

**WE KEEP
EACH OTHER
SAFE:**

**A Guide for Unions to
Address Anti-2SLGBTQI+
Hate at Work**

**WORKERS UNITED
AGAINST
HATE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- A WORD FROM CLC PRESIDENT BEA BRUSKE..... 3
- DISCLAIMER..... 4
- SECTION 1: WHAT IS ANTI-2SLGBTQI+ HATE AND HOW DOES IT SHOW UP AT WORK?..... 6**
- WHY IS 2SLGBTQI+ HATE A WORKER ISSUE?..... 6
- WHY IS CHALLENGING HATE A UNION ISSUE?..... 6
- HOW DOES ANTI-2SLGBTQI+ HATE SHOW UP AT WORK?..... 7
- HAZARDS STEMMING FROM ANTI-2SLGBTQI+ HATE AND ANTI-2SLGBTQI+ VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT..... 8
- SECTION 2: HOLDING THE EMPLOYER RESPONSIBLE FOR WORKER SAFETY..... 9**
- WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT..... 10
- SPECIFIC REGULATIONS REGARDING VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT..... 11
- RIGHT TO REFUSE UNSAFE WORK..... 11
- COLLECTIVE BARGAINING..... 12
- SECTION 3: HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES AND HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES..... 13**
- HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND PROGRAM..... 14
- SECTION 4: SUPPORTING WORKERS SUBJECT TO HATE..... 19**
- SECTION 5: HOW UNIONS AND WORKERS CAN SHOW SOLIDARITY..... 24**
- APPENDIX 1: FLYING SQUADS..... 27**
- WHAT IS A FLYING SQUAD?..... 27
- IS THERE A FLYING SQUAD IN MY COMMUNITY ALREADY?..... 27
- MY AREA DOESN'T HAVE ANY FLYING SQUADS. CAN MY UNION FORM ITS OWN?..... 27
- WHAT ARE SOME BEST PRACTICES FOR MANAGING SAFETY RISKS?..... 28
- APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES..... 29**

A WORD FROM CLC PRESIDENT BEA BRUSKE

On behalf of over 3 million unionized workers in Canada, I am pleased to share this new resource to support unions and workers in their collective efforts to ensure safety against rising anti-Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Asexual/Ace/Androgynous (2SLGBTQI+) hate.

For decades, unions have stood alongside organizations and community efforts dedicated to advancing and defending the rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people and communities in Canada and internationally. Bigotry, violence and harassment threaten the fundamental human rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people. Hate requires a strong, unified response rooted in solidarity from all workers, regardless of their gender identity, expression or sexual orientation.

At the 2023 CLC's Constitutional Convention, delegates unanimously adopted an emergency resolution on rising anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate at work. It committed the Congress to take action to support local community protests and actions that defend queer and trans rights as human rights, and to develop this resource.

If you are a union representative or activist engaged in countering anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate, I encourage you to review these resources to keep workers safe.

With many thanks to those delegates, and the organizations and unions that collaborated with us on the development of this resource, I am pleased to present A Guide for Unions to Address Anti-2SLGBTQI+ Hate at Work.

In solidarity,



Bea Bruske
President,
Canadian Labour Congress



DISCLAIMER

This resource is intended to augment – not replace – existing legal obligations, standards, resources and practices related to psychological health and safety in the workplace; this includes the **National Standard on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace** (Canadian Standards Association).

It is important to understand that the consequences of hate are not always readily apparent, and targeted groups may be reluctant to come forward and disclose what they are being subjected to. This could stem from a fear of reprisal from management or their fellow workers, a sense of shame, or the belief that nothing will change, among other factors.

This resource provides an overview of how to implement a framework against 2SLGBTQI+ hate within existing Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) mechanisms. The work of protecting and promoting human rights – including the right to be safe – is not exclusively an OHS issue but should be reflected in systems throughout the workplace.



SECTION 1:

WHAT IS ANTI-2SLGBTQI+
HATE AND HOW DOES IT
SHOW UP AT WORK?

Anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate is an ideologically driven and highly politicized form of hate that specifically targets 2SLGBTQI+ communities and seeks to undermine their important gains at the community level, in public policy and in federal, provincial and territorial legislation.

This hate can and has manifested into violence and harassment targeting 2SLGBTQI+ workers (or those who others may perceive to be 2SLGBTQI+). It can also target allies in the workplace who are supportive of 2SLGBTQI+ inclusive workers, policies and programming.

While homophobic and transphobic violence, bullying and harassment is not new to workplaces in Canada, in recent years there has been a marked increase in overt, targeted expressions of anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate at work, online and in our communities. This includes a particular surge of hate targeting libraries and library workers at Drag Storytime, Pride events and events aimed at promoting trans awareness and inclusion as well as those working at 2SLGBTQI+ community events and providing social services.

Schools, school boards and social services have also been targeted by individuals and groups who seek to undermine longstanding policies and practices that help vulnerable youth who experience bullying because they are gay, trans, have same-sex parents, look different, or hold a different faith. These are policies and initiatives that were created with care, have worked for years without issue and have made it safer for young people to be their authentic selves and to get the support they need from both their schools and their families to thrive.

The rhetoric and disinformation tactics mirror similar campaigns in the United States and elsewhere – campaigns which in several states have been successful in stripping trans and queer youth, adults and families of rights and supports. The intention is to stoke fear and anger and fuel mistrust in teachers, care providers, governments and others. The messaging perpetuates harmful stereotypes about trans and queer people and includes significant falsehoods about what is being taught in schools or how trans, nonbinary and gender non-conforming youth access care and support.

