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## Equity Matters at Queen's University

Issue: 2; Vol: 2  
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## Message from the Editor

**Dear Queen's University Member:**

Welcome to the second issue of *Equity Matters at Queen's*, our new, bi-monthly electronic newsletter from the Queen's University Equity Office.

This edition's focus is on building inclusive workplaces for members of the LGBTQ community. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ) employees constitute a sizeable and dynamic workforce population and are an important priority in Diversity and Inclusion (D & I) literature. In addition, the Ontario Human Rights code has recently been amended to include the ground *transgendered* in the prohibited grounds of discrimination, although it is important to note that Queen's has included this ground for some time in its internal anti-discrimination policy.

The articles included here help us to consider how to move beyond anti-discrimination policies and ensure our work environments are inclusive of the everyday issues faced by LGBTQ employees. In the "[Review your LGBTQ Policies and Practices](#)" section, a series of questions help us assess the current level of LGBTQ inclusion within our workplaces and provide

**Review your LGBTQ  
policies and  
practices:**

critical points for consideration in the development of future directions. One such direction is highlighted in the "[Equity in the Community](#)" section: we hope to see the designation of gender neutral washrooms at Queen's in order to ensure an inclusive community. For further resources, a suite of D&I practices highlighting cutting-edge LGBTQ inclusion efforts from global organizations in Australia, China and India are available on the Catalyst website at: [Inclusive LGBT Practices](#)

We invite you to share your comments and suggestions for future feature articles on the accomplishments and activities of faculty, staff, students, and alumni of Queen's University relating to employment equity. Please contact us at [equity@queensu.ca](mailto:equity@queensu.ca)

-Ekta Singh, Equity Advisor



- Do you have anti-discrimination statements inclusive of LGBTQ on your department's website? Are they communicated to staff and faculty?
- Do you participate in benchmarking or other forms of evaluation of your department's LGBTQ demographics and inclusiveness?
- Are you aware of transgender-inclusive health care benefits?
- Do you encourage the support of LGBTQ allies in your inclusion practices?
- Do you organize and/or communicate LGBTQ networking or mentoring activities ?
- Are senior managers and administrators knowledgeable in:
  - LGBTQ benefit offerings and how to describe benefits to staff?
  - Managing the concerns of transgender employees transitioning at work?

## Employment Equity "Bits and Bites"

### LGBTQ Terminology: What you need to know

The term "LGBTQ" is useful to refer to individuals in the minority with respect to sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression, but it is important to recognize the diversity of the LGBTQ community. The acronym LGBT is most commonly used in Canada and the United States to address the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered community. The acronym can vary in a number of ways, including GLBT, GLB and can include additional letters such as Q (queer; also questioning) as we have at Queen's, I (intersex), and A (straight ally). It is important to note that terms may evolve over time to reflect changes in thinking and/or preferences within the LGBTQ community. Catalyst (2009) offers the following definitions but also encourages readers to recognize that different language may be used by different people, companies, and countries.



**Sexual identity or orientation.** The terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual all refer to sexual orientation, the emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to individuals of a particular gender (women or men). Critically, these terms do not necessarily refer to sexual practices or behaviours.

**Gender identity and gender expression.** Gender identity is one's inner sense of being a woman or a man, regardless of biological birth sex; gender expression refers to how an individual manifests a sense of femininity or masculinity through appearance, behaviour, grooming, and/or dress. The term transgender and transsexual refer to gender identity and/or expression. At some points in their life, people who are transgender may express and/or identify with the characteristics, roles, behaviours or desires of the gender different from the one they were assigned at birth.

Transsexuals change or seek to change their physical characteristics through surgery or hormone replacement therapy to that of the opposite sex--for example, individuals born as males seek to change their sex to female.

All individuals, regardless of whether or not they identify as LGBTQ, have a sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

### **Breaking down the LGBTQ: Key Terms**

**Lesbian:** A woman whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are primarily to other women.

**Gay:** A woman or man whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are primarily to members of the same gender.

