



DIGNITY NETWORK CANADA

ROUNDTABLE
MEETINGS 2024



DIGNITY NETWORK CANADA: ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS 2024

Dignity Network Canada (DNC) was created as a national collaborative platform for Canadian organizations to work together to advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ people around the world. DNC's roundtable meeting has always been an opportunity for members to connect, discuss shared challenges, and benefit from the support of a strong community.

In May 2024, Dignity Network Canada held its largest ever roundtable meeting to date. This was DNC's fourth roundtable meeting in Ottawa. Over 200 people from across civil society and government came together to discuss Canada's role in the world on advancing human rights for LGBTQI+ people over three days. During the week,

international human rights defenders from our Global Advisory Board met with a dozen Canadian Members of Parliament from all parties, and we had our most successful parliamentary outreach to date. The final day of the roundtable took place at Global Affairs Canada's 111 Sussex Building where government officials and civil society leaders joined in dialogue to discuss how the Canadian Government can continue developing its work in support of global SOGIESC issues.

This report is a summary of DNC's 2024 roundtable meeting and aims to provide a review of the outcomes as well as to provide a foundation for the next steps of the network.



ACT TOGETHER FOR INCLUSION FUND (ACTIF) MEETING DAYS

Prior to our roundtable Meeting, local partners from 11 projects supported by the Acting Together for Inclusion (ACTIF) Fund met in Ottawa on May 6 and 7. Managed by Equitas in collaboration with Dignity Network Canada, ACTIF is a multi-year project representing a central component of Canada's LGBTIQ International Assistance Program, through Global Affairs Canada (Canadian Partnerships Window).

This co-learning and networking event was an opportunity to build community between the numerous organizations and human rights defenders who have been beneficiaries

of ACTIF. Participants shared motivations, best practices and challenges of carrying out collaborative projects for their respective communities, as well as gave feedback on the ACTIF overall. This event was facilitated and documented by Equitas, in collaboration with Dignity Network Canada; we are grateful for Equitas's continued leadership in driving Canadian international development programming with local partners.



GLOBAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE & ADVOCACY MEETINGS

Dignity Network Canada is privileged to draw expertise from leading human rights defenders from around the world - our Global Advisory Board represents the diversity of identities and intersectionalities in the global LGBTIQ community to better inform and incorporate the perspectives of international partners in all the work Dignity Network Canada does for SOGIESC human rights.

Leading up to our Roundtable Conference, members of the Global Advisory Board participated in Dignity Network Canada's largest ever series of meetings with MPs representing all major parties. In representing our network, Global Advisory Members shared their experiences in working with Canadian organizations and emphasised the immense value of Canada's contributions to advancing global SOGIESC human rights.

We organised meetings with six members of the Canadian federal cabinet: Hon. Melanie Joly (Foreign Affairs), Hon. Ahmed Hussen (International Development), Hon. Marci Ien (Women and Gender Equality and Youth), Hon. Marc Miller (Immigration and Refugees), Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Employment), and Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Crown-Indigenous Relations). Meetings were also held with Parliamentary Secretaries Anita Vandenbeld (International Development) and Hon. Rob Oliphant (Foreign Affairs), as well as Foreign Affairs and International Development House Committee Chair, MP Ali Ehsassi.

In addition to members of Canada's Liberal Party, Dignity Network Canada organized meetings for Global Advisory Board members to meet with MPs from Canada's three main opposition parties. Meetings were held with Conservative MPs Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Shadow Minister for Women and Gender Equality), Scott Aitchison, Larry Maguire, and Eric Mellilo. Other meetings with opposition party representatives included Bloc Quebecois MP Andreeanne Larouche (Critic for Women and Gender Equality) and New Democratic MP Randall Garrison (Critic for 2SLGBTQI+ Rights).

Great value was found in meeting and sharing experiences with legislators from all parties in Canada. A key topic discussed was how human rights defenders have found success working with Global Affairs Canada, including Canadian Embassies abroad, and next steps on developing this work further to ensure Canada remains a leader for human rights in foreign policy.