These false claims are intentionally deployed to undermine positive policy initiatives that have increased 2SLGBTQI+ visibility and inclusion in recent years, including the ban on conversion therapy and protection from hate and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Many of the organizations and individuals involved have been documented to be well connected and resourced within a network of alt-right, Christian Nationalist and white supremacist organizations and movements. You can learn more about the history and organization of hate-driven, alt-right groups in Canada in this [Online Environmental Scan of Right-wing Extremism in Canada](#) by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

WHY IS 2SLGBTQI+ HATE A WORKER ISSUE?

Because the safety and human rights of all workers – including those who are 2SLGBTQI+ matters.

The impact of rising hate at work not only makes 2SLGBTQI+ workers increasingly vulnerable to harassment and violence, it has also pushed many into work where they are not protected – jobs which often lack employment benefits, are unsafe or precarious.

The impact of this precariousness can lead to chronic stress and trauma and negatively affect both mental and physical health. This reality is made even worse when intersecting with other factors like race, Indigeneity or disability. In this sense, hate is a key determinant of the health and well-being of workers and must be addressed at work.

WHY IS CHALLENGING HATE A UNION ISSUE?

Because solidarity and the principle that “an injury to one is an injury to all” is a fundamental union value. We all have an interest in defending human rights, and in keeping everyone safe at work.

For decades unions have led the charge to advance human rights both at work and in society. We have a lot of victories to celebrate, but those rights are fragile. Defending them is our collective responsibility.

HOW DOES ANTI-2SLGBTQI+ HATE SHOW UP AT WORK?

Anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate can show up at work in a number of ways. When workplaces are targeted by these hateful groups, such as the more recent targeting of schools and school boards, post-secondary institutions, performance venues and libraries, all workers at these sites are affected and put at risk.

External manifestations of anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate from outside the workplace can include demonstrations at the workplace, physical violence, threats or harassment over telephone or email, videos, podcasts, websites, social media posts and the like.

Internal manifestations of anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate can occur between workers, from management to workers or from members of the public or other third parties while people are at work. Examples include comments, images and graffiti directed at individuals and/or groups; this can impact 2SLGBTQI+ workers or those who may be perceived as 2SLGBTQI+.

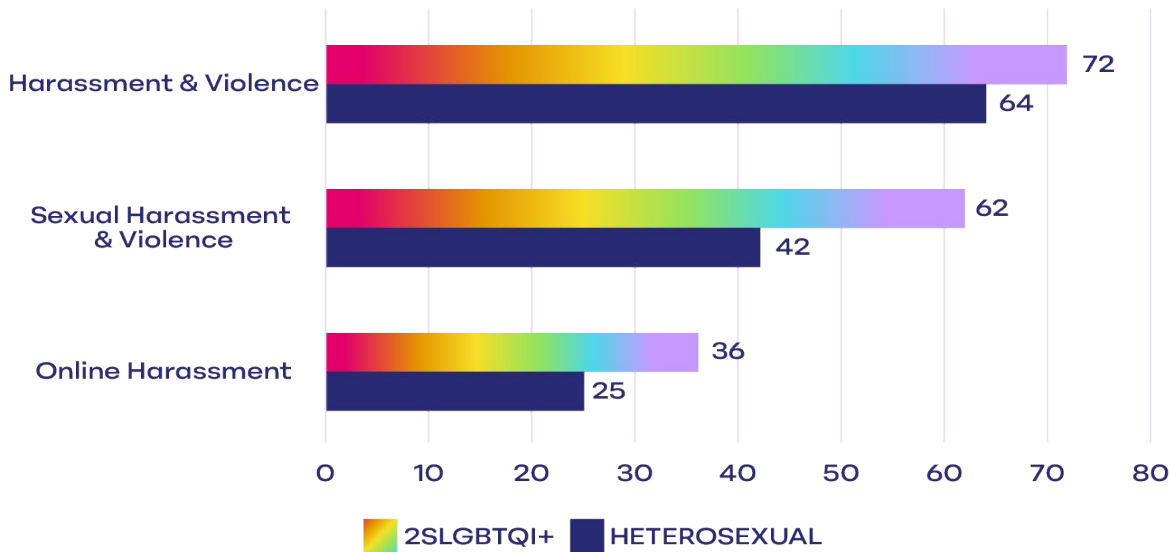
At times, 2SLGBTQI+ workers can experience more subtle manifestations of hate that create a hostile work environment, including through microaggressions, or “the **everyday “slights, snubs, or insults**, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages” to members of a marginalized group”; **this article** provides some examples¹. Regardless of whether intentional or unintentional, microaggressions can wear on – and harm – fellow workers.

1. Extracted from, Borresen, K. (2022), “14 Microaggressions LGBTQ People Deal with All the Time”, [HuffingtonPost.com](https://www.huffpost.com).

HAZARDS STEMMING FROM ANTI-2SLGBTQI+ HATE AND ANTI-2SLGBTQI+ VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

The CLC's recent report on [Harassment and Violence in Canadian Workplaces](#)² shed light on the alarming number of 2SLGBTQI+ workers who are disproportionately impacted by harassment and violence at work.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND WORKPLACE HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED



Source: [Harassment and Violence in Canadian Workplaces](#)

The survey results also found that women and gender-diverse workers were particularly vulnerable to all forms of harassment and violence, “This was most pronounced for sexual harassment and violence: 73% of gender-diverse respondents experienced this form of harassment and violence compared to 46% of women and 38% of men.”³ As anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate rises, so does the risk of violence and harassment at work. This can impact workers in many ways.

