



HEU recognizes Transgender Day of Remembrance – November 20

On November 20, HEU is joining with the worldwide community on Transgender Day of Remembrance to recognize and honour members of the trans community, who have been murdered or assaulted for expressing their gender choice – those living openly in a gender that differs from their sex assigned at birth.

This day originally started as a candlelight vigil in 1999, a year after trans-woman Rita Hester was murdered in San Francisco.

In Canada, more than 10 per cent of trans individuals have attempted suicide. And hate crimes in the trans community are on the rise, and often go unsolved.

HEU is committed to recognizing and defending the human rights of our transgender members, and supports advocating for the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity, as prohibited grounds for discrimination, in respectful workplace policies.

Most provinces have passed human rights legislation to add “gender identity” and “gender expression” to the discrimination list, with the exception of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories, which only include “gender identity”.

In June 2017, the federal Liberal government passed *Bill C-16*. This bill updated the *Canadian Human Rights Code* and the *Criminal Code* to add the protection of “gender identity” and “gender expression”.

As a trade union that has proudly championed labour, social and human rights protections for all citizens, HEU delegates to the 2014 convention passed a resolution to lobby governments to fund the cost of sex reassignment surgeries, hormone treatments, and procedures necessary to undergo gender transition.

In many work environments and countries, trans people experience unspeakable prejudice and brutality. Trans people are bullied, ostracized and beaten or killed. Brazil has the world’s highest transgender murder rate.

Much work still needs to be done. Medicare coverage for gender reassignment surgery and treatment is inconsistent across Canada. Changing one’s name and gender on legal documents, like birth certificates and passports, is a very difficult process. Accessing public washrooms can be a daunting experience due to fear of verbal or physical attack. And barriers to accessing housing, employment, health and social services continue to exist.

November 20, 2017