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Ontario's Seniors Strategy Consultation  
Seniors Policy and Programs Division  
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility  
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The Senior Pride Network (Toronto) welcomes this opportunity to provide input into the consultation on Ontario's Seniors Strategy. The Senior Pride Network (Toronto) is an association of individuals and organizations committed to promoting appropriate services and a positive, caring environment for elders, seniors and older persons who identify as 2 Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, intersex and other (2SLGBTQI+). We envision a series of communities of 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons that are respectful, affirming, supportive, safe and healthy.

The Senior Pride Network (Toronto) asserts and advocates for the human, economic, social and cultural rights of 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons. We seek to eradicate all forms of oppression including homophobia, heterosexism, lesbophobia, transphobia, biphobia, sexism, cissexism, racism, antisemitism, settler colonialism, xenophobia, islamophobia, ableism and ageism. We demand the right of all 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons to live their lives free from discrimination, harassment, reprisal, bullying, intimidation, victimization, stigmatization, silencing, being marginalized or being made invisible.

### **2SLGBTQI+ Elders, Seniors and Older Persons and Ontario's Seniors Strategy**

2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons face a number of issues that have impacted their lived experiences and may have negatively affected their mental or physical health, their financial and housing circumstances and their overall social well-being. Gaining an understanding of those issues and positively addressing them are necessary to developing and implementing an inclusive and effective Ontario's Seniors Strategy. To that end, the Senior Pride Network (Toronto) presents this submission and our recommendations to the Ontario Government.

### **Life Experiences of 2SLGBTQI+ Elders, Seniors and Older Persons**

2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons are an exceptionally diverse group. The life and aging experiences of 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons vary significantly because of their race, gender, sex and other identities.

Throughout their lives, 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons have had to cope with stigma and discrimination in various forms that have negatively impacted their wellness and their economic and social well-being. Many have been or have risked being discriminated



against in employment, housing and access to services, denied the right to have custody of their children, or denied legal and societal recognition of their same-sex spousal relationships.

Some 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons have been convicted of criminal offences, or perhaps even imprisoned, for engaging in consensual sex. Many 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons have been victims of police harassment or assaults. Being victims of violent physical assaults and hate crimes, or being persecuted and tormented by others are also among the life experiences of 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons.

Other 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons have had treatments such as electroshock therapy imposed on them for “sexual orientation disorder” or “gender identity disorder”, or otherwise have been subjected to therapies and treatments purported to cure, suppress or change their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Depression, anxiety, abuse of drugs and/or alcohol, and suicidal thoughts or attempts, are common among 2SLGBTQI+ populations because of discrimination, inequality, social stigma and social isolation.

Many 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons have experienced prolonged poverty or financial insecurity, especially lesbians, bisexual and trans women, 2 Spirit persons and LGBTQI+ people of colour. Homelessness and lack of affordable, accessible housing are particular vulnerabilities for 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons, particularly transgender and 2 Spirit persons.

HIV positive 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons who survived the HIV/AIDS health crisis of earlier decades are now at high risk for HIV/AIDS-related co-morbidities and depression. More than a few older 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons have experienced multiple losses and are coping with significant grief.

2 Spirit elders, like all Indigenous peoples, have experienced higher rates of personal trauma, such as assaults and abuse, incarceration and systemic racism. They have lived with the horrific legacy of colonization, attempts by Christian churches to deny or suppress Indigenous spiritualities and the residential school system in Canada.

2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older people, and their partners or spouses, often face discriminatory or inequitable treatment from medical, social service and home care providers and in residential, assisted living and long-term care facilities. Too often, 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons are forced to live in facilities and care homes in which there is a presumption that every resident is heterosexual and that gender identity and gender expression equate with the sex or gender assigned at birth.

2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons, especially those experiencing dementia/Alzheimer’s, are often in vulnerable or risky situations because of their use of chosen names, preferred pronouns, how they express themselves or converse with other 2SLGBTQI+ persons, how they dress or accessorize, or how they act or interact (e.g. campy) with other people.

Social isolation and lack of support systems are other significant factors that may negatively impact the health and well-being of 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons.