Behaviour, practices, or experiences that cause psychological harm are known as psychosocial hazards. This includes verbal abuse, exposure to hateful graffiti or memes, sexual harassment or microaggressions. These can cause stress or trauma that can have lasting effects on both mental and physical health.

In the CLC survey, almost 1 in 2 survey respondents (43.3%) who experienced sexual harassment and violence and 1 in 3 (28%) who experienced harassment and violence identified negative consequences to their health and well-being. Negative impacts included loss of sleep, and impacts on emotional health and personal relationships.

Anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate can also create safety hazards, or risks to physical health and safety, such as violent physical aggression or assault.

It's important for those who are most impacted by anti-2SLGBTQI+ violence and harassment to have a strong voice in any process designed to prevent and manage these hazards.

Employers have a legal responsibility to prepare their workplaces to prevent and manage these hazards through an occupational health and safety lens. Unions hold employers accountable and ensure that workers' voices are heard and their safety is prioritized.

2. Berlingieri, A., Welsh, S., MacQuarrie, B., McFadyen, N.D., Bigras-Dutrisac, H. with the Canadian Labour Congress. (2022). Harassment and violence in Canadian workplaces: It's [not] part of the job. London, ON: Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, Western University.

3. Ibid.



SECTION 2:

**HOLDING THE EMPLOYER
RESPONSIBLE FOR WORKER SAFETY**

No one should be – or feel – unsafe at work: all workers have a right to a healthy and safe working environment, including freedom from violence, harassment, and hate.

Under Occupational Health and Safety legislation and regulations, employers have a “general duty” to ensure the health and safety of workers from **hazards** on the job. By getting involved with health and safety at the workplace and holding employers responsible for preventing harm from anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate, you can ensure greater safety your fellow workers.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT

Health and safety legislation in all jurisdictions includes a general requirement for the employer to provide workers with a safe place to work. In addition, across Canada, health and safety is supported by the concept of the **Internal Responsibility System** which recognizes that employers have the greatest responsibility to ensure health and safety in the workplace.

In addition to adhering to instructions and guidance, workers have a responsibility to participate in health and safety by working safely and identifying hazards. Hazard assessments should be shared with the Health and Safety Committee (HSC), where applicable.

The government enforces the law. For most jobs in provinces and territories, health and safety falls under the Occupational Health and Safety Act or similar legislation. Health and safety legislation in federally regulated workplaces is found in **Part II of the Canada Labour Code**.

It is important to understand in more detail that health and safety is addressed by law in the jurisdiction under which the worker’s job falls. Here are some general resources related to violence and harassment to get started:

JURISDICTION	RESOURCE
Canada	<u>Labour Program</u>
British Columbia	<u>WorkSafe BC</u>
Alberta	<u>Government of Alberta</u>
Saskatchewan	Government of Saskatchewan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Violence</u> ▪ <u>Bullying and Harassment</u>
Manitoba	<u>SafeWork Manitoba</u>
Ontario	<u>Government of Ontario</u>
Quebec	<u>Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail / Commission for standards, equity, health and safety at work</u>
Nova Scotia	<u>Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration</u>
New Brunswick	<u>WorkSafe NB</u>
Prince Edward Island	<u>Workers Compensation Board</u>
Newfoundland	<u>Workplace NL</u>
Yukon Territory	<u>Workers Safety and Compensation Board</u>
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	<u>Workers Safety and Compensation Commission</u>

SPECIFIC REGULATIONS REGARDING VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

In 2022, Canada ratified International Labour Organization's **Convention 190, Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019**, meaning that the government agreed to enshrine the convention into law and is accountable for its implementation in all jurisdictions.⁴

C-190 applies to everyone in the world of work, including apprentices, volunteers, and job seekers, and covers violence and harassment that occurs in a broad range of situations “in the course of, linked with or arising out of work” including social events, places where workers take a rest break or meal, through work-related communications including online, and when commuting to and from work.

While the federal government has integrated C-190 into its **Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations**, other provinces and territories have specific regulations – or instructions on how the law – such as an Occupational Health and Safety Act – must be followed.

In addition, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety has an **overview of legislation of violence and harassment regulations** to consult.

RIGHT TO REFUSE UNSAFE WORK

As union representatives are well aware, most workers have the **right to refuse unsafe work**. For example, if there is an anti-2SLGBTQI+ demonstration that is escalating outside the worker's office and posing a threat of violence – and their duties would bring them into contact with the people demonstrating, and the employer has not provided mechanisms to ensure their safety – you may wish to consider initiating a **work refusal**.

In other instances, you can work with workers to notify management of hazards in the workplace, and where legally required, initiate such a refusal.

4. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2023/01/minister-oregan-ratifies-c190-the-first-ever-global-treaty-ending-violence-and-harassment-in-the-world-of-work.html>

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Health and safety legislation only sets a floor for expectations regarding health and safety in the workplace. Unions can use their **collective bargaining** power to fight for greater protections, including enhanced anti-discrimination language and specific language on harassment and violence.

This **resource** from the Canadian Union of Public Employees provides some examples of general anti-harassment and protection and prevention language in collective agreements, as does the CLC's **Bargaining Equality for LGBTQ Workers**. The latter offers this example:

- When it comes to investigation/resolution policies, ensure that the policies don't expose 2SLGBTQI+ workers to further harassment. Will the investigation/resolution policies "out" the worker if they are not already out (i.e. if everyone in the workplace doesn't already know that they are 2SLGBTQI+)?

