

**Lesbian and Gay  
Agenda  
for Election '95**

April 1995  
Produced for Ontario's Provincial Election

**The 1995 provincial election is an important turning point in the history of Ontario's lesbian and gay\* communities, as our issues assume greater significance in the political mainstream of the province.**

*Lesbian and Gay Agenda for Election '95* has been produced to draw attention to and stimulate discussion of issues affecting lesbian, gay and bisexual voters and their supporters in Ontario. It covers a wide range of issues which address the legal and social inequities which are faced by lesbians and gays because of their sexual orientation.

Many of these inequalities are contrary to the Ontario Human Rights Code. All of these issues speak to fundamental disadvantages that lesbian and gay individuals face compared to others in our society.

Most importantly, this Agenda calls for actions which the next government of Ontario must take to eliminate inequalities faced by Ontarians because of their sexual orientation.

This document has been prepared by a coalition of community activists from various lesbian, gay and bisexual organizations. While it does not purport to represent the views of all lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Ontario, it does address the primary issues that continue to prevent these individuals from being treated in a fair and equitable manner in many aspects of their lives.

\*Throughout this document, and reference to lesbian and gay should be taken to include the diverse makeup of the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities.

## **THE AGENDA**

**This document calls for action in the following areas:**

- Enforcement/Strengthening of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- Same-Sex Relationship Recognition
- Youth Issues
- Education
- People Living With HIV/AIDS
- Health Care and Social Services
- Employment Issues for Lesbian and Gay Workers
- Employment Equity
- New Citizens/Immigrants/Refugees
- Arts and Culture
- Censorship

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**For additional copies of *Lesbian and Gay Agenda For Election '95* or the *Questions for Candidates* pamphlet, contact:**

- Campaign for Equal Families - Toronto at (416) 925-7040;
- Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario at (416) 533-6824; or
- Ontario Federation of Labour (Carrol Anne Sceviour) at (416) 443-7670 or 1-800-668-9138.

## ENFORCEMENT/STRENGTHENING OF THE ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS CODE

### THE ISSUES

Since 1986, the Government of Ontario has included sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. This law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, colour, ancestry, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, record of offenses, citizenship, handicap and receipt of social assistance in areas including the provision of goods, services, and facilities; accommodation; contracts; vocational associations and employment.

This law has primacy over all other laws in the province. Its intent is to ensure that the equal rights of all Ontarians are upheld in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

However, there are a number of issues affecting the ability of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (which enforces and provides education on the *Code*) to ensure that groups, particularly lesbians and gays, are adequately protected under this law:

- Discrimination in the areas protected under the *Code* continues to be widespread. Yet *the Commission is chronically underfunded*, with almost all of its resources devoted to investigating and resolving complaints of discrimination that are brought forward to the Commission. Little funding or resources are devoted to the educational function. The result is that numerous employers and service providers, knowingly or unknowingly, continue to allow unlawful discrimination to occur against gays, lesbians and others protected by the *Code*.
- Under the Commission's current structure, *complaints of discrimination can only be brought forward by individuals*. For many, the disclosure of sexual orientation, the possibility of publicity, as well as the threat of further discrimination, ostracizing and family rejection present real barriers for such individuals. The *Code* will not allow groups that represent lesbians and gays to bring forward complaints against organizations that systematically discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation.
- The awards for damages that Human Rights Boards of Inquiries may make in cases where discrimination has been proven are not always adequate to promote compliance with the *Code* or compensate victims of discrimination. In particular, the amount that can be ordered to be paid by individuals or organizations to compensate a victim for loss of dignity and worth, or for emotional or physical *damage is limited to \$10,000* maximum. This standard is far less than similar compensation awarded by the courts.

