

## HAPPY 2SLGBTQI+ PRIDE MONTH!

While Pride events are held around the world all throughout the year, June has become known as Pride month globally. What started as a fightback against discrimination and oppression from the police at Stonewall in 1969, famously known as the Stonewall Riots, has grown over the decades to become a month of celebratory and political reflection and actions.

In Canada, forty years ago, we had our own uprising similar to Stonewall when in 1981, Toronto Police raided multiple bathhouses in Toronto, [harassing, beating and arresting a total of 306 people](#). To give some further context to the magnitude of this, the next largest mass detention in Canadian history would be at the G20 summit in Toronto in 2010. 2SLGBTQI+ communities fought back and this history of activism remains alive today in Toronto both at the grassroots level and continuing on at the institutional level through Pride Toronto. Pride has been and always will be political.

Pride month is a time to reflect on both the successes of 2SLGBTQI+ communities and the diverse lives of the 2SLGBTQI+ folks that are a part of our communities. It is also a time for us to individually and collectively look at our own values and beliefs and how we can continue to challenge oppression and empower 2SLGBTQI+ folks to live their fullest, authentic lives.

The Labour movement and 2SLGBTQI+ communities share a long history of working together – both domestically and abroad. In Canada, the Labour movement has consistently shown up for queer communities, in part as a regular supporter of Prides everywhere, but as well, has empowered many 2SLGBTQI+ folks within the movement. The Labour movement has also been supportive of many of the big legislative battles for 2SLGBTQI+ communities. In recent years, this includes the fight to have Trans rights enshrined into law as well as the battle for gay marriage.

COPE Ontario denounces homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, sexism, racism and all the other oppressive -ism's that still plague our wider cultures and communities. COPE Ontario acknowledges that our system and culture is not outside of this and our Union works hard to show that we value this by striving for strong collective agreement equity language that empowers 2SLGBTQI+ workers and protects them in their workplaces as well as supporting 2SLGBTQI+ workers in our ranks. COPE Ontario also firmly believes in supporting grassroots activism in the many communities that make up Ontario.

There are numerous ways to participate and support during Pride month as well as all year round. Here's a non-exhaustive list of ways you can support 2SLGBTQI+ folks and communities:

### **Fly A Pride Flag**

Since being designed by Gilbert Baker in 1978, the rainbow flag has long been a symbol for queer communities. The rainbow flag design has had many variants over the years but after undergoing a redesign by Daniel Quasar in June 2018, the Progress Pride flag, modified to be more inclusive of racialized and Trans communities, has quickly become the modern rainbow flag for 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

While you may not be a part of 2SLGBTQI+ communities, flying a Progress Pride flag is a way to demonstrate allyship with 2SLGBTQI+ communities from wherever you may live. It also lets 2SLGBTQI+ folks living in your neighbourhood that you're supportive and a safer space to go to if they encounter harassment and/or violence.

Recently, [11 Pride flags have been stolen from houses](#) in Burlington reminding us how important it is to show visible solidarity with 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

An important, enduring symbol, raise the Progress Pride flag or post a picture of one up proudly and show your support for 2SLGBTQI+ folks and communities!

### **Be An Active Ally**

Allyship isn't a banner or identity you wear but a practice that is ongoing, evolving and ground in action. Be an active ally. Listen to feedback. Take action.

One key way allies can be active and supportive is to shut down anti-2SLGBTQI+ oppression, harassment and discrimination that is happening in front of you, whether in-person or digitally, rather than leaving the onus on the person(s) being targeted to fend for themselves. Don't be an enabler through your own complacency. Be an active ally - [click here for tips on Bystander Intervention](#).

### **Make The Labour Movement More 2SLGBTQI+ Inclusive And Support 2SLGBTQI+ Workers**

Often, the perspectives and wisdom of 2SLGBTQI+ and other marginalized folks doesn't make it to the elected decision-making level of our Unions which in turn just further entrenches oppression within the Labour movement. Actively work to create space for these perspectives and voices to be heard and included – infuse intersectional equity into all your events and create spaces, opportunities, and seats in your Locals.

As well, both the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress have Solidarity and Pride Committees for 2SLGBTQI+ workers to come together and work on infusing greater equity and inclusivity into the Labour movement. Consider sending members of your Local to participate on either, or both, of these important committees.

### **Support Your Local Pride Event**

While Pride events have historically been tied to larger cities, as acceptance and inclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ communities has grown, so have the amount of Pride events. Now celebrated in places both larger and small, there's always a Pride event on the horizon.

In Ontario while COVID has put a hold on in-person Pride events, many Prides all across Ontario have pivoted to doing online events. To find out what Pride events are going on in your neck of the woods, check out this [handy list of Pride events](#) taking place across the Province.

### **Support Organizations That Empower And Support 2SLGBTQI+ Folks And Communities**

There are many non-profit and charitable organizations that do fantastic work year-round to support 2SLGBTQI+ folks and communities. As non-profits, these organizations rely on donations and support to keep their doors open and performing the important work that they do.

For parents and families of 2SLGBTQI+ youth, there's PFLAG chapters across the country that exist to support families and their 2SLGBTQI+ kin. Click to [find your closest PFLAG chapter](#) in Ontario. LGBT Youthline is also an excellent support for 2SLGBTQI+ youth, offering peer support to youth. Check out their [website](#) and find them on [Facebook](#).

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations (2-Spirits) is a great non-profit social service organization whose membership consists of First Nations, Metis and Inuit 2-Spirit People. During COVID, they're continued to

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555 Richmond Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5V 3B1

+1 416 703 8515    copeontario.ca

support queer Indigenous communities and have a busy Pride month ahead. To find out more about them and to support them, head on over to their website at [www.2spirits.com](http://www.2spirits.com) or find them on [Facebook](#).

The Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers Action Project continues its great work of supporting marginalized sex workers, many who hail from racialized and/or 2SLGBTQI+ communities. During the pandemic, they've not only been running a fund to support sex workers and coordinating low barrier vaccine clinics but also have been fighting for greater health and safety for these vulnerable workers. To check out what they're up to and to donate, visit their [website](#) or find them on [Facebook](#).

These are just a few organizations that are doing great work but there's also so many more including regional organizations in your communities such as The [519 in Toronto](#) or [Pride Central in Thunder Bay](#), that provide many services specific to 2SLGBTQI+ folks and communities. Click for a more extensive [list of organizations](#) across Ontario, or check out [this list](#) which includes organizations in Ontario as well as some across Canada.

### **Support 2SLGBTQI+ Artists And Creatives**

2SLGBTQI+ folks are active in every arts scene. Canada is rich with 2SLGBTQI+ artists and creatives who bring their unique perspectives and lived experience to their art. Check out this list of [Resources by CBC Saskatchewan](#), that features lots of artists and creatives whose work you can check out and support.

The Canadian Office & Professional Employees' Union is a Canadian Union representing approximately 35,000 members in the private and public sector. COPE ONTARIO works with Ontario Health Coalition, Labour Councils and the Ontario Federation of Labour to protect healthcare jobs so that we retain and grow unionized jobs and create a stronger healthcare system that serves all of Ontario. Together we are stronger!

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