While it's important to have protections in place for 2SLGBTQI+ workers facing violence and harassment at work, unions also play a critical role in ensuring systems and supports are put in place to help create a safer and more inclusive workplace overall and prevent incidences of hate to begin with. Resources such as CUPE's **Bargaining Beyond the Binary**, and the CLC's **Workers in Transition Guide** can help unions and workers do this.

Examples of issues that either have been or could be addressed through bargaining include the following:

- **Mandatory training for all staff on 2SLGBTQI+ hate and its consequences.** Check with your regional or national union, labour council, CLC regional representative or local 2SLGBTQI+ organizations to determine what might be available in your area.
- **Paid time off to recover from incidents of hate.** Depending on collective agreements in place, some employers require workers to provide medical documentation for time off, which may be re-traumatizing, have additional costs, and are not conducive to recovery. A set number of days should be prescribed, whereby the worker may seek an extension, as needs may dictate.
- **Additional mental health services to address the impacts of hate.** Some employers provide workers with access to Employee and Family Assistance Programs, which provide short-term mental health supports. Extended health benefits – particularly for mental health services – are crucial. Unions may consider pushing for additional services above and beyond this threshold where incidents of hate occur. Furthermore, it must be stressed that a worker need not be directly targeted by hate; the psychological harms of witnessing hate in the workplace can be substantial.
- **Additional supports that may be required, as identified by member surveys and/or feedback.** Each situation – and the needs of those subjected to hate – are nuanced and different. Collective agreements may require that active offers of support be made and that corresponding resources not be unreasonably refused by the employer.

Check with your union to see if they have relevant model language or proposals that can be brought to the bargaining table.

SECTION 3:

HEALTH AND SAFETY
COMMITTEES AND HEALTH
AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

The resources below are intended to be **integrated** into existing initiatives of any legislatively required Health and Safety Committee (HSC), where applicable.

The best way to ensure safety in the workplace is to **prevent** hazards in the first place.

In Canada, the responsibility for health and safety between managers, supervisors and employees is integrated into Health and Safety Committees, or a similarly named body where required by law. HSCs consist of a minimum number of worker and employer representatives. They are an excellent resource for identifying hazards and other issues of concern, and developing and monitoring programs, measures and procedures to address them.

Health and Safety Committees are instrumental in making recommendations which employers must respond to in writing. Any worker can participate in assessing hazards and make suggestions to the Health and Safety Committee (where one exists), a worker representative, or management.

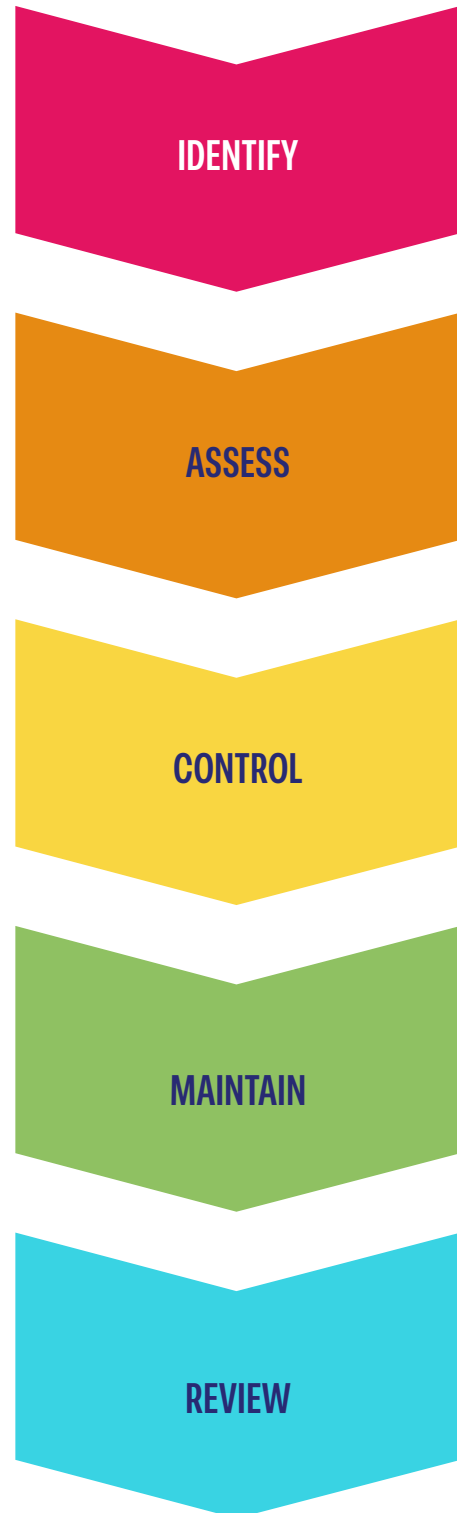
HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND PROGRAM

A health and safety **policy** is important as it shows the level of an employer's commitment to health and safety. A policy could include a statement condemning hate, for example:

- *[Organization] believes in the dignity and worth of every human being, including those who are part of the Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex and + communities and those that may be perceived as such. We stand against any and all forms of hate that would seek to diminish their worth to our community as a whole, and their right to safety, inclusion and belonging, and commit to controls and mitigations to limit hazards towards such persons.*

A Health and Safety **Program** identifies and assesses hazards and recommends mitigations – or controls. Particularly when hateful incidents take place, the Health and Safety Program can be used to proactively reiterate the provisions of the Health and Safety Policy.

It consists of the following steps:



STEP 1:

IDENTIFY HAZARDS

By identifying the hazards, or harms to worker wellbeing, we know what issue (or issues) we are trying to address.

