



# Beyond Platitudes:

A Bold 2SLGBTQ+  
Agenda for the 2021  
Federal Election



Wisdom2Action  
Savoir pour agir

# Introduction

With staggering rates of homelessness, poverty, discrimination and violence, 2SLGBTQ+ communities are in a constant state of crisis and struggling to survive. After decades of government neglect, intentional discrimination and chronic underfunding, our communities have demonstrated their incredible resilience through our singular commitment to keeping ourselves, our friends and our families alive.

With a federal election on the horizon, it's time to move beyond platitudes and embrace a fundamental commitment to justice, health, safety and liberation for 2SLGBTQ+ communities. It's time for our federal government, political parties, candidates and elected officials to put 2SLGBTQ+ issues on the federal agenda. No more piecemeal commitments. No more symbolic gestures. No more delays. We have the capacity to deliver real change for 2SLGBTQ+ communities. We can end the violence, protect human rights, and can create a world wherein all 2SLGBTQ+ people survive and thrive.

We are calling on all federal political parties, party leaders and candidates to commit to substantive policy change and significant funding to deliver change for 2SLGBTQ+ communities. We are calling on all federal political parties to raise the bar on 2SLGBTQ+ issues during and beyond Election 2021.

In this publication, we have outlined key activities we believe must inform federal and political party leadership on 2SLGBTQ+ issues, alongside 8 key policy proposals that we believe political parties should commit to for Election 2021.

## Why Us & Why Now?

Wisdom2Action (W2A) is an LGBTQ+-owned and operated social enterprise and consulting firm. Through W2A's commitment to anti-oppression, community engagement and evidence-based practice, we help civil society organizations and governments facilitate change and strengthen communities.

As a firm, we have had the immense privilege of working with many local and national 2SLGBTQ+ organizations in Canada to lend our expertise to their work. We have witnessed the immeasurable knowledge and talent of these organizations and

their teams as they have responded to the urgent needs of 2SLGBTQ+ people in their local communities and across Canada.

Our team and our work is grounded in the movement for 2SLGBTQ+ justice and liberation. Our founder was on the front lines of the marriage equality fight in the early 2000s. Outside of their work with W2A, our associates support advocacy and community care for 2SLGBTQ+ people in their own communities. We are involved in trans health advocacy, fighting to ban conversion therapy, supporting LGBTQI+ refugees and so much more.

Through work and community leadership, we have a deep appreciation for and understanding of the issues facing 2SLGBTQ+ communities in Canada. We have witnessed the crises impacting our communities, and are intimately familiar—as 2SLGBTQ+ people ourselves—with the discrimination that continues to plague our communities. However, our perspectives are not comprehensive, nor reflective of the full diversity of 2SLGBTQ+ communities. We are limited by our respective experiences and privileges.

We publish this report in recognition of the crises in our communities, whose urgency we see and feel, and the desperate efforts of 2SLGBTQ+ community leaders and organizations going above and beyond every day to support 2SLGBTQ+ people. Our recommendations are derived from our experience working in community and supporting national 2SLGBTQ+ advocacy and public policy efforts. Through these recommendations, we hope to encourage all political parties and candidates to change the narrative on 2SLGBTQ+ issues and put real solutions in place to promote and protect the human rights of 2SLGBTQ+ people.

In Election 2021, we can move beyond platitudes and towards justice for 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

## Endorsements

This publication is endorsed by two leading 2SLGBTQ+ organizations in Canada: [The Enchanté Network](#) and the [Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity](#).

The Enchanté Network is a national network connecting and supporting over 150 pride centres and 2SLGBTQ+ service providers across Canada.

The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity is a national 2SLGBTQ+ organization working to empower gender and sexually diverse communities through education, research, and advocacy.

# The State of 2SLGBTQ+ Communities in Canada

2SLGBTQ+ communities in Canada continue to face devastating disparities in terms of health and safety.

2SLGBTQ+ Canadians are [more likely](#) to experience violence and sexual assault. As a result of systemic transphobia, [84%](#) of trans people in Canada avoid at least one public space to protect themselves from harassment and discrimination based on their gender identity and expression.