Further issues related specifically to lesbians and gays include the following:

- Harassment in employment is a specific violation defined in the *Code*, apart from discrimination. The list of prohibited grounds for harassment is the same as that for discrimination, with the exception of sexual orientation. In other words, *lesbians and gays are*

*technically not protected from harassment in employment.*

- A Board of Inquiry decision in the Leshner case extended the *Code's* definition of marital status to include partners of the same sex. However, it left unchanged the *Code's* definition of "spouse" or common-law partners of the opposite sex. Accordingly, many *provincial laws which use the Code's definition of "spouse" continue to discriminate against same-sex relationships.*

## **WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING**

**1. Increased funding to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, dedicated specifically to province-wide educational initiatives to inform employers, municipalities and other providers of services about the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and encourage compliance.**

**2. Amendments to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* to:**

- include "sexual orientation" in the list of prohibited grounds covering harassment in employment;
- change the *Code's* definition of "spouse" to include partners of the same sex, so that it is consistent with the change to "marital status" ordered by the Human Rights Board of Inquiry in Leshner;
- increase the amount that can be awarded by Boards of Inquiry for damages arising from loss of dignity and worth or psychological or emotional damages to be paid by those in violation of the *Code*; and
- allow representative groups of those individuals protected under the law to bring a complaint forward against individuals or organizations that violate the *Code*.

## **QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

1. In view of the fact that discrimination against people because of their sexual orientation continues to be widespread and contrary to the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, will you support increased funding to the Ontario Human Rights Commission for province-wide educational initiatives to inform employers, municipalities, and other service providers about the *Code* and encourage compliance?

2. Will you support amendments to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* to:

- include "sexual orientation" in the list of prohibited grounds covering harassment in employment; and
- define "spouse" to include partners of the same sex, in order that it be consistent with the change to "marital status" ordered by the Human Rights Board of Inquiry in Leshner?

- **Prepared by members of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO). For further information, contact CLGRO at (416) 533-6824.**

## **SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIP RECOGNITION**

### **THE ISSUES**

**With the defeat of Bill 167, Ontario's provincial laws continue to discriminate against lesbians, gays, and their relationships. Throughout Ontario's laws, the definition of "spouse", "marital status" and "family" are stated as only including opposite-sex couples. All people, regardless of sexual orientation, have the right to determine for themselves their primary personal relationships and to have those relationships supported and recognized in law and by social institutions, if they so desire.**

No individual relationship or family should face discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employee benefits, health care, guardian issues, child support and custody, or other areas of provincial law.

### **WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING**

**1. Introduction and passage of a bill amending the full range of Ontario statutes set out in Bill 167. This will amend the definition of "spouse", "relationship", and "family" everywhere, as they appear, to include same-sex relationships.**

**2. This bill, once it is introduced, must be treated in the normal parliamentary manner, i.e. must not be subject to a "free" vote.**

The support and recognition of same-sex relationships should also include, but not be limited to, the following:

- establishment of a system under which heterosexual or same-sex relationships may be registered with the government, thereby providing them with as many of the benefits and obligations of marriage as are within the ability of the government to confer.
- extension of property-division and spousal-support obligations to same-sex relationships, based on current provisions for common-law heterosexual relationships.
- establishment for lesbian and gay parents of the legal right to child custody and access.
- recognition of surviving same-sex spouses under pension legislation and intestacy rules (i.e., where one partner dies and does not leave a will).
- recognition of same-sex relationships in provincial laws governing such matters as adoption, income tax, home ownership, workers' compensation, tenancy, and health services, as well as in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

### **QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

1. Given that equal treatment for lesbians, gays, and their families is a matter of fundamental human rights, will you, and your party leader, commit yourselves to introducing and voting in favour of a bill recognizing same-sex relationships? And, as well, will you ensure that the bill will be treated in the standard parliamentary way, rather than by a "free" vote?

2. Many lesbians and gays in same-sex relationships urgently need to have their legal rights addressed with regard to issues such as pensions, employee benefits, and family rights. The failure of Bill 167 last year means that many will need to have their rights redressed through the courts. Will you support funding of legal challenges so that lesbians and gays may obtain equal rights as promised under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*?

3. The publicity around the Bill 167 debate last year led to a pronounced increase in lesbian- and gay-bashing, discrimination, harassment, and homophobia in certain areas of the province. As this behaviour is a violation of the *Ontario Human Rights Code* in many situations, will you support funding for community groups to institute a program of anti-homophobia education, much as government under all three parties has supported education on racism, sexism, and disabilities in the past?