Examples could include, but are not limited to

- Verbal threats
- Physical intimidation or injury
- Hate literature
- Doxing (publication of personal information online)
- Harassing jokes
- Outing in the workplace

STEP 2:

ASSESS HAZARDS

When assessing hazards – we need to consider certain risk factors, among them:

- The **rise** in backlash against the 2SLGBTQI+ community. In recent years reactionary forces have sought to diminish progress. Backlash is likely to occur around Pride events, Drag Queen Storytimes, and inclusive sex education initiatives, among others. They may also occur internally between colleagues, such as resistance to 2SLGBTQI+-positive training.
- External hate, such as organized pickets from groups that purport to “save children” from “gender ideology” – and that they should be “left alone”, despite evidence that 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion saves lives ([Supporting the Health of LGBTQ2S Youth in Canada](#)).
- Workers that are at higher risk of being subjected to hate include those who work with children, including **libraries** and **schools**.
- That external hate may also come from **members of the public**, particularly to out 2SLGBTQI+ workers, or those who “present” as such to those with hateful views.
- That anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate can happen **internally**, such as between management and workers – and between workers as well.

We also need to consider:

- **What constitutes the hazard?** What actions or factors create conditions in which a worker could be harmed?
- **What might be some impacts on the worker’s health?** How might there be psychosocial impacts from hate literature in the workplace? Could workers suffer mental harm, or develop mental health conditions?
- **How prevalent is the hazard?** Is a wide spectrum of the workforce impacted by hate literature? Does it happen rarely or fairly often? In particular, it can be helpful to review past incident reports to management to assess if prevalence has increased, stayed the same, or decreased over time.

STEP 3:

CONTROL HAZARDS

When faced with a hazard, it is always best to **eliminate it** – though this may not always be possible.

Via the **Hierarchy of Controls**, we see how specific incidents may require tailored mitigations.



Source: [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#)

Below are definitions of controls – and some examples of how to address hazards such as the threat of physical violence:

CONTROL	EXAMPLE
Elimination: Removing the hazard	Removing a member of the public making threats
Engineering: Isolating the worker from the hazard	Installing barriers – such as plexiglass
Administrative: Changing the way work is done	Having someone walk a person to and from their car or changing hours of work.
Personal Protective Equipment	Protective equipment on the body of the worker – such as protective vests

Below is an example of controls and their effectiveness where there is an anti-2SLGBTQI+ demonstration is being held outside of a Drag Queen Story Hour:

EFFECTIVE	POTENTIAL CONTROL
MOST EFFECTIVE	Hold the event at another location, and ensure that protestors are not made aware of it
	Staff refuses entry to potentially disruptive members of the public
MODERATELY EFFECTIVE	Hold the event at a location within the building, with curtains over the windows and away from noise.
	Management provides staff with advance notice and the option to work from home or another location or with paid leave
	With employee consent as a means to limit doxing, management removes photos and contact information of affected staff from website
LEAST EFFECTIVE	Management locks doors
	Staff desk is isolated from doorway with a clear path of exit Plexiglass and a panic button is installed at a centralized staff desk with a clear path of exit

There has been ample debate in the community regarding the pros and cons of “protective corridors” from anti-demonstrators to work locations. Concerns include the potential for doxing – or publication of personal information online – and psychosocial stress to impacted persons.

That said, some workers feel safer using corridors and wish to work at the affected site during demonstrations.

Other measures include:

- **Promptly removing hate literature and graffiti**
 - Before removal, ensure that records are kept, including the time, date, and location of the incident, including any evidence such as photographs and copies
- **Ensuring worker schedules and contact information are not posted publicly**
- **Ensuring access to safe transportation after shifts**
- **Public declarations that “hate has no place.”**

Whether it be in the Health and Safety Policy, a declaration of values or a similar document, it is imperative that management commit to issuing public declarations against 2SLGBTQI+ hate and affirming support for the community. This is true for external (such as a demonstration) and internal (worker to worker) incidents.
- **Responding to incidents in a timely manner.** To mitigate the risk of potential escalation and the impacts on workers targeted by hate, it is imperative that management commit to addressing incidents as soon as they become aware of them.
- This can include, but is not limited to:
 - Management taking immediate steps to ensure the health and safety of workers before the effects of the incident escalate further.
 - Management ensuring that workplace incidents are investigated to identify specific factors that contributed to the incident to better prevent future incidents. Union representatives are instrumental in ensuring that investigations are conducted in a manner that is trauma-informed and that workers have a meaningful say in the proposal and implementation of recommendations.

- **Offering 2SLGBTQI+ awareness training.** Here, the objective is to move merely beyond tolerance, but towards acceptance and to understand the impact hate has on workers' wellbeing and the broader workplace.
- **Offering expanded mental health support.** This can include, but is not limited to, employee assistance programs and peer-to-peer support; for the latter, this should be offered on paid time.
- **Offering time off to recover from hateful incidents.** This is particularly necessary for directly impacted workers. Furthermore, barriers such as requiring doctors' notes and the like should be removed.

STEPS 4 AND 5:

PROGRAM MAINTENANCE AND REVIEW

To ensure the hazards are appropriately monitored, encourage your Health and Safety Committee to collate plans and outcomes and develop an Action Plan. This can include other initiatives that will be done by employees' unions and other partners outside of the Health and Safety framework, including, but not limited to:

- Flying squads
- Participation in Pride events
- Training and social events throughout the year



SECTION 4:

SUPPORTING WORKERS
SUBJECT TO HATE

Being subjected to hate is deeply disorienting and harmful. This is why union representatives are so important: they provide worker-directed, compassionate, timely support.

There is no “right way” for workers subjected to hate to feel. Union representatives provide support on the worker’s terms– not direct them to a specific outcome; workers subjected to hate know best what they need, when they need it, and in what way.

