



Canadian Professional Association
for Transgender Health

OPEN LETTER

April 17, 2009

Honourable Ronald Liepert
Minister of Health and Wellness
Government of Alberta
323 Legislature Building
10800-97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

Minister:

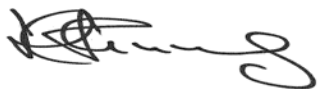
You must be fully aware of the negative impact your recent announcement to delist sex reassignment surgery (SRS) as a benefit of Alberta's health care system has had on an already significantly disenfranchised group of Canadians. The decision is arbitrary, and discriminatory.

The barriers experienced by trans people in accessing healthcare are growing at a rapid pace. The situation of many is bleak and most are prone to discrimination and abuse. They are invisible in human rights legislation in Canada and continue to suffer discrimination and prejudice in accessing our health care system. Now, having to fund their own treatment of this internationally recognized, medically necessary procedure out of their own pocket at a high personal financial cost will cause significant and unnecessary debt just to meet their needs. For many such an expense is out of reach and consequently their needs are never met. For all trans people in Alberta, this will likely result in despair, depression, anxiety and for some, perhaps a more tragic response to their situation.

The United Nations Working Group on Human Rights recently recommended that Canada implement the Yogyakarta principles as a guide to assist in policy development when addressing sexual orientation and gender identity issues. Principle 17 is explicit and states: "facilitate access by those seeking body modifications related to gender reassignment to competent, non-discriminatory treatment, care and support." In response, the Federal Government is meeting with groups like Egale Canada on April 21st to discuss the effective implementation of these guidelines. The failure of the Alberta Government to consult with medical authorities and trans community members indicates a disregard for transsexual and transgender persons and a lack of understanding with regard to the importance of this procedure for this marginalized and vulnerable population.

Minister, this is more than a medical issue, but also one of basic human rights. We urge you to reverse this decision and instead address the shortage of accessible, localised access to specialist care so that the most marginalized in society can be treated with dignity and respect.

An opportunity to meet with you at your convenience would be greatly appreciated. We would be happy to supply a briefing package that includes information on the funding supplied by the other provinces for your perusal.



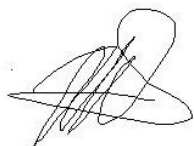
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