Opportunities to meet other older 2SLGBTQQ+ people for social and cultural interaction are limited. Programs, activities and events specifically geared toward 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons are rare. Many 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons have experienced rejection from family, spouses and children, and increasingly rely on chosen families to provide care and nurturing relationships and to build support networks. 2SLGBTQQ+ seniors fearing discrimination or ill-treatment will often avoid seeking social services and healthcare support when they need them. They are more likely to lack adequate social support, in particular emotional support, than elders, seniors and older persons who identify as heterosexual.

### **Senior Pride Network Recommendations for Ontario's Seniors Strategy**

On behalf of 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons, the Senior Pride Network (Toronto) calls for specific inclusion of service and care needs of 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons within Ontario's seniors strategy as an urgent priority. Our recommendations to the Ontario Government in that regard are:

That the Ontario government will provide financial, housing, health care, social and legal supports which attend and respond to the individual needs of 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons.

That the Ontario government ministries having responsibility for health, long-term care, social and community services, and seniors will develop and implement 2SLGBTQQ+ inclusive policies and practices for service providers that recognize the diversity of 2SLGBTQQ+ communities and individuals. This will include but is not limited to:

- Standards, policies and procedures for monitoring, inspecting and certifying or licensing service providers that specifically recognize the service and care needs of 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons and that prescribe effective methods for measuring the quality of service delivery to 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons.
- Adopting person-centred, intersectional approaches to service delivery that are tailored to positively responding to the unique issues, needs and concerns of individual 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons; and
- Providing 2SLGBTQQ+ intersectional inclusion/cultural competency training for the staff and volunteers of service providers and, in respect of assisted care and residential care service providers, for residents.

That provincial ministries and bodies providing funding for healthcare, for assisted living and residential/long-term care and for social-service delivery will establish standards of equitable distribution of funding that include agencies and organizations that provide services to 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons, for funding of services to 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons.

That Ontario government ministries that have responsibility for healthcare, for assisted living and residential/long-term care, for housing, for social and community services, and for seniors will ensure provision of funding to carry out research into and to promote public awareness of the specific concerns and needs of, and support systems required for, 2SLGBTQQ+ elders, seniors and older persons.



That the Ontario government will provide for affordable, accessible housing, in respectful, welcoming and safe environments, for 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons who do not require accommodation in assisted care, residential care or long-term care homes.

That the Ontario government will provide enhanced funding for legal aid and community legal clinics as a necessary support and to ensure access to justice for low-income 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons.

That the Ontario government will advocate with the Government of Canada to extend disability benefits coverage under the Canada Pension Plan to continue past the age of 65 for 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons who do not have pensions or other income supports beyond the CPP and Guaranteed Income Supplement.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### “2SLGBTQI+”

An acronym for persons who identify as 2 Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, intersex and other.

### “\_\_\_\_\_”ism

Harmful beliefs, behaviours or institutional practices by a group or person with power directed against specific groups, rationalized by an underlying belief that certain people are superior to others. Examples include: ageism, anti-semitism, audism, cissexism, classism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, racism, sexism, shadism, sizeism.

### “\_\_\_\_\_” phobia

A learned dislike, aversion, or an extreme, irrational fear and/or hatred of a particular group of people. It is expressed through beliefs and tactics that devalue, demean and terrorize people. Examples include: biphobia, homophobia, Islamophobia, transphobia, xenophobia and others.

### **Bisexual**

A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender, though not necessarily at the same time.

### **Biphobia**

Negative attitudes, feelings, or irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of bisexual people and their communities, or of behaviours stereotyped as bisexual, leading to discrimination, harassment or violence against bisexual people.

### **Cis/Cisgender**

Cisgender is used to explain the phenomenon where a person’s gender identity is in line with or “matches” the sex they were assigned at birth. Cis can also be used as a prefix to an assortment of words to refer to the alignment of gender identity and the assigned at birth sex status including; cisnormativity, cissexual, cisgender, cis male, and cis female.

### **Cissexism**

A system of oppression that considers cis people to be superior to trans people. It includes harmful beliefs that it is “normal” to be cis and “abnormal” to be trans. Examples include scrutinizing the genders of trans people more than those of cis people or defining beauty based on how cis people look.

### **Colonization**

The process of focusing on and devaluing people’s differences in order to dominate and control them, including various economic, political and social policies by which a powerful group maintains or extends control over other people or areas.