We also know that 2SLGBTQ+ people are [more likely to live in poverty](#). Those living at the intersections of systematically oppressed identities and social determinants of health—such as trans women of colour, LGBTQ+ newcomers, or 2SLGBTQ+ people in rural communities—are especially vulnerable. Between [25 and 40% of homeless youth in Canada identify as 2SLGBTQ+](#) and [40%](#) of trans and gender diverse people in Canada are living in a low-income household.

2SLGBTQ+ communities also experience higher rates of mental health concerns. 2SLGBTQ+ people are [21%](#) more likely to report their mental health to be poor or fair, [25%](#) more likely to experience suicidal ideation, as well as [25%](#) more likely to have been diagnosed with a mood or anxiety disorder than their heterosexual, cisgender peers. Within 2SLGBTQ+ communities, QTBIPOC have mental health needs [5%](#) higher compared to non-racialized 2SLGBTQ+ people, and [16%](#) higher compared to heterosexual, cisgender non-racialized people. Similarly, [56%](#) of trans and gender diverse people in Canada rated their mental health as fair or poor and [31%](#) have seriously considered suicide.

## A Call for Meaningful Political Leadership and Discussion on 2SLGBTQ+ Issues

In the previous federal election, 2SLGBTQ+ issues were rarely discussed. Rather than substantive dialogue on making this country better for 2SLGBTQ+ people, candidates and party leaders across the political spectrum utilized 2SLGBTQ+ issues to score cheap political points and further partisan agendas.

To this day, not all political party platforms include specific commitments to 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Even within those parties that do respond to the specific needs and issues of 2SLGBTQ+ people, platform commitments are consistently insignificant and insufficient. Amid multiple crises, token attention isn't enough. All

political parties should publicize their specific commitments to improving the rights, safety and well-being of 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

It is equally important to ensure 2SLGBTQ+ issues, needs and priorities are reflected throughout their platform. We need a national housing strategy—one that responds to the needs of 2SLGBTQ+ people. We need action on universal and accessible healthcare—action that addresses healthcare barriers for 2SLGBTQ+ people. We need to see 2SLGBTQ+ issues reflected both within 2SLGBTQ+-specific commitments and throughout party election platforms.

After the last election, the number of openly out 2SLGBTQ+ Members of Parliaments decreased from 5 to 4. While a record number of 2SLGBTQ+ candidates ran for office across all parties, it didn't improve the actual number of elected 2SLGBTQ+ people. This is due in part to the tendency to push marginalized and underrepresented candidates—2SLGBTQ+ people included—to unelectable ridings where the overall likelihood of a candidate from a given party to succeed in a given riding is extremely improbable. Political parties can and must demonstrate their commitment to bringing diverse voices into the House of Commons by supporting 2SLGBTQ+ candidates within their party and encouraging 2SLGBTQ+ people to run for office in ridings where they have a realistic chance at success.

In 2021, there is no excuse to omit 2SLGBTQ+ issues from political party platforms or to avoid substantive debate and policy proposals on issues of importance to 2SLGBTQ+ people in Canada. This election, we call on all political parties to raise the bar on 2SLGBTQ+ issues in Canada.

## **8 Essential 2SLGBTQ+ Policy Commitments Within and Beyond Election 2021**

2SLGBTQ+ people exist in all communities and all regions across Canada. Our issues and needs are complex, and our struggle for rights, health and safety, for a world free from homophobic and transphobic violence obligates an intersectional response centering those in our communities most impacted by violence and oppression. Effective federal leadership on 2SLGBTQ+ issues must embrace the full diversity of our communities.

While the variety of issues facing our communities is seemingly innumerable, there are key areas wherein the federal government and Canadian political parties can enact change and deliver on health and justice for 2SLGBTQ+ communities. These policy proposals are not reflective of the full diversity or needs of our communities, but they are viable interventions to strengthen health and safety in our communities. They are not the end, but possible beginnings.