**- Prepared by members of the Campaign for Equal Families - Toronto (CEFT) and the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO). For further information, contact CEFT at (416) 925-7040 or CLGRO at (416) 533-6824.**

## **YOUTH ISSUES**

**Along with education issues (see "Education" section), there are a number of issues facing lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth ranging in age from 15 to 25. Many must live in environments which provide no support to help them come to terms with their sexual orientation. Those who "come out of the closet" are most often subject to emotional abuse and rejection by family and friends. They also face neglect and condemnation by the very education and community systems which are entrusted to help mold them into integrated responsible adults.**

## **THE ISSUES**

A disproportionate number of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth develop drug and alcohol addictions in order to cope, and needlessly expose themselves to sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS due to a lack of education and support. Their suicide rate is approximately four times the rate of the heterosexual population.

Their concerns include the following:

- Lack of protection against crimes motivated by homophobia where youth congregate.
- Lack of financial support and social assistance for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth unable to remain living with their families.
- Lack of peer support groups both inside and outside the school environment.
- Lack of training/support for guidance counselors to understand and help lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth locate support groups, social assistance, and other types of help.
- Lack of openly lesbian and gay role models.
- Absence of counseling and information for planning lesbian, gay, and bisexual families.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth seldom have the opportunity to have their voices heard by the Government of Ontario. Yet they would like to remind all candidates that ***they are the next generation of voters that will support or reject candidates*** based on their record around lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues.

## **WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING**

- 1. That the Ministries of Community & Social Services and Health provide funding for peer support groups and counseling for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. This must include stable and long-term funding for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Youth Line.**
- 2. That the Ministries of Community & Social Services, Education and Health provide**

**training and information materials on issues and support services related to lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth to guidance counselors, community workers, and others who counsel youth.**

### **QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

1. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth have few or no social services to assist them at their most vulnerable and difficult time of life. Will you support funding by the Ministry of Community and Social Services for community counseling and information as well as peer support groups and other services for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth?

2. Given the great need for youth services, will you ensure that the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Youth Line continues to receive long-term and stable funding from the government?

3. Little information and support is available on lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth issues for guidance counselors, community workers, and others who counsel youth. Will you support increased funding for training and information materials to meet this need?

**- Prepared by Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Toronto (LGBYT). For more information, contact (416) 533-6824.**

## EDUCATION

### THE ISSUES

**Increasing evidence portrays a state of crisis for lesbian and gay youth. Academic failure and school dropout are frequent, but rarely the most serious manifestations of the crisis. High rates of suicide, alcohol and substance abuse, homelessness and high-risk sexual activity are testimony of our failure to provide lesbian and gay youth with appropriate services and opportunities to develop self-esteem and healthy lifestyles.**

Our schools actively contribute to this crisis by not providing an equitable learning environment for lesbian and gay students. As service providers under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, schools are required to provide students with protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Yet *most school boards still do not protect gay and lesbian students from discrimination* by including sexual orientation in anti-harassment policies. Our schools impede the development of self-esteem in lesbian and gay students through a biased curriculum that systematically excludes lesbian and gay issues. Until schools provide safe working environments for visible lesbian and gay staff, lesbian and gay students will continue to be denied positive role models.

### WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING

**That the Ontario government:**

- 1. Protect lesbian and gay youth by requiring all school boards to include sexual orientation in harassment policies, and include actions to combat homophobia in their violence-prevention programs.**
- 2. Ensure school staff are able to identify and eliminate homophobia and heterosexism within schools by requiring anti-homophobia training for teacher certification and mandatory anti-homophobia in-service training for all school staff and administrators.**
- 3. Make all consultative bodies representative of the diversity of Ontario's education system by including lesbian and gay students, parents, school staff and community organizations.**
- 4. Ensure all schools in the province offer targeted support services for lesbian and gay youth that address the effect of homophobia and heterosexism on these youth.**
5. Help lesbian and gay youth develop the self-esteem necessary to succeed in schools by eliminating biases and ensuring that lesbian and gay realities are reflected in the curriculum, as well as other school activities such as extra-curricular clubs, Career days, etc.
6. Provide a safe and equitable work environment for lesbian and gay school staff so that they

may act as positive and visible role models.