POLITICAL ADVOCACY



DNC Member Rainbow Railroad and Global Advisory Members discuss LGBTQI+ forced displacement and migration with the Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship



Global Advisory Members and DNC Staff with the Hon. Ahmed Hussen, Minister of International Development



Global Advisory Members discussing queer indigenous global solidarity with the Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations



Global Advisory Members and DNC Staff with the Hon. Rob Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs



DNC Staff and Global Advisory Members presenting a flag to the Hon. Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth



Global Advisory Members and Roundtable Participants with MP Anita Vandenberg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development



Global Advisory Members meeting with the Hon. Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs

POLITICAL ADVOCACY



Global Advisory Members and DNC Staff with Conservative MP Scott Aitchison



Global Advisory Members meeting with Conservative MP Eric Melillo



DNC Member Representatives meeting with Bloc Quebecois MP Andréanne Larouche, Bloc Opposition Critic for Women and Gender Equality



Global Advisory Members and DNC Staff meeting with Conservative MP Shelby Kramp-Neuman, Opposition Shadow Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, and Chair of the Standing Committee for Status of Women



Global Advisory Members and DNC Staff presenting Conservative MP Larry Maguire DNC's 2023 Annual Report



Global Advisory and DNC Board Members with NDP MP Randall Garrison, NDP Opposition Critic for 2SLGBTQ+ Rights



DNC Staff and Global Advisory Members meeting with MP Aii Ehsassi, Chair of the House of Commons Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

DAY 1 SUMMARY

Indigenous Opening Ceremony & Panel

Dignity Network Canada was proud to centre indigenous perspectives as part of our 2024 Roundtable meetings. Opening our sessions at the Ottawa City Centre Delta Hotel, Elder Irene Compton provided a land acknowledgement and conducted a smudging ceremony.

DNC held an opening panel discussion on building Two Spirit and indigenous LGBTIQ solidarity with speakers representing queer and trans indigenous groups from Canada and Guatemala. The panel presented findings and a discussion on a report commissioned by DNC and ACTIF in 2023, which explored solidarity opportunities between the Two Spirit community in Canada with other global indigenous LGBTIQ groups.



Strategic Planning

A conversation on Dignity Network Canada's new 2025-2030 strategic plan was moderated by House Consulting, featuring DNC members, international partners, Board Members.. Key takeaways regarding the network's next steps

included an expansion of the DNC's capacity to engage with its membership through programming, and the encouragement of further advocacy work with the Canadian government. . We are excited to begin implementing this strategic plan!



OPENING RECEPTION

In partnership with Pride at Work Canada, we were proud to host an opening reception themed around 'Welcome to Canada' for the roundtable's myriad of international guests. The reception featured Canadian wines and a build-your-own poutine bar, and was attended by a range of local civil society leaders, as well as representatives from the

Parliament of Canada and Canadian civil service. Remarks by the Hon. Rob Oliphant - Parliamentary Secretary for International Development, were given on behalf of the Government of Canada. We acknowledge and are grateful for contributions by Pride at Work Canada in ensuring our opening reception was a strong success!





DAY 2 SUMMARY

Our roundtable day on May 9th focused on building solidarity across Dignity Network member organizations and affiliated groups. After a plenary session discussion on ACTIF featuring representatives of Canadian funded projects, roundtable participants delved into a range of breakout discussions on building solidarity through partnerships. Demonstrating the range of expertise and thought leadership within ACTIF, breakout discussion topics included economic inclusion, mental health and wellness, human rights and legal advocacy, engaging media/journalists, faith communities, as well as research and advocacy.



Key themes that emerged, stressed the necessity of DNC's network model in building on members' work across areas. For instance, mobilizing existing forums (DNC working groups) to advance priorities were key to the advocacy successes of network members. Secondly, developing inter-network partnerships (including transnationally), for delivering public outreach events, learning products, advocacy materials, and programming content, was deemed a best practice that roundtable participants were urged to pursue more widely.

Representatives from several funder organizations, (Global Philanthropy Project, USAID, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, ISDAO, International Trans Fund), conducted a panel discussion outlining trends in global SOGIESC funding, including next steps. It was expressed that due to an uncertain global political environment, the need for philanthropic and accessible government funders to step up for global LGBTIQ issues, has never been greater.



During our opening discussion on Day 2 of our Roundtable, some participants expressed concern about conflicts in Gaza and the broader Middle East, demonstrating a strong interest in organizing more spaces to discuss this topic at the event. In addressing these issues, spaces were created during the Day 2 Roundtable, as well as during a breakout discussion on the day spent with Global Affairs Canada - the focus of these discussions was to build solidarity between impacted groups, as well as Canadian foreign policy and refugee policy pertaining to this.