### **Cultural Competence**

A person's ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence has four components: (a) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview; (b) Attitude towards cultural differences; (c) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; and (d) Cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to better understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

### **Gay**

A person whose enduring physical, romantic, spiritual, emotional, and/or sexual attractions are to people of the same gender. The word can refer to men or women, although some women prefer "lesbian." Sometimes used as an umbrella term for the LGBTQ community.

### **Gender**

Gender is based on the expectations and stereotypes about behaviours, actions, and roles linked to being a "man" or "woman" within a particular culture or society. The social norms related to gender can vary depending on the culture, and can change over time.

### **Gender Expression**

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. Others perceive a person's gender through these attributes.

All people, regardless of their gender identity, have a gender expression and they may express it in any number of ways. For trans people, their chosen name, preferred pronoun and apparel are common ways they express their gender. People who are trans may also take medically supportive steps to align their body with their gender identity.

### **Gender Identity**

A 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 birth-assigned sex. A person's gender identity is fundamentally different from and not related to their sexual orientation.

### **Heterosexism**

The assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior and preferable. The result is discrimination against bisexual, lesbian and gay people that is less overt, and which may be unintentional and unrecognized by the person or organization responsible for the discrimination.

### **Homophobia**

Negative attitudes, feelings, or irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of gay, lesbian, or people and communities, or of behaviours stereotyped as "homosexual." It is used to signify a hostile psychological state leading to discrimination, harassment or violence against gay, lesbian or people.

### **Intersectional**



Of or relating to intersectionality.

**Intersectionality**

When two or more oppressions overlap in the experiences of an individual or group, creating interconnected barriers and complex forms of discrimination that can be insidious, covert and compounded.

**Intersex**

A term used to describe a person born with reproductive systems, chromosomes and/or hormones that are not easily characterized as male or female. This might include a woman with XY chromosomes or a man with ovaries instead of testes. Intersex characteristics occur in one out of every 1,500 births. Typically, intersex people are assigned one sex, male or female, at birth. Some intersex people identify with their assigned sex, while others do not, and some choose to identify as intersex. Intersex people may or may not identify as trans or transgender.

**Lesbian**

A woman who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to women.

**Oppression**

The obvious and subtle ways dominant groups unjustly maintain status, privilege and power over others, using physical, psychological, social or economic threats or force. Frequently an explicit ideology is used to sanction the unfair subjugation of an individual or group by a more powerful individual or group, which causes injustices in everyday interactions between marginalized groups and the dominant group.

**Queer**

Formerly derogatory slang term used to identify LGBT people. Some members of the LGBT community have embraced and reinvented this term as a positive and proud political identifier when speaking among and about themselves.

**Sex**

The classification of people as male, female or intersex. Sex is usually assigned at birth and is based on an assessment of a person's reproductive systems, hormones, chromosomes and other physical characteristics.

**Sexual Orientation**

The direction of one's sexual interest or attraction. It is a personal characteristic that forms part of who you are. It covers the range of human sexuality from lesbian and gay, to bisexual and straight.

**Trans/Transgender**

Umbrella terms that describe people with diverse gender identities and gender expressions that do not conform to stereotypical ideas about what it means to be a girl/woman or boy/man in society. "Trans" can mean transcending beyond, existing between, or crossing over the gender spectrum. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, transsexual, cross-dressers or gender non-conforming (gender variant or gender-queer).



Trans identities include people whose gender identity is different from the gender associated with their birth-assigned sex. Trans people may or may not undergo medically supportive treatments, such as hormone therapy and a range of surgical procedures, to align their bodies with their internally felt gender identity.

**Transsexual**

A person whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth. They may or may not undergo medically supportive treatments to align their bodies with their gender identity, such as hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery or other procedures or changes.

**Transphobia**

Negative attitudes and feelings and the aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward trans people, or those perceived to be trans.

**Two-Spirit/2 Spirit**

A term used by Indigenous People to describe from a cultural perspective people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, or intersex. It is used to capture a concept that exists in many different Indigenous cultures and languages. For some, the term two-spirit describes a societal and spiritual role that certain people played within traditional societies; they were often mediators, keepers of certain ceremonies; they transcended accepted roles of men and women, and filled a role as an established middle gender.

This Glossary contains terms extracted from ***Glossary of Terms***, published by The 519 at [The519.org](http://The519.org)