Representatives may be asked to provide support by any of the following:

- The worker directly
- A member of the Health and Safety Committee, where one exists or
- The employer

If asked by the worker to provide support, it is imperative that representatives employ a **trauma-informed approach**. Unions should ensure that representatives and other staff have access to such training opportunities.

During the traumatic event, a person might experience fight, flight or freeze reflexes. These reflexive reactions are stronger than conscious thought and a survivor might not understand why they reacted the way they did. Trauma also affects the ability to form memories, which means that a survivor might not be able to tell one, coherent, complete story the first time they disclose an incident. More information may come out later or a person might be able to describe one part of the incident clearly and vividly, and have no memories or only scattered memories of everything around that moment.

The four pillars of such an approach are:

1. Realizing the impact of trauma
2. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma
3. Responding in ways that are based on the knowledge of trauma
4. Seeking to avoid retraumatization

This, in turn, requires:

- Expressing empathy and compassion: “I’m so sorry this happened to you. This must have been very difficult.”
- Being careful not to express judgment, to assign blame, or to suggest doubt in any way.
- Mirroring the language used by the survivor to describe what has happened.
- Asking questions for clarification when necessary, but not asking someone to recount more of their story than they are comfortable with.
- Providing information to allow the survivor to make an informed choice, while being careful not to pressure them into a certain response.
- Asking the survivor about confidentiality, whom you may share information with, and how much information you may share.
- Clearly explaining (before a disclosure) what your responsibilities are when you do have an obligation to report information to the institution, to the police, or to a professional regulatory body.

Extracted from: Canadian Union of Public Employees (November 5, 2021), “[A Trauma-Informed Response to Sexual Violence and Harassment](#)”.

Prior to receiving information from the worker, clearly outline parameters where information must be shared with authorities by law. Representatives should make every effort to be transparent with this support process, to help the worker understand what to expect and anticipate. In a trauma-informed and worker-centered approach, predictability for the worker is essential.

Here we share a table to show what a trauma-informed peer support approach looks like. In contrast to an abusive relationship, a trauma-informed peer support approach understands how trauma affects people’s lives. It tries to give compassionate support that respects a person’s autonomy and helps them feel better.

POWER AND CONTROL RELATIONSHIP	TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH
Volatile and unpredictable	Predictable, consistent
Belittled and mocked	Validated and feels heard
Powerless	Self-determination and agency
Boundaries violated	Choice
Gaslighting	Believed
Secrecy	Transparency
Fear	Consent
Shame	Dignity

Depending on jurisdiction, the employer may conduct – or have a third party conduct – an investigation into the incident. In such instances, the representative's role is to ensure the integrity of the process and, to the fullest extent possible, that the process is trauma-informed, transparent and worker-centered.

In cases where the person who may have perpetrated harassment and violence is also a member, it is important to ensure that the respondent has separate union representation, and that the workplace's harassment and violence policy is followed fairly.

Here are concrete steps to take:

STEP 1:

ENSURE THE WORKER'S SAFETY

If they have not already, representatives should remind the worker to remove themselves from the hazard. Should the worker need to initiate a work refusal to be safe, representatives should ensure that they **follow the steps** in their jurisdiction.

If required, the representative should invite the member to:

- Connect with a trusted peer, friend or partner and/or community groups (Trans, Queer, etc.)
- Make an appointment with a trusted medical professional, which may be a family physician or a specialist
- Connect with community resources including support counselling and cultural spaces
- Ask for paid time off to recover from the incident
- Work with the employer on a safety plan if the risk for further exposure to hate-motivated harassment and violence is ongoing
- If appropriate, consider a workplace compensation claim

STEP 2:

DOCUMENT THE INCIDENT, IF POSSIBLE

Utmost care should be taken to ensure that the worker leads the process, with the representative taking a supportive, recording role – **not an investigatory one**.

From a health and safety standpoint, documentation is important for recording:

- WHAT happened
- WHEN and WHERE the incident occurred
- WHO was involved

The process for documentation should be transparent; it should be communicated at the outset how notes will be used and stored. Whether or not the notes or summary will be shared with them, let the member know.

Representatives should speak to their union for guidance on specific circumstances that may require disclosure by law and/or about privacy in general.

STEP 3:

ASSIST THE WORKER IN OBTAINING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT THEY NEED

Community organizations, including Community Health Centres and social services may be able to assist with:

- Finding legal assistance
- Seeking medical care
- Obtaining counseling services
- Identifying and accessing potential assistance funds
- Identifying online support spaces
- Connecting to cultural healing practices
- Support networks and services can also help determine next steps.

STEP 4:

PROVIDE THE WORKER WITH THE OPTION OF DISCLOSING THE INCIDENT

It is normal for workers to be apprehensive about this, and to take their time deciding how to best move forward.

Representatives must not press workers to take one approach or another.

Depending on the incident, some information – with the express consent of the worker – may be shared with the Health and Safety Committee to identify hazards and implement controls in the future.

Workers may also wish to review health and safety policies and programs to reduce any barriers identified for reporting. This can include having materials available in more than one language, and in an accessible format using plain language.

If the worker so chooses, and if circumstances warrant, representatives may also help them with filing a grievance or other legal options, such as a human rights complaint, where possible.

In some situations, particularly if the incident is between employees, and both parties are open to it, it may be possible to have conciliation or mediation take place, whereby a third-party works to resolve the issue.

Should the worker decide to file a complaint with the police, it may be appropriate to remind them that this is a personal decision – and one not to be taken lightly.