## 1. \$25M Annual Investment in Funding for 2SLGBTQ+ Community Organizations through the LGBTQ Capacity Fund

2SLGBTQ+ community organizations are the lifeblood of 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Ranging from grassroots collectives to vibrant community centres, these organizations are on the frontlines responding to the crises facing our communities. From housing programs to counselling services to arts programs, 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations are supporting our communities to survive and thrive.

Unfortunately, these organizations have suffered from decades of neglect from all levels of government. Instead of well-resourced community, health, and social services for 2SLGBTQ+ communities, we have organizations going above and beyond while working on shoe-string budgets to support 2SLGBTQ+ people.

In May 2021, the Enchante Network [called on the federal government](#) to commit \$25M per year in core operational funding for 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Through a commitment to a minimum of \$25M a year in core operational funding for 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations, the federal government can stabilize the 2SLGBTQ+ service sector and enable these organizations to scale up their services and better address the crises in our communities.

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations is essential to promoting health, wellness and safety for 2SLGBTQ+ communities. We are proud to join the Enchante Network in calling for core annual funding for our communities.

## 2. A Federal Conversion Therapy Ban and National Strategy to End Conversation Therapy

Conversion therapy is alive and well in Canada. [An estimated 11% of trans people](#) and as many as [47,000 gay, bi, trans, Two Spirit or queer men in Canada have been subjected to conversion therapy](#). This horrific, torturous, scientifically discredited and deeply traumatic practice persists in Canada and continues to enact harm on 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

Alongside [No Conversion Canada](#) and conversion therapy survivors across Canada, we are calling for a federal ban and national strategy to end conversion therapy.

Through a federal ban, the government can take a significant step forward in eradicating this horrifying practice, but legislative change is insufficient to address insidious practices of conversion therapy. Through a national strategy to end conversion therapy and support survivors, the government can provide mental health and community supports to survivors of conversion therapy, introduce educational programs to raise awareness about these unethical practices and help community, health and social services provide more inclusive supports to individuals from 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

### 3. Enact Full Decriminalization of Sex Work

Sex worker rights are human rights. Current federal legislation entrenches discrimination against sex workers by criminalizing almost all aspects of sex work, while not technically criminalizing the act in and of itself. Within the current legislative structure, sex workers are rendered more vulnerable to violence and exploitation, and are often unable to access mainstream supports due to a fear of criminalization and discrimination. For a myriad of reasons, many 2SLGBTQ+ people engage in sex work. Movements for 2SLGBTQ+ liberation have long been guided and led by 2SLGBTQ+ sex workers. Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ communities obligates us to work in solidarity with and alongside sex workers toward our collective liberation.

Through the repeal of existing legislation and the introduction of a new bill modeled on decriminalization and created through deep consultations with sex worker advocacy and support groups, the federal government can affirm the rights of sex workers and ensure sex workers have access to necessary legal protections and community and social services.

### 4. Universal and Accessible Gender-Affirming Healthcare

Access to trans healthcare varies significantly from one province to the next. Of all provinces and territories in Canada, [only the Yukon](#) has a trans health coverage policy that reflects international best practices and aligns with recognized standards on trans health care. Currently, many trans people are forced to pay tens of thousands of dollars out of pocket—an unimaginably difficult task for a community facing staggering rates of homelessness and poverty—to cover medically necessary healthcare.

Through the Canada Health Transfer, the federal government can incentivize the expansion of universal health coverage to include trans and 2SLGBTQ+ health issues. Through federal leadership and incentivization, provinces and territories can come together to build on successes such as the Government of Yukon's comprehensive trans health coverage, and align trans health coverage with international best practices.

Universal and accessible trans healthcare and 2SLGBTQ+-inclusive mainstream health services are essential to the health of 2SLGBTQ+ people in Canada. It's time to deliver on universal healthcare for 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

## **5. Federal Ban on Invasive, Medically Unnecessary Surgeries on Intersex People**

Canada has violated the rights of intersex children through a legal exemption allowing invasive, non-consensual and medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex babies. Criminal Code Section 268(3) allows for parents and medical practitioners to undertake nonconsensual, cosmetic surgeries on intersex infants. These surgeries often result in lifelong physical and psychological pain, amounting to Torture or Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment under the UN Convention Against Torture.

