

# Trans Activism

## BILL C-16 & THE TRANS MARCH







Please follow the steps to complete the zone:

- 1) Watch the video
- 2) Read through the booklet contents
- 3) Answer the discussion questions as a group

**Content warning**

*Police violence, nudity, swearing, transphobia, homophobia*

## Bill C-16



On June 17th in 2017, Bill C-16 was passed in Parliament. The Bill amended the **Canadian Human Rights Act** and the **Criminal Code** to provide protection to individuals from discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression.

After the Bill passed, any actions motivated by hate, bias, or discrimination regarding someone's gender expression or identity became illegal and could be used to determine a criminal sentence.

Individuals who are protected under the Human Rights Act are people who may otherwise have unequal opportunity to live in society and have their needs accommodated without discrimination.

### What is a bill?

If someone wants to create a new law, they first present it as a "bill." The bill must be approved by several levels of government and signed by the Prime Minister before it becomes a law.

## Meet a local activist

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Charlie Lowthian-Rickert, a young activist from Ottawa, spoke out in support of passing Bill C-16. When speaking to politicians and fellow activists before the Bill was passed, she said:

*"It could protect us and stop the people who would have just gone off and done it in the past, and discriminated or assaulted us. Now it could be stopping them and basically punishing them if they actually do it."*

## Gender identity & expression 101

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**Gender identity** is each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their **sex assigned at birth**.

**Gender expression** is how a person publicly expresses or presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language, and voice. A person's chosen name and **pronoun** are also common ways of expressing gender.

## The Trans March



In Toronto Pride's early days, the trans community took part in Pride marches and parades during Toronto Pride week. However, they were often outnumbered and sidelined by their gay and lesbian peers in LGBTQ+ spaces.

On June 26th, 2009, the first Trans March took place in Toronto with over 1,500 people in attendance. Inspired by similar marches in the USA, the Toronto march was organized by Karah Mathiason and her wife, Diane Grant. The march began in the hopes of creating "a safe place where everybody's welcome to be who they are."

Since its start, the march has been used as a way to increase visibility, raise awareness, and end human rights inequalities facing the trans community.



The Pride parade is often a place where we see a lot of corporate sponsorship and political presence. Unlike the parade, the Trans March is much more community-based and community-run, similar to the [Dyke March](#).

The Trans March has run every year since 2009, but not without difficulty. The march continues to experience a lack of support from both the City of Toronto and Pride. Over the past years, neither have provided funding or media and logistical support.

Despite the barriers, in 2018 the trans community held the largest self-organized march of its kind, and continues to attract thousands of participants each year.



In the past years, the Trans March has called attention to honouring the lives of missing and murdered trans and non-binary people. Many speakers spoke out against the police force's mishandling of missing persons cases, adding to a long history of conflict between law enforcement and the trans community.





## Glossary of terms

The **Canadian Human Rights Act** was created in 1977 with the goal of extending Canadian law to protect individuals who may face unequal opportunity or discrimination within society. The Act prohibits discrimination on the ground of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, gender expression and gender identity, and conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted. The Act is open to amendments, which means it can have new protected groups added.

The **Canadian Criminal Code** is a document where all the criminal laws in Canada are written. It lists and defines all the criminal offenses and establishes the appropriate punishment for people convicted of a crime.

**Sex assigned at birth** refers to the assignment of people as male, female, or intersex when they are born, usually based on physical anatomy. Someone's sex assigned at birth and someone's gender identity can either be the same (cisgender) or different (trans/non-binary). Sex and gender are not the same thing.

A **Pronoun** is a grammatical category that can be used to replace a noun (person, place or thing), and a **personal pronoun** is used to replace a person's name. People use pronouns as a way of expressing their gender identity: female (she/her), male (he/him), non-binary or gender non-conforming (they/them/xie/xer).

**Dyke March** is a march for 2SLGBTQ+ women and non-binary people that often takes place during Pride festivities. The march aims to build community, hold space, protest the commercialization of Pride, and end discrimination against members of the community.

## Discussion Questions



1) Why is it important for trans and gender diverse people to be specifically protected by law?

2) Why is it significant to continue to support community-led organizations and events during Pride?

3) Why do you think the Trans and Dyke Marches are called "marches" and not "parades"? Why is that an important distinction to make?

### Sources for this booklet:

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House of Commons of Canada. (2017, May 16). "Bill C-16, First Reading." *Parliament of Canada*.



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