7. Develop and make available to all staff and students, lesbian/gay-positive resource material.

8. Protect the health of all students by revising the curriculum guidelines on AIDS and HIV to reflect the significant new understanding of AIDS/HIV issues developed since 1987.

9. Ensure all equity-related education policies and resource materials reflect the links between different forms of oppression.

10. Eliminate the heterosexual bias in the Ministry's gender-equity policy and ensure that the policy reflects lesbian and gay realities.

### **QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

1. Under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, schools are required to protect students from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Given that lesbian and gay students face continuing violence and harassment in our schools, will you support the inclusion of sexual orientation in anti-harassment policies and violence-prevention plans of all school boards?

2. Do you support the inclusion of lesbian and gay students, parents, and teachers in all relevant consultative bodies in the Ministry of Education, such as the Parents Council?

3. Our school curriculum must reflect the diversity of our province. If elected, will you encourage the Ministry of Education to develop curriculum guidelines that address homophobia and heterosexism?

**- Prepared by members of Education Against Homophobia and CLGRO=s Sexual Orientation in Education Project (SOEP). For further information, call (416) 927-9132.**

## PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

### THE ISSUES

**Care, treatment, and support for people living with HIV and AIDS continue to be priorities for lesbian and gay communities. Through strong lobbying, there have been some gains in government recognition of the problems facing people with HIV/AIDS. The Trillium Drug Plan has helped address the problem of the cost of treatments; however, a further commitment to reduce the deductible for the working poor and improve coverage of new therapies is urgently needed.**

*Poverty and HIV are a dangerous combination.* Inadequate nutrition and housing, few choices in therapies, and increased stress mean poor people with HIV get sicker faster. This situation will continue to worsen without increased income supports for people living with HIV and AIDS.

People with HIV and AIDS need access to a full spectrum of health services, including hospitals, hospices, and homecare. While initiatives like anonymous testing, the HIV clinic network, and clinical care guidelines have helped improve the number and expertise of health-care providers in Ontario, it is crucial that funding to maintain and expand these initiatives continue.

Community-based AIDS organizations have provided life-saving education, care, and support to people living with HIV. *Any reduction in funding to these organizations will make the crisis of this epidemic even worse.*

To make health promotion a realistic option for people, strategies for research, consumer information, and funding for complementary (i.e., non-pharmaceutical) therapies are needed. Funding is also required for experimental therapies in cases where other options have been exhausted.

### WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING

- 1. That the Ministry of Health improve the Trillium Drug Plan by reducing the deductible for the working poor and improve coverage of complementary, experimental, and new therapies.**
- 2. That the Ministry of Health provide sufficient funding to maintain and improve community-based AIDS organizations which provide education, care, and support to people living with HIV.**

### QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Will you support improvements in the Trillium Drug Plan which would reduce the deductible for the working poor and improve coverage of complementary, experimental, and new therapies

for people living with HIV/AIDS?

2. Will you call for improved funding to support community-based AIDS organizations which provide education, care, and support to people living with HIV?

- **Prepared by members of AIDS Action Now! For more information, contact AIDS Action Now! At (416) 928-2206.**

## HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

### THE ISSUES

**As with all individuals in society, lesbians and gay men inevitably experience times of vulnerability. In those times, it becomes necessary for them to turn to the health-care and social-service systems for support. The *Ontario Human Rights Code* protects people from discrimination in housing, services, and employment on the basis of sexual orientation. Yet health care and social services clearly do not provide services in an equitable manner compared to the general population. Homophobia and heterosexism lie at the core of the uninformed, insensitive, or neglectful responses often encountered by lesbians and gays through their life-cycles when dealing with health care and social services.**

The following outline just some of the scenarios in which health and social services are ill-equipped to respond sensitively and adequately to lesbians and gays:

- Same-sex couples who want to adopt a child.
- Lesbians seeking out alternative/artificial insemination.
- Recognition of alternative/chosen families as opposed to biological families in family therapy or hospital settings.
- Recognition of same-sex relationships in couple counseling and hospital settings.
- Domestic/socialized violence (bashings) involving lesbians and gays.
- Drug/alcohol abuse treatment for lesbians and gays.
- Lesbians and gays contemplating, threatening, or attempting suicide.
- Lesbians and gays who have been sexually abused as children or adults.
- Services and resources for lesbians and gays with disabilities (physical limitations, mentally challenged, psychiatric disorders).
- Consideration of work-related issues of harassment and poisoned environments for lesbians and gays by those who administer Employee Assistance Programs.
- Children or youth questioning or identifying themselves as not heterosexual.
- Those leaving heterosexual relationships who may or may not be parents.
- Lesbians and gays who are in their senior years who may or may not be dependent on the system.