Immediately after lunch, there was a panel discussion on Canada's role in international crisis response. Panelists emphasized the need for Canadian foreign policy to be more responsive to feedback from local partners, especially in fast evolving situations that imminently put the safety of human rights defenders at risk. Additionally, having a better understanding of roles at Global Affairs Canada for CSOs to identify relevant contacts for more effective crisis response was identified as an area for future work.

The afternoon built on previous discussions of solidarity, with 'World Cafe' discussions that encouraged developing further connections and mutual support within identity based groups. Discussions were held for:

- Indigenous/Two Spirit communities
- Transgender participants
- Francophone communities
- Refugees and migrants



INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA & BIPHOBIA (IDAHOBIT) RECEPTION



In partnership with Fondation Emergence, as well as Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Borden Ladner Gervais (BLG) LLP, we held a reception to commemorate the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia (IDAHOBIT), at the BLG Ottawa law offices. We were also pleased to host representatives from the Canadian civil service, diplomatic corps, and the Parliament of Canada.

Remarks were given by the Hon. Marc Len, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, and H.E. Ines Coppoolse, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Canada. Prior to remarks by Laurent Breault, Fondation Emergence presented the video 'Outing the Outdated,' to highlight IDAHOBIT, as well as the work that needs to be done to combat growing anti-LGBTIQ movements. We are grateful to all of our partners and sponsors for making this IDAHOBIT reception a success, and look forward to building deeper collaborations for future events.



GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA ENGAGEMENT DAY

Dignity Network Canada hosted our final day of the 2024 roundtable at the offices of Global Affairs Canada at the John D Diefenbaker Building, 111 Sussex. By holding these meetings at Global Affairs Canada, civil society leaders and human rights defenders attending our 2024 roundtable were able to directly engage and network with officials responsible for delivering Canadian foreign policy on relevant thematic and regional issues.

Roundtable participants discussed a range of themes with civil servants from the Government of Canada, stressing how Canadian foreign policy should continue advancing global SOGIESC issues, as well as key next steps. In addition to various branches of Global Affairs Canada, representatives from Women and Gender Equality Canada, as well as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, were present.

Breakout discussions co-facilitated by a DNC-affiliated civil society representative and a corresponding representative from the Government of Canada were held throughout the day. Dignity Network Canada is grateful for Global Affairs Canada staff who worked in identifying and confirming relevant civil service representatives to complement our discussions. Overall, an immense and unprecedented exchange of learning happened for both CSO and Government of Canada participants, with both becoming better acquainted with how to build stronger collaborations in the Global SOGIESC/Canadian foreign policy space.



Panel with International Human Rights Defenders and Parliamentary Secretary Anita Vandenberg

Our day at Global Affairs Canada was opened by a panel discussion with Canada’s Parliamentary Secretary for International Development, MP Anita Vandenberg, who was joined by members of the DNC’s Global Advisory Board, including human rights defenders from Thailand, Cameroun, Ecuador, Uganda and Saint Lucia. Key points of discussion included the value of the Government of Canada’s ongoing commitment to advancing global SOGIESC human rights, and strengthening of partnerships between GAC and global south human rights defenders. In addition to the panel discussion, Parliamentary Secretary Vandenberg announced \$1.7 million CAD in funding as part of Canada’s ongoing LGBTIQ International Assistance Program commitment.



GAC DAY TAKEAWAYS

Scene-Setting Presentations

Global SOGIESC issues are relevant across different branches of Global Affairs Canada. Our morning presentations sought to foster a stronger understanding of how LGBTIQ issues impact the 'landscape' of Canadian foreign policy, specific to various thematic priorities.

Breakout session topics included; Countering global anti-gender politics, Economic Inclusion and Employment, Promotion Democracy and Inclusive Governance, Responding to Emergencies and Humanitarian Crises, Feminist Foreign Policy, Women, Peace and Security, and Canada's Federal 2SLGBTQI Action Plan.

Key takeaways included the need for civil society to have a better understanding of how Global Affairs Canada operates and the scope of involvement held by various departmental divisions. These scene-setting dialogues also reaffirmed the positive impact of the CSO-GAC Standing Table on SOGIESC Issues, co-chaired by the DNC.



Regional Breakouts

DNC members and local partners represent dozens of countries in every region of the world. Regional breakout discussions were held to better coordinate civil society and relevant GAC representatives to assess how Canada is working with human rights defenders in every region.

Breakout session topics/regions included; Asia-Pacific, Africa (francophone and anglophone), Latin America, Caribbean, and Middle East.