**Bi-sexual:** A person whose emotional, sexual, or romantic attractions are to both men and women.

**Transgender:** People who identify with the characteristics, roles, behaviours, or desires of a gender different from the one they were assigned at birth. Some may use the umbrella term "trans-identified."

**Queer:** A fluid term with numerous meanings. It is commonly used to describe sexual orientation/gender expression/gender identity that does not conform to heterosexual norms.

**Questioning:** Someone who is questioning their gender, sexual identity, or sexual orientation.

**Two spirit:** The term used by contemporary Native Americans and Aboriginal people in Canada to describe a masculine and a feminine spirit living in the same body.

**Straight ally/LGBT Supporter:** An individual who identifies as non-LGBT and who supports the LGBT community in a direct way, such as attending LGBT activities, acting as an executive sponsor, or volunteering at LGBT events.

### **LGBTQ Resources at Queen's:**

**Queer Forum:** an email listserv for Queen's and Kingston LGBT individuals. To join email: [queer-request@lists.queensu.ca](mailto:queer-request@lists.queensu.ca)

**Queen's University Association of Queer Employees (QUAQE)**

[www.queensu.ca/quaqe](http://www.queensu.ca/quaqe)

**Kingston Pride Committee:**

[www.kingstonpride.org](http://www.kingstonpride.org)

**Join Our Mailing List!**



**Out in Kingston:**

[www.outinkingston.org](http://www.outinkingston.org)

**Here and Queer in Kingston: A directory of Queer-Positive Resources:**

[www.queensu.ca/positivespace/kingston.html](http://www.queensu.ca/positivespace/kingston.html)

\*This article uses information from the 2009 Catalyst Report entitled: *Building LGBT-Inclusive Workplaces, Engaging Organizations and Individuals in Change*.

## Equity In Focus:

### Building LGBTQ Inclusive Workplaces



In Canada, a country with legislated human rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals, LGBTQ employees continue to face

workplace barriers that limit career advancement and, therefore, restrict potential contributions to organizational success, according to Catalyst's third report on building LGBTQ-inclusive workplaces, *Building LGBT-Inclusive Workplaces: Engaging Organizations and Individuals in Change (2009)*. The Canadian-based study that surveyed LGBTQ employees across Canada, found that a lack of awareness, which may cause other employees to rely on stereotypes, can lead to a hostile work environment for LGBTQ employees. This included discriminatory behaviours such as inappropriate humour or derogatory language; exclusion from important relationships and advancement opportunities; and a lack of role models.

LGBTQ employees also felt their colleagues, managers, and senior leaders could be more comfortable with them and better informed about the challenges they face at work. Interestingly, LGBTQ women reported less positive relationships with their managers compared to LGBTQ men and non LGBTQ women and men.

The study suggests that since some LGBTQ employees are "invisible" and choose not to disclose or come out, organizations may not fully understand the benefits, needs, and challenges of these employees. It also points out that when LGBTQ employees spend less effort managing disclosure and can focus on their work, both organizations and employees benefit.

## **DO: Recommendations and Practices**

Creating inclusive workplaces takes concerted efforts by organizations. The following paragraphs highlight important elements of programs and practices that foster diversity and inclusion. In addition, it is evident that LGBTQ employees working in organizations with diversity and inclusion policies and practices have a greater career satisfaction and commitment, increased perceptions of fairness, and better relationships with managers and colleagues.

### **1) Identify Organizational Issues Related to LGBTQ Employees**

Organizations should collect internal and external data regarding LGBTQ issues in all facets of the workplace experience. They should also proactively build knowledge about how to support LGBTQ employees. For example, being aware of transgender and transsexual specific health needs.

### **2) Dispel Myths and Stereotypes through Diversity Training**

Diversity training can play an important role in increasing awareness, dispelling myths and stereotypes, and encouraging dialogue about diversity and inclusion, which is beneficial to all employees. For example, IBM Canada has diversity training in all of its offices worldwide; and in its Canadian offices a two-day program *Diversity and Inclusive leadership* is required for all managers and project leaders.