- Health-care and social-service professionals who need sensitivity training before entering their respective fields, including doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, psychotherapists, psychoanalysts, adjustment counselors, social service workers, counselors, etc.

## **WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING**

**That, in consultation with lesbian and gay communities, the:**

**1. Ministry of Education and Training produce guidelines for colleges and universities to incorporate an understanding of the specific needs of lesbians and gay men in their respective curriculums for the formal training of health-care and social-service students.**

**2. Ministries of Citizenship, Community and Social Services, and Health develop policies and guidelines calling upon health care and social service professionals to provide equitable and sensitive services for lesbians and gays, in order to comply with their respective codes of ethics and the provisions of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.**

## **QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

1. Currently, many lesbians and gays do not receive sensitive and equitable treatment in health care and social services. Will you call for the Ministry of Education and Training to produce guidelines, addressing anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism issues for colleges and universities to use when formally training future health care and social service professionals?

2. Will you call for the Ministries of Citizenship, Community and Social Services, and Health, to produce policies and guidelines urging health care and social service professionals to abide by their respective codes of ethics and the provisions of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, in order to provide such service to lesbians and gays?

- ***Prepared for members of the Coalition For Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO) and its Project Affirmation. For further information, contact Project Affirmation at (416) 593-9229 or 1-800-663-5530.***

## **EMPLOYMENT ISSUES FOR LESBIAN & GAY WORKERS**

### **THE ISSUES**

**Increasingly, lesbian and gay workers are demanding equality at work. They are working through unions and the courts to gain access to employment benefits for themselves and their families. For years, lesbian and gay workers have been losing out when it comes to benefit protection that most workers take for granted. This discrimination stems from a lack of recognition of same-sex relationships.**

Unions have taken same-sex relationship recognition to the bargaining table with limited success regarding anti-harassment measures and employment benefits. Often when members file grievances or human rights complaints, unions find that arbitrators, human rights commissioners, and boards of inquiry have little, if any, training on issues of homophobia/heterosexism.

There are limits to the ability of using collective bargaining to correct systemic discrimination. For example, many insurance companies have refused to provide negotiated employment benefits and the Federal Government has refused to change pension laws. Also, unions cannot bargain for rights outside the collective agreement, e.g. access to ill spouses or spousal inheritance. The elimination of systemic discrimination cannot be achieved on a workplace-by-workplace basis. *Legislation is key to eliminating the systemic discrimination faced by lesbian and gay workers every day in this province.*

### **WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING**

**That the Ontario government:**

- 1. Provide mandatory training on issues of sexual orientation, as well as ableism, racism, and sexism for all arbitrators, board of inquiry appointees, and human rights commissioners.**
- 2. Provide lesbian and gay community groups with funds to conduct a province-wide campaign on gay and lesbian rights which will confront workplace and community homophobia.**
- 3. Provide the Ontario Human Rights Commission with adequate staff and resources to ensure they are proactive on issues of sexual orientation, as well as ableism, racism, and sexism.**
- 4. Ensure all government bodies dealing with employment law have openly gay and lesbian representatives.**

### **QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

1. Given that lesbians and gay men face day-to-day violence, harassment, and discrimination, if elected will you ensure that the government provides funding to lesbian and gay community groups to develop and conduct a province-wide campaign on gay and lesbian rights which will confront workplace and community homophobia?
2. If elected, will you advocate the inclusion of openly gay men and lesbians on all appointed government bodies?
3. Given the present lack of visible representation from the lesbian and gay community on government bodies, will you advocate mandatory training on issues of sexual orientation, as well as ableism, racism, and sexism for all government workplace and human rights enforcement investigative staff and tribunal appointments?
4. Will you advocate employment laws which ensure lesbians and gay men have the same rights and access to benefits as other workers?

