together, our collective efforts, as Unifor members acting in solidarity across Canada for the pursuit of dignity and equality for all LGBTQ people, we can continue to make a difference.

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