A theme across all break-out sessions was to emphasize incorporating further LGBTIQ content and international development assistance in every region. Although regions vary immensely in issues posed, roundtable participants expressed a desire to integrate new ventures to support human rights defenders and more robustly action LGBTIQ issues.

A panel discussion assessing SOGIESC International Assistance was held, engaging representatives from ACTIF, ISDAO, The Equality Fund, and Global

Affairs Canada. Panelists agreed that Canada's foreign policy leadership in SOGIESC international assistance has yielded strong results from current progress, and this work should be built further. In addition, CSOs and Global Affairs Canada will continue working in partnership to address gaps in international assistance, and ensure existing commitments are met.

Building on discussions held around Canadian foreign policy priorities and regional engagement, breakout discussions discussing next steps were held in the afternoon. Through collaboration between Global Affairs Canada and the DNC's Government Relations and Advocacy Working Group, several pressing themes for advancing SOGIESC issues in Canadian Foreign Policy were identified.



NEXT STEPS

Diplomacy and International Fora

An overall plan from GAC on Canada's SOGIESC priorities in international diplomatic forums should be developed in cooperation with civil society to better consolidate overall Canadian participation. Canada should also re-explore the establishment of specific senior role (envoy) to direct foreign policy strategy for SOGIESC Human Rights.

International Assistance Programming

GAC, DNC, and key stakeholders should co-design a model that more explicitly describes how the IAP will commit to the future \$10m CAD/year minimum spending of SOGIESC issues in future years, as well as identify how the IAP can evolve towards a specific funding envelope in the department. How the IAP is meeting or exceeding spending commitments should be more clearly expressed to civil society.

Canadian Embassies and Missions Abroad

DNC, in collaborating with GAC, should develop a toolkit for LGBTIQ CSOs to more easily engage with Canadian missions abroad in accessing funding (ex Canada Fund for Local Initiatives) and assist deepening partnerships between missions and local groups. Better training of Canadian diplomats to be responsive to the needs of human rights defenders is also critical, including familiarity with the Voices at Risk Guidelines for mission staff.



Engaging Canadians in Global Citizenship

CSOs involved with public engagement and GAC should develop increased partnerships focused on enhancing awareness of SOGIESC issues as part of Canada's foreign policy/international assistance work. It would be valuable for both GAC and Civil Society to have a sense of which units/organizations are engaged in public engagement, initiatives being taken, as well as areas for collaboration.

Migration and Emergency Support

More intentional contact and expanded projects between relevant CSOs and GAC should be established, to better coordinate responses to emergent crises while being cognizant of the numerous additional unique factors the experiences of LGBTIQ displaced people.

Breakout Room Topic	Discussion Summary	Next Steps
<p>Diplomacy and International Fora</p>	<p>Canada has increasingly integrated SOGIESC issues in international diplomacy spaces, including the United Nations, OAS, La Francophonie and the Commonwealth. Many Dignity Network Canada members also participate in these spaces, but have identified gaps in collaborating with government delegates and streamlining Canadian international advocacy on global SOGIESC issues. As there is a developing cooperation model between GAC and civil society through DNC, this poses opportunities to better approach working together.</p>	<p>An overall plan from GAC on Canada's SOGIESC priorities in international diplomatic forums should be developed in cooperation with civil society to better consolidate overall Canadian participation. Canada should also re-explore the establishment of specific senior role (envoy) to direct foreign policy strategy for SOGIESC Human Rights.</p>
<p>International Assistance Programming</p>	<p>Canada announced the LGBTIQ International Assistance Program in 2019, committing to \$30m CAD over 5 initial years, followed by \$10m CAD every year thereafter. We are reaching the end of the initial stage of the IAP and there are questions in defining how spending from 2025-2026 onwards will be implemented.</p>	<p>GAC, DNC, and key stakeholders should co-design a model that more explicitly describes how the IAP will commit to the future \$10m CAD/year minimum spending of SOGIESC issues in future years, as well as identify how the IAP can evolve towards a specific funding envelope in the department. How the IAP is meeting or exceeding spending commitments should be more clearly expressed to civil society.</p>
<p>Canadian Embassies and Missions Abroad</p>	<p>Engaging with SOGIESC issues has been a priority of foreign Canadian missions and has proven invaluable to supporting LGBTIQ issues in various regions. Canada also provides a framework to guide missions on working with human rights</p>	<p>DNC, in collaborating with GAC, should develop a toolkit for LGBTIQ CSOs to more easily engage with Canadian missions abroad in accessing funding (ex Canada Fund for Local Initiatives) and assist</p>