**- Prepared by the Ontario Federation of Labour Gay and Lesbian Working Group. For further information, contact Carrol Anne Sceviour at (416) 443-7670 or 1-800-668-9138.**

## **EMPLOYMENT EQUITY**

### **THE ISSUES**

**The Employment Equity Act, which came into effect in Ontario on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994, does not include lesbians and gays under the legislation, nor does it refer to them in the Act's preamble. The Act aims to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all people in the workplace. However, it requires most employers to remove barriers that adversely affect members of only four designated groups: women, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, and members of racial minorities.**

As with the four designated groups, *protection under the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code is not sufficient to address barriers faced by lesbians and gays in the workplace*, thus the need to be included in the Act. In particular, qualitative measures such as anti-harassment policies, sensitivity training, and diversity education in the workplace are required, as opposed to qualitative measures such as numerical targets and goals. In this manner, lesbians and gay men would be empowered to self-identify if they chose to (as is currently the case with the designated groups) without repercussion.

Such inclusion would require employers to carry out their tasks and duties in a non-homophobic and non-heterosexist manner. *Qualitative measures would ensure that lesbians and gay men are given equitable consideration in recruitment, selection, training, and promotion without having to face discriminatory barriers.* Employers would have to put in place positive and supportive measures to help recruit, employ, retain, promote, and treat fairly members of the lesbian and gay communities. All of this would contribute to developing a poison-free work environment that would benefit the workforce as a whole.

### **WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING**

**That lesbians and gay men be included in Ontario's Employment Equity Act in order that they will be protected under the qualitative measures of the Act.**

### **QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

Do you support the inclusion of lesbians and gay men in the Employment Equity Act in order to receive protection under the Act's qualitative measures such as anti-harassment policies, sensitivity training, and diversity education in the workplace?

**- Prepared by members of the Coalition For Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO). For further information, contact CLGRO at (416) 533-6824.**

## **NEW CITIZENS/IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES**

### **THE ISSUES**

**Though the Ontario government is not primarily responsible for immigration and citizenship, they are responsible for culture, education, health and welfare including public safety and security, as well as the provision of immigrant settlement services. Within this framework, the provincial government has certain responsibilities towards new citizens in the province of Ontario, by ensuring humanitarian and compassionate treatment of new citizens, landed status seekers, refugees, visitors, and, in particular, people with HIV.**

A particular problem facing newly-arrived lesbians and gays is a general lack of recognition of the diversity of cultures in the lesbian and gay communities. This is compounded by the *lack of recognition of this cultural diversity and identity on the part of government and its agencies.*

The fact that many new immigrants may be fearful and unsure of their rights upon arrival makes them particularly vulnerable to insensitive or abusive treatment.

### **WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING**

- 1. That the Ministries of Citizenship, Community and Social Services, and Housing introduce into immigrant settlement programs targeted health, social service and housing initiatives to deal with the concerns of immigrants who are lesbian or gay.**
- 2. That the Office of the Solicitor General undertake an internal education program directed at Police Services Boards and Departments to sensitize personnel to issues related to sexual orientation and the diversity of gay and lesbian communities.**
- 3. That the Ministry of Citizenship establish an independent review/complaints process to deal with questions surrounding government inspectors/officials who may be abusing their authority, or exploiting new citizens, immigrants, and refugees, including lesbians and gays.**

### **QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

1. A particular problem facing newly-arrived lesbians and gays is a general lack of recognition of their identity and diversity by government and its agencies. Will you support targeted health, social service, and housing initiatives in government settlement programs to deal with the issues and concerns of immigrants who are lesbian or gay?
2. Will you call for the Office of the Solicitor-General to undertake training for Police Service Boards and Departments to sensitize personnel to issues related to sexual orientation and the diversity of lesbian and gay communities?

3. Many new immigrants, particularly, lesbians and gays, may be fearful and unsure of their rights upon their arrival. Will you call for the Ministry of Citizenship to establish and independent review/complaints process to deal with questions surrounding government inspectors/officials who may be abusing their authority or exploiting new citizens, immigrants, or refugees?