Current hate reporting systems are inadequate, ableist and often traumatic, particularly for Indigenous, Black and racialized workers, and 2SLGBTQI+ workers, who have been at the forefront of advocating for non-policing, and community-centered reporting mechanisms and supports for many years now. **Research shows** that police services have often upheld legacies of harm and contact with law enforcement can be dangerous for too many. As such, many hate crimes and instances of hate go unreported to police, and people impacted seek support from other organizations and networks, including community organizations.

As Egale Canada notes:

“[Research] has found that under-reporting of hate crimes is particularly high among those who are targeted based on their sexual orientation, in part because of a belief that their victimization will not be taken seriously by law enforcement, or that police may be a source of further victimization [...] Further, 2SLGBTQI+ people fear secondary victimization resulting from reporting their victimization (for example, fear that disclosure of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity accompanying the reporting process may elicit negative reactions or repercussions).”

That said, hate crimes reporting is one of the main sources of statistics and data collection related to hate incidences and crimes in Canada. This data, in turn, informs civil society and governments of hate incidents and crime trends over time, and possible strategies to address them.

Regardless of whatever approach the worker chooses, representatives should be open about the reality that unfortunately, no one approach will necessarily provide the desired outcome.



SECTION 5:

HOW UNIONS AND WORKERS
CAN SHOW SOLIDARITY

It is crucial that unions lead by example by promoting 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion in their internal practices, communications, and advocacy. Unions can “walk the talk” and foster a more inclusive environment for their 2SLGBTQI+ members by using gender-neutral language whenever possible, by inviting members to share their pronouns in meetings or on nametags, and by ensuring gender-neutral washrooms are available at union events.

It's also important to remember that different people experience discrimination, hate and other forms of oppression differently, depending on their social identities. There are no “one size fits all” solutions. A person's experience of anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate and discrimination will differ if they are a woman, live with a disability, are Black, racialized or Indigenous, are a member of a religious minority and so on. Understanding how these different forms of discrimination intersect is an important perspective to bring to your role as a union leader or representative, and to understanding what your members need.

Below are some ideas on how unions can get involved:

EDUCATION

The work of inclusion is always evolving, and there is always more to learn. Unions can have experts provide training opportunities to members or encourage and support members to take advantage of educational opportunities organized by national and regional unions, the CLC, federations of labour, or labour councils. Many local 2SLGBTQI+ organizations and community resource centres have a wide range of workshops and materials to promote inclusion and a better understanding of the challenges facing 2SLGBTQI+ communities and can work with local unions on a workshop tailored for your members.

UNION VISIBILITY AT PRIDE AND OTHER QUEER EVENTS – AND BEYOND

Pride and other queer events are rooted in history as the first points of protest and activism in defense of 2SLGBTQI+ rights. Unions have a proud legacy of being present at local Pride events across Canada. Whether it's coordinating a float during a Pride parade, a contingent in a local Pride march, or hosting a booth at your local Pride picnic, find out how your local can get engaged in Pride events in your community. Don't forget to bring your banners, flags and other union swag to make your visibility and presence known. Say it loud and say it proud: 2SLGBTQI+ workers' rights are human rights!

Beyond Pride month, unions can also display Pride and trans-inclusive symbols and messaging throughout the year and be present at other events to show public support and solidarity with 2SLGBTQI+ community members, such as at public panels and talks on trans rights, or at drag story time events. These visuals signify proactive openness and understanding to the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

CREATE OR SUPPORT FLYING SQUADS AND SHOW UP TO COUNTER-PROTESTS

Flying squads are direct action tools that activists use to dispatch allies to events and spaces that hate-driven groups are targeting to ensure an active and visible presence to counter the messages of hate. Flying squads can be a helpful support to workers and members of the public attending frequently targeted events such as community Pride events, Drag Storytime at libraries, and discussions on inclusive school curriculums or policies at community centers or local schools.

Do your research to find out if there is a flying squad or a Community Solidarity mobilizing effort in your area. Your union, local labour council, or regional CLC rep might have information about existing groups, labour flying squads, or organizing networks. The Canadian Anti-Hate Network's [Guide for Pride Defenders](#) (English only) is a helpful resource.

BUILD 2SLGBTQI+ ISSUES INTO YOUR UNION'S ADVOCACY STRATEGY

Unions can demonstrate our solidarity against the rise of anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate by incorporating lobbying and advocating to uphold inclusive and human rights driven policies in our society as part of our general advocacy strategy. This can include advocacy for inclusive education policies at your province or school board, inclusive washrooms or recreation facilities in your municipality, and access to gender-affirming health care at the provincial level.

Unions can champion stronger health and safety measures when workplaces and workers themselves are being targeted by these hateful groups. In addition, unions can also act by helping to elect candidates to every level of government that pledge to support 2SLGBTQI+ communities and individuals.

SUPPORT LOCAL 2SLGBTQI+ ACTIVISM, ORGANIZATIONS, AND NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Solidarity starts with meaningful connections with those most impacted by the rise of anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate. Look for opportunities for your local to connect to 2SLGBTQI+ activism in your community, and be aware of existing mutual aid projects, campaigns and advocacy efforts that impact 2SLGBTQI+ people in your area and nationally. Get involved by endorsing these campaign efforts, incorporating them into your ongoing advocacy efforts, and finding out how your local can help direct or fundraise resources that are needed to support these often underfunded and volunteer run local 2SLGBTQI+ groups and campaigns.



APPENDIX 1: FLYING SQUADS

WHAT IS A FLYING SQUAD?

