

**Testimony of Jade Pichette, Director of Programs and Advocacy, delivered
February 9, 2026, before the [Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights](#)**

“Thank you, senators, for the invitation to speak today and the commitment you have been showing by reviewing employment equity in Canada.

Pride at Work Canada is a national non-profit organization focused on creating a Canada where every individual can achieve their full potential at work regardless of gender expression, gender identity and sexual orientation. In our work, we work with large employers including those in federally regulated sectors, including the public service, Crown corporations, banking, transportation, telecommunications and some employers with contracts with the federal government.

Within our work, we have seen the reality for 2SLGBTQIA+ workers in Canada. Despite same-sex marriage, human rights protections, high levels of public support and even our Prime Minister getting involved in the “Heated Rivalry” craze, we live in a country where 2SLGBTQIA+ workers still live a much different reality.

We know that inequities continue for 2SLGBTQIA+ workers. About 30% of 2SLGBTQIA+ people reported experiencing discrimination or harassment on the job in the past year, compared to 8% of non-2SLGBTQIA+ respondents. A workplace where nearly one-third of any equity-deserving group receiving discrimination is one where it is not a marginal issue. It is a systemic failure with economic costs.

There is also a financial hierarchy that we see from statistics in Canada when it comes to earnings, where heterosexual men make the most, followed by gay men, lesbian women, bisexual and trans communities. Though these impacts are particularly felt by 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians, they have an economic impact for all Canadians.

When the modernization of the Employment Equity Act was being discussed in Ottawa, we became quite excited at Pride at Work Canada, as although this would not be a panacea to addressing all the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ workers and job seekers, it would set an important precedent for the inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ workers in the public service and federally regulated sectors.

When Pride at Work Canada saw a lack of action, we started to have more conversations with parliamentarians to move this forward. To echo our friends at the Enchanté Network, we saw broad agreement across representatives of all parties who see this as an economic good for Canada.

Jurisdictions that fully include 2SLGBTQIA+ people are more competitive, innovative and easier to do business in. Conversely, we are seeing countries and U.S. states that pursue exclusionary policies experience negative impacts on economic growth and security.

Modernization of the Employment Equity Act may not address every employment inequity that 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians experience; however, it would be a historically needed update to

address past omissions and serve as a model for employers across society that 2SLGBTQIA+ people are a part of our community and must be honoured.

The absence of explicit inclusion in federal law has real consequences. One federally regulated employer recently removed 2SLGBTQIA+ communities from its equity strategy, citing the fact that they are not a designated group under the act. This is not an isolated case. When federal law is silent, employers follow that silence.

We are aware that the Employment Equity Act has been far from perfect. As a result, we support the work of the employment equity task force led by Dr. Blackett, who I heard you spoke to last week. This includes the legislative as well as non-legislative changes that were recommended. In particular, we look for this act to include Black and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, to do so in an intersectional way that does not leave out those at the intersections and to be one that provides greater transparency as to the actual inclusion of all equity-deserving communities.

Senators, I thank you for studying this issue. Despite broad, cross-party support, action has not yet followed. At a time of rising hate crimes and increasing anti-trans and anti-gay legislation at home and across the world, modernizing the Employment Equity Act would send a clear message: that Canada is committed to dignity, freedom and economic opportunity for all. Thank you.”