



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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HEU marks Transgender Day of Remembrance – November 20

Although Canada is one of the world's most progressive countries in protecting the human rights of its citizens, transgender Canadians are still vulnerable to discrimination, hate crimes, including anti-transgender violence, and high rates of suicide.

That's why HEU is recognizing Transgender Day of Remembrance – November 20 to draw attention to transgender people's struggle for justice and equality, celebrate their accomplishments, and remember those killed because of their gender expression.

"As a social justice union, HEU has been at the forefront of raising awareness about LGBT issues within our own membership and through active participation in our communities," said HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson.

In fact, HEU negotiated same-sex medical benefits in 1989, before it was legally mandated in the province.

And in 1991, the union filed an historic human rights lawsuit – on behalf of HEU member Tim Knodel – against B.C.'s Medical Services Commission (MSC) when it denied medical coverage for Knodel's partner Ray Garneau, who was terminally ill.

On August 31, 1991, the B.C. Supreme Court ruled in favour of HEU and ordered the MSC to recognize same-sex partners as "spouses" and grant them medical coverage.

That landmark decision generated national recognition for HEU as leaders in advancing LGBT human rights that will benefit all Canadians.

But there's still a lot of work to do for the transgender community. Besides blatant violent attacks, they regularly encounter harassment at work, discrimination in accessing services, are ostracized from participating in neighbourhood events or charitable organizations, and even face ridicule when utilizing public restrooms.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance, which is now recognized in more than 20 countries, was first launched in 1998 by transgender activist Gwendolyn Ann Smith after Rita Hester was murdered in an anti-transgender hate crime in Massachusetts.

November 20, 2013