- **Prepared by HOLA - Gay/Lesbian Latino Group and the Campaign For Equal Families**
- **Toronto. For further information, call (416) 925-7040.**

## ARTS & CULTURE

### THE ISSUES

**Culture as an entity is Ontario's biggest asset, its most distinctive feature and the most democratic expression of the identities and aspirations of its diverse population. Ontario's lesbian and gay communities play a significant role in the province's cultural dynamic as artists and audiences, and have helped to build an industry which directly employs more than 150,000 people. For example, Metropolitan Toronto's cosmopolitan environment and artistic vitality make it a Mecca for residents and aspiring artists, while cultural tourism is recognized as the single biggest draw for tourists.**

The arts are wired into the province's economy and they need to be further developed with full understanding of their economic impact, public profile, and social value. Yet, in the past ten years, the amount (in real dollars) of *public support of artists and organizations has dwindled* at virtually every level of government.

*Freedom of expression is fundamental* in a culture of democracy and must be safeguarded from political expediency. Lesbian and gay artists creating high-risk art or work outside the cultural mainstream must be seen as an intrinsic part of our culture as a whole.

### WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING

**1. That the Ontario government play a leadership role in developing a strategy which will allow arts, cultural, and heritage groups to flourish. It is essential that government commit itself to maintaining the current level of funding and establish long-term program stabilization.**

**2. That the Ontario Solicitor-General end any targeting and prosecution of the lesbian, gay, and artistic communities through the misuse of obscenity and child pornography laws. (See "Censorship" section.)**

### QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

1. Over the past ten years, the amount in real dollars of public support of artists and organizations has dwindled at virtually every level of government. Are you committed to maintaining Ontario's investment in arts and culture by sustaining the current level of funding to the arts?

2. Are you and your party committed to maintaining the "arm's length" relationship between the government and arts funding?

**- Prepared by members of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre and the Inside-Out Film and Video Collective. For more information, contact Buddies in Bad Times Theatre at (416)**

**975-9130 or the Inside-Out Film and Video Collective at (416) 920-4936.**

## **CENSORSHIP**

### **THE ISSUES**

**Canada's obscenity laws are used by the police and government in targeted and disproportionate ways to censor representations of lesbian and gay sexuality. The following are specific areas of concern for the lesbian and gay communities in Ontario.**

*Project "P"*, the anti-pornography unit of the Ontario Provincial Police, is under the direct supervision of the Solicitor-General's office. It continues to single out the lesbian and gay communities in its use of federal anti-pornography legislation. With the changes resulting from the Butler decision and the adoption of Bill C-128 (the law used in the Eli Langer case), Project "P" has used its discretionary powers to attack the lesbian and gay community. Lesbians and gays were the first to be arrested in the aftermath of these measures. No other province in Canada has a similar body such as Project "P".

The *Ontario Film Review Board's power to censor* explicit images is significant. Its decisions must be made in a way that is fair and representative of our diverse society. To help meet this goal, the Board must include visible lesbian or gay representatives on an ongoing basis, so that "community standards" are not defined by exclusively heterosexual norms.

Canada is one of the few countries that still censor print materials. *The Federal government's routine seizure of lesbian and gay literature* at the border continues to adversely affect lesbians and gays in Ontario. Criteria for seizures is inconsistent and places an undue economic burden on book distributors and retailers residing in this province.

### **WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING**

- 1. That provincial MPPs ensure just application of laws against pornography, and that the representation of lesbian/gay sexuality, in and of itself, should not be deemed obscene.**
- 2. That the Ontario Film Review Board ensure that visible lesbian or gay representatives sit on the Board on an ongoing basis.**
- 3. That the Government of Ontario act on behalf of its lesbian and gay citizens to oppose the abuses inherent in the Federal government's seizure of imported publications.**

### **QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

What will you do to avoid the targeted and disproportionate use of obscenity laws to censor representation of lesbian and gay sexuality?

- Prepared by members of the lesbian and gay community concerned about censorship.  
For further information, call (416) 533-6824.