



THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR  
**GENDER+SEXUAL  
DIVERSITY**



LE CENTRE CANADIEN DE LA  
**DIVERSITÉ DES GENRES  
+ DE LA SEXUALITÉ**

C304-440 rue Albert St, Ottawa, ON K1R 5B5 (territoire Algonquin Territory)  
info@ccgsd-ccdgs.org/ Tel: 613-858-3427

Re: Feedback Form (2018-10-02)

To whom it may concern,

On October 2nd, 2018, we received an email through our CCGSD Feedback Tool: Openness, Transparency and Accountability. It was brought to our attention that a post on Facebook suggested that the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity (CCGSD) was partnering with a conservative senator. The post continues to suggest the organization fails trans and gender diverse communities. This email requested clarity in the post to follow.

Before we get into an account of the event, we would like to say that we understand the reason this has been a distressing event, and we apologize.

This response seeks to provide an explanation for the lunch portion of the event: Rainbow Day on the Hill.

### **Rainbow Day on the Hill (Oct 2, 2018)**

On October 2, 2018 the CCGSD co-hosted Rainbow Day on the Hill with MP Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre). Rainbow Day on the Hill, founded in 2013 by NDP MP Dany Morin (Chicoutimi-Le Fjord) and his executive assistant Steve Slepchik, seeks to pair LGBTQI2+ youth, with LGBTQI2+ Members of Parliament and Senators for an inside look at Parliament. The students shadow the MPs and Senators at meetings, press conferences, question period - whatever may be on the schedule for the day.

This year participating MPs and Senators included: Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre); Rob Oliphant (Don Valley West); Randall Garrison (Esquimalt--Saanich--Sooke); Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West); and Senator Renée Cormier.

After a morning of mentorship, students participated in the Allyship Lunch. The lunch elevates the voices of the LGBTQI2+ youth participants by connecting them to straight-cis MPs and Senators who want to learn from these youth participants. This year, youth got to speak to MPs Catherine McKenna (Ottawa Centre), Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby), and Karen Vecchio (Elgin-Middlesex-London).

The lunch was originally supposed to be hosted by Senator Mobina Jaffer (a long-time supporter of the trans community), but because of illness Senator Jaffer had to cancel. The CCGSD then was connected to Senator Frum's office. Senator Frum was in committee meetings Oct 2, 2018 and did not attend the lunch. Senator Frum's office booked space in an East Block committee room to host the participants, MPs and Senators for lunch and used their funds to pay for lunch. Senator Frum's office did not ask for any credit or to be recognized.



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## **Comments on social media**

A social media post suggested that the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity (CCGSD) was partnering with a conservative senator. The post continues to suggest the organization fails trans and gender diverse communities.

The CCGSD was not partnering with Senator Frum. The Senator's staff booked a meeting room for CCGSD to use after the original space was not available to host the participants, MPs and Senators for lunch. Senator Frum had no intention of attending the event and was supporting Senator Mobina Jaffer by booking the meeting room for lunch.

We understand there is an appetite for responses and dialogue on social media. However because of staff and volunteers' (the Board of Directors) limited time it is impossible to effectively reply to all comments. Moreover, we do feel that comments in writing miss the intonation and tone that in-person communication offers. As such, it has been noted that social media conversations can be misunderstood easily. Furthermore, engagement on social media has the potential to cause harm to those who engage in a discussion that may include negative comments about CCGSD, whether they agree or disagree with those comments. We cannot contribute to discussions in which such harm may be caused.

## **The CCGSD is continuously working to support trans and gender diverse communities**

Two weeks ago, the CCGSD partnered with Gowling WLG, a leading firm in advancing LGBTQI2+ rights (both among staff and in the community) to offer pro-bono services for trans and non-binary individuals who wish to meet with a legal professional to have their gender designation forms and affidavits commissioned or notarized.

These resources also includes guides for trans and non-binary folks, written by trans and non-binary folks, that make it easier to change gender markers on your identification documents. (<http://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/changing-gender-markers-2/>).

We are also working on other projects listed here: <http://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/campaigns/>

These projects are developed in response to needs brought forward by members of the LGBTQI2+ communities. Should you have an idea for a new project, please reach out to me (Calla@ccgsd-ccdgs.org).

## **Goals of the CCGSD**

The CCGSD is known for working with and pushing many opponents of LGBTQI2+ rights to change their minds, stop being obstacles, and instead support queer and trans communities. Rainbow Day on the Hill is part of this work: it is a forum that provides LGBTQI2+ youth leaders an opportunity to critically engage with MPs and Senators, and to have their voices heard among the decision-makers in this country.



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The goal of this lunch was clear: to engage MPs who may otherwise not be engaged in LGBTQI2+ rights and develop a sense of allyship among them and the youth participants.

I volunteer with the CCGSD, and I believe that the solution to discrimination in our country lies with not refusing to debate with those who are oppressive. Our goal is to teach them; to continue to deliver a message of strength and equality among us - when it is safe to do so. It is to challenge the thoughts and behaviours of those who would oppress us and, hopefully to gain them as allies of the LGBTQI2+ community. We cannot build bridges by refusing to work with people.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me or to use our Feedback Form (<http://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/contact/feedback-form/>).

Yours truly,

Calla Barnett  
(pronouns: elle, she, her)

présidente | President  
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