### **3) Communicate the Organization's LGBTQ Policies and Programs Internally and Externally**

Organizations should communicate at all levels the policies and programs that affect LGBTQ employees. They can use varied communication methods such as newsletters, employee handbooks, Intranet pages, and information sessions. Extending communications beyond employees who identify as LGBTQ ensures that information will reach LGBTQ employees who may not be out at work and allows them to gain access to resources without having to come out.

### **4) Help LGBTQ Employees build Employee Resource Groups and Find Mentors**

Past Catalyst research has consistently found that exclusion from networks is a major workplace barrier. LGBTQ employees want to learn from and support each other, and employee resource groups (ERG's) offer them access to potential mentors, role models, and career advancing information. Ensuring that LGBTQ employees have opportunities to meet potential mentors through networking activities supports the development of an organization's talent base.

Diversity and inclusion policies, practices, and programs positively impact LGBTQ employees. Institutions of higher education should leverage broader talent management practices, those designed to develop and advance all employees--to create more positive workplace experiences for LGBTQ employees.

**For information on LGBTQ resources at Queen's University, please visit:**

[The Human Rights Office](#)

[The Equity Office](#)

[The EQUIP Program](#)

[The Postive Space Program](#)

*\*This article has been adapted from Catalyst's (2009) "Building LGBT-Inclusive Workplaces: Engaging Organizations and Individuals in Change"*

## Equity In the Community:



### Gender Neutral Washrooms at Queen's

Jean Pfleiderer  
Sexual and Gender Diversity Advisor  
Queen's Human Rights Office

When you use the washroom, which one do you choose, the Men's or the Women's? For those of us who have no trouble thinking of our gender as precisely the one that was assigned to us at birth, this is an easy question. For those for whom that is not the case, those the Ontario Human Rights Commission describes as "transsexual, transgender and intersex persons, cross-dressers, and other people whose gender identity or expression is, or is seen to be, different from their birth-identified sex," it may be considerably more complicated.

Notwithstanding that potential complication, the Ontario Human Rights Code explicitly states that the right to equal treatment and freedom from discrimination is not infringed by the existence of separate washroom facilities based on sex. That is, it is held to be acceptable, on the ground of public decency, to have separate men's and women's washrooms. And so, how do we equitably serve trans individuals when it comes to this most basic of bodily requirements?

Even before the welcome recent addition to the Ontario Human Rights Code that explicitly affirms the right to equal treatment and freedom from discrimination regardless of one's "gender identity" or "gender expression," the word "sex" in the Code was being interpreted to apply to the trans community, and the washroom question was raised early on. Specifically, the Commission has recognized the situation in which someone is preparing to go through the process of "transitioning" from male to female or from female to male. They noted that not only might someone preparing to transition prefer to begin using the appropriate washroom right away, but that living in the gender to which one is transitioning, including using the appropriate washroom, could be **required** for some period of time prior to sex-reassignment surgery in order for the individual to qualify for the surgery at all. Although the perception of others using the washroom might well be that the transitioning individual was not of the designated gender, the Commission came down on the side of the right of the individual to use the washroom

that accorded with the individual's felt gender.

Having such a right, and asserting it in the face of potentially humiliating and even dangerous responses from others, are, of course, two different things. Further, the right to choose the washroom designated for one's felt gender also presumes that everyone has a felt gender, and that gender is either male or female. As we increasingly are coming to understand, gender identity and presentation are complex and fluid; the "gender binary" is not a sufficiently comprehensive concept.

One response to these concerns is to provide more gender-neutral washrooms. Many such washrooms have been constructed in public places with an eye to accommodating other needs, such as those of parents and children, and of persons with disabilities; in most instances, these would serve the needs of the trans community as well if signage made it clearer that they were available to everyone.

The existence of gender neutral washrooms is a perfect example of how ensuring the rights of one group help make the environment inclusive for everyone. It is important for everyone to do their part to support these initiatives in our community.



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