Flying squads are a direct-action tool where 2SLGBTQI+ community members and their allies go to events and spaces that hate-driven groups are targeting. They provide an active and visible presence to counter hate with truth and positive messaging. Built in advance, they support workers and others who would otherwise be vulnerable.

Targeted events include, but are not limited to:

- Pride events
- Drag Storytime at libraries or performance spaces
- Discussions on inclusive school curriculums or policies at school board meetings, community resource centers or local schools.

TIPS:

- Reach out in advance to the union representing workers at a workplace that has been targeted by anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate. They can let you know of any specific demands or recommendations that could be implemented or amplified at a counter-protest or other type of solidarity event.
- Connect with the location/venue of the demonstration in advance to ensure they are aware of any logistics that may impact their operations.

IS THERE A FLYING SQUAD IN MY COMMUNITY ALREADY?

There may already be one located in your local community. Start by connecting with local 2SLGBTQI+ organizations and campaigns in your area and region and ask about existing efforts that your union can help support and be a part of. Your local CLC representative may also have information on resources in your region.

Unions can provide resources that support local organizing. These include, but are not limited to: funding, translation services, megaphones, marshal training, printing

services, and other in-kind donations.

MY AREA DOESN'T HAVE ANY FLYING SQUADS. CAN MY UNION FORM ITS OWN?

Absolutely! Working within your union, start with a core group of workers and:

- Commit to learning together. Reach out to local 2SLGBTQI+ organizations for education and training opportunities.
- Build community. Connect with these organizations and check in about what the priorities are when it comes to community safety, and resources that your flying squad and/or union can provide.
- Learn in advance about de-escalation and conflict resolution.
- Establish a “basis of unity” that outlines core beliefs.
- Develop a mobilization plan. Determine members’ general availability, establish resources on hand (such as flags, signs, and microphones), and how you will communicate. Options include WhatsApp, Signal, Facebook and email.
- Take precautions to ensure your communications, meetings, and planning discussions are secure and only accessible to trusted people in your network.
- Debrief after the event. How are people feeling? What went well? What additional support or resources might be needed during future actions?

WHAT ARE SOME BEST PRACTICES FOR MANAGING SAFETY RISKS?

Flying squads are not for everyone.

It may be helpful to meet with the police in advance to establish an expectation that they protect squad members and in no way demonstrate support for those who express hate.

That said, situations may be fluid and volatile. People with reduced mobility or other disabilities that may limit reaction time should be provided with the option of “staying back” in a crowd, **but only if they choose.**

In addition, it is crucial that flying squads not be “spread too thin” over a large area to ensure that people are protected. Consider having a “protesting partner” and have each other’s contact information on hand.

In such situations, it is possible that you may be arrested, through no fault of your own. Check out the [Know Your Rights](#) protesting guide in advance from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association for information on what to do. Additional resources for safe protesting and other considerations can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

Keep in mind hate groups often try to provoke counter-protesters and film or livestream conflicts to bolster their narrative. It is important not to engage in arguments or confrontations with them.

Similarly, be aware that the potential for doxxing is high. Know that anything you say or do is likely to be recorded by hate groups and posted online out of context with malicious commentary.

To limit doxxing, consider wearing face masks and removing any easily identifiable clothing and the like. Of course, this is only advice – many people feel strongly that they have the right to protest publicly, and **this should be respected.**

APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

RESOURCE(S)	LINK
519 (Toronto)	<p><u>Army of Lovers</u></p> <p><u>Creating Authentic Spaces: A Gender Identity and Gender Expression Toolkit to Support the Implementation of Institutional and Social Change</u></p>
Canadian Anti-Hate Network	<p><u>Confronting and Preventing Hate in Canadian Schools Toolkit</u></p> <p>Guide for Pride Defenders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Link to <u>Complete version</u> ▪ Link to <u>Short version</u>
Canadian Civil Liberties Association	<u>Right to Gather and Protest</u>
Canadian Labour Congress	<p><u>Workers in Transition: A Practical Guide for Union Representatives and Trans Union Members</u></p> <p>Research Report (with Western University): <u>Harassment and Violence in Canadian Workplaces: It's [Not] Part of the Job</u></p>
Canadian Union of Public Employees	<u>Bargaining Beyond the Binary: A negotiating guide for trans inclusion and gender diversity</u>
EGALE	<p><u>Don't Let Them Unravel Our Pride Campaign</u></p> <p><u>Pride and Safety Toolkit</u></p>
Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario	<u>2SLGBTQI+ Resources</u>
Federation des Travailleurs et Travailleuses du Quebec	<u>Campagne sur les microagressions au travail</u> (Français seulement)
GSAnetwork.org	<u>Safety Tips for 2SLGTBQIA+ Youth</u>

RESOURCE(S)	LINK
Momentum Campaign	<u>#Act4QueerSafety</u> <u>#FactsOverFear</u> <u>@queermomentum</u> <u>@Queer.Momentum</u>
National Public Radio	<u>A Guide to Gender Identity Terms</u>
Movement Defence	<u>Know Your Rights</u>
Ontario Federation of Labour	<u>An Activist’s Guide to Safer Protesting: A List of Do’s and Don’ts to Help Activists Stay Safer and Keep the Message of the Protest at the Forefront of the Conversation</u>
Pride at Work	<u>Beyond Diversity: An LGBT Best Practice Guide for Employers</u> <u>Know Your Rights: A Guide for LGBTQ2+ Employees</u>
UFCW OUTreach	<u>Creating an LGBTQ+ Affirming Union</u>
Wisdom 2 Action	<u>The Internet Isn’t All Rainbows: Exposing and Mitigating Online Queerphobic Hate Against 2SLGBTQ+ Organizations</u>

