



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LGBT COMMUNITY STANDS TOGETHER AGAINST HATE CRIME

Toronto: Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) community will come together in Toronto to launch *Courage in the Face of Hate*, a new initiative by Egale Canada designed to combat the rising incidence of hate crime in Canada motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity.

Hate crimes based on sexual orientation more than doubled in 2008 and increased by another 18% in 2009, according to Statistics Canada. Further, three-quarters of hate crimes against the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) community in Canada are violent, with 63% resulting in physical injury to the victim—far more than any other identifiable group. Notably, the absence of legal protections on the basis of gender identity and expression means that police-reported hate crime data give no indication of the level and severity of hate crimes against trans Canadians.

These numbers stress the need for amplified education, training and prevention initiatives explicitly targeting homophobia and transphobia in our schools and communities. "It is clear that hate crime in Canada is a youth phenomenon," said Helen Kennedy, Executive Director of Egale Canada. "When youth ages 12 to 18 represent the highest volume of both victims and those accused of hate crimes, it is impossible to deny the urgent need for comprehensive anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia measures in every school in Canada."

Courage in the Face of Hate will bring together educators, police services and those directly affected by hate crime to combat the rising trend of LGBT-targeted violence. The program will provide victims of hate crime with a forum in which to share their experiences and connect with other members of the community during focus groups and individual interviews, to be facilitated by Prof. Barbara Perry, an internationally renowned expert in hate- and bias-motivated violence. Using video footage of victims' testimonies to create an educational video and lesson plan for high school students, the project will reach out to youth across the country. By highlighting the human impact of hate and bias, the project will reduce fear and dispel prejudice, thereby decreasing the overall number of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity.

Courage in the Face of Hate will travel across Canada over the coming months to connect with LGBT Canadians from all walks of life.

Egale Canada is Canada's LGBT human rights organization: advancing equality, diversity, education, and justice.

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