Surgeries on intersex children have been condemned by major human rights groups such as the United Nations, Physicians for Human Rights, and Human Rights Watch, as well as every intersex-led organization in the world.

Canada must adhere to international human rights standards by amending the Criminal Code, in consultation with Intersex people in Canada, to prohibit non-consensual medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex children. It is time to repeal Criminal Code s.268(3).

## **6. Full Implementation of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Sub-Working Group MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+ National Action Plan Final Report**

Health, safety and justice for 2SLGBTQ+ communities obligates a critical analysis of the intersections between colonialism, white supremacy, homophobia and transphobia. [This report](#), authored by Percy Lezard, Zoe

Prefontaine, Dawn-Marie Cederwall, Corrina Sparrow, Sylvia Maracle, Albert Beck and Albert McLeod, provides concrete and comprehensive recommendations for the federal government on supporting health, safety, justice and liberation for Two Spirit and 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous communities.

Recommendations include implementation of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, greater investments in Indigenous-specific 2SLGBTQ+ programs and services, affirming and supporting Two Spirit and 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous histories, and building the capacity of community, health, and social service providers to provide inclusive and affirming care to Two Spirit and 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous peoples.

## 7. Eradicate The Anti-2SLGBTQ+ Blood Ban

Despite numerous commitments to end the blood ban, which excludes sexually active gay and bisexual men, and many trans people, from donating blood, the federal government has continued to entrench discrimination against 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Despite absolutely no legitimate or scientific rationale for the ban, the government has failed to change their policies to ensure a truly inclusive approach to blood donations in Canada.

When we rely on sexual orientation or gender identity for eligibility, it is inherently discriminatory. Rather than eliminate an entire base of potential donors based on their sexuality and/or gender, Canada must shift towards a gender-neutral screening process that examines behaviour and risk.

## 8. Full Implementation of the HESA Report on LGBTQ2+ Health

In June 2019, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health (HESA) conducted [a study on 2SLGBTQ+ health in Canada](#). This study, which brought together briefs and testimonials from 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations, advocates, researchers and service providers, proposed 23 ground-breaking recommendations to advance LGBTQIA+ health in Canada.

These recommendations provide a blueprint for substantive federal leadership on 2SLGBTQ+ health issues, which includes, for example, working with the provinces and territories to establish uniform coverage of gender-affirming

surgeries and other medical procedures for trans people, and creating new federal health funding programs for organizations focused on improving 2SLGBTQ+ health.

Unfortunately, this groundbreaking report, praised by many 2SLGBTQ+ organizations as a comprehensive roadmap to 2SLGBTQ+ health equity, received minimal attention when it was launched and has collected dust in the two years since. 2SLGBTQ+ health has not been a priority for this federal government, and must be emphasized during and beyond Election 2021.

Full implementation of the HESA report is an essential step forward to improve 2SLGBTQ+ health and well-being in Canada.

## Recommended Further Reading:

- [2SLGBTQQIA+ Sub-Working Group MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+ National Action Plan - Final Report](#)
- [The Enchanté Network call to action for \\$25M a year for 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations](#)
- [Key recommendations for federal and provincial/territorial sex work law reform, by the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform](#)
- [Egale Canada call to action on ending medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex children](#)
- [The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity Report and Survey on the LGBTQ2 Action Plan](#)

# Thank You

We are deeply appreciative of the 2SLGBTQ+ community leaders and community organizations that work each and everyday to support our communities. We are thankful to our partners, team members and supporters, who have contributed to this report and helped advance 2SLGBTQ+ issues in this country.

During and beyond the 2021 federal election, we are committed to advocating by, for and with 2SLGBTQ+ communities in all of their diversity to tackle systemic oppression and promote the health, safety and rights of 2SLGBTQ+ people in Canada and around the world.