Breakout Room Topic	Discussion Summary	Next Steps
<p>Canadian Embassies and Missions Abroad</p>	<p>defenders called, 'Voices at Risk.' Yet, there remain strong disparities between missions in their support for LGBTIQ communities, as well as no consolidated strategy across all missions to work in SOGIESC issues.</p>	<p>deepening partnerships between missions and local groups. Better training of Canadian diplomats to be responsive to the needs of human rights defenders is also critical, including familiarity with the Voices at Risk Guidelines for mission staff.</p>
<p>Engaging Canadians in Global Citizenship</p>	<p>Numerous DNC members have now developed public engagement and communications strategies to bring awareness to global SOGIESC issues. GAC also has robust Global Citizenship and public awareness programming, yet there has been no connection made between these, and Canada's work on SOGIESC issues. These are missed opportunities to deepen collaboration between GAC's public engagement programming and internationally-focused LGBTIQ programming including events and social media.</p>	<p>CSOs involved with public engagement and GAC should develop increased partnerships focused on enhancing awareness of SOGIESC issues as part of Canada's foreign policy/ international assistance work. It would be valuable for both GAC and Civil Society to have a sense of which units/ organizations are engaged in public engagement, initiatives being taken, as well as areas for collaboration.</p>
<p>Migration and Emergency Support</p>	<p>Numerous humanitarian situations have required urgent and unique responses for LGBTIQ communities. Additionally, crises pertaining to anti-LGBTIQ legislation and state persecution have intensified and require increasingly greater capacity. CSOs with programming related to queer refugees are ready to deepen their partnerships with both Global Affairs Canada and IRCC to streamline assistance for LGBTIQ communities.</p>	<p>More intentional contact and expanded projects between relevant CSOs and GAC should be established, to better coordinate responses to emergent crises while being cognizant of the numerous additional unique factors the experiences of LGBTIQ displaced people.</p>

CLOSING RECEPTION

To close our week of roundtable discussions, Rainbow Railroad hosted an exclusive closing night reception at the National Arts Centre, where new projects funded by Global Affairs Canada were discussed in depth. Legislators, political staff, members of the diplomatic corps, and local civil society partners were in attendance throughout. After remarks were given, attendees were treated to a public celebration featuring a performance by Canada's Drag Race season 4 winner, Venus. We express our gratitude to our partner Rainbow Railroad for their organization of this roundtable closing celebration.



POST-ROUNDTABLE FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

"I really enjoyed the sessions and an opportunity to engage with Global Affairs Canada. I think this type of opportunity and engagement with governments is rare and quite special."

"One of the best conferences I have ever attended. The discussions were great, the networking was easy and the people were fantastic."

"The event would benefit from more space and more speakers from the French-speaking world."

"The semi-structured breakout sessions supported a balance between hearing from presenters/panellists, and creating space for response and inter-participant discussions or advocacy by participants."

"Ensure that panels/ breakout sessions stay on schedule so that the sessions afterwards are not rushed/short on time."

POST-ROUNDTABLE FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

A post-roundtable survey was circulated to participants to guide the planning for subsequent international gatherings in Ottawa. Overall feedback reinforced the importance of the DNC providing a platform for French and Spanish interpretation around the event, as well as appreciation for opportunities given to international participants to engage with legislators and civil servants from the Government of Canada. A strong focus was placed on fostering these relationships further in future years, as well as following up on the many shared experiences, ideas, concerns and questions given throughout the week.



The following statistics are derived from the post-roundtable survey:

94% of ACTIF workshop participants found the sessions were successful at creative learning and networking between ACTIF funded partners.

88% of CSOs attendees to the DNC CSO roundtables found the sessions were successful in creating spaces to network, learn, and build relationships between CSOs.

95% of attendees from both CSOs and government felt the sessions at Global Affairs Canada were successful in creating spaces to network, learn and build relationships between CSOs.

97% of attendees found the evening receptions were successful in creating spaces for networking, learning and relationship building.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FUNDERS AND SPONSORS

We acknowledge and thank all of the funders and sponsors who have helped make our 2024 roundtable meeting a success. These include Global Affairs Canada, and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, as well as Pride at Work Canada, Fondation Emergence, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Borden Ladner Gervais LLP.

We are also grateful to our volunteers, event manager, DNC and ACTIF staff, as well as network and board members who helped make this event a great success.



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