



Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

Supporting police professionals through innovative and inclusive police leadership
to advance the safety and security of all Canadians.

Association canadienne des chefs de police

Appuyer les professionnels du secteur policier par un leadership policier novateur et inclusif
afin de promouvoir la sûreté et la sécurité de tous les Canadiens.

CACP Apology to Canada's 2SLGBTQ+ Communities

**Chief Bryan Larkin, President, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police
December 10, 2020**

As we celebrate International Human Rights Day, we also mark a new day for police-community relationships in Canada. On this day, we acknowledge the universal rights and freedoms that we are all entitled to, the right to live free and safe without discrimination regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, identity, or any other status.

While this declaration has existed for over 70 years, two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, transgender, and queer individuals continue to face and confront discrimination on a daily basis. While we have made progress as a society and a nation, there is still much more we can do. Now is the time to take responsibility in leading and championing the systemic changes necessary to move beyond a declaration and into the creation of an inclusive and equitable society for all.

Police have an obligation, and a duty to uphold the law and a responsibility to create and support safe communities for every Canadian. However, at times, we have failed in our obligations and have made decisions and purposely taken positions that have harmed the very people we are sworn to protect.

True leaders in policing must demonstrate courage, compassion, integrity, transparency, respect and inclusiveness. True leaders must also be accountable. Police agencies have not always been supportive of sexual and gender diverse communities, and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police is no exception.

Our organization publicly opposed changes to the Canadian Criminal Code to decriminalize homosexuality in the late 1960s. Despite the federal government making amendments to the *Criminal Code* in September 1968 to decriminalize homosexuality, police agencies across Canada continued to criminalize members of sexual and gender diverse communities.

The years that followed were filled with harassment, discrimination and persecution. Police agencies targeted Canadians based solely on their sexual orientation, resulting in an increase in gross indecency and obscenity charges, imprisonment, and raids. Many people were charged under the 'Bawdy House' law for merely being present in a gay bar or bathhouse.

As a result of our purposeful intolerance, our own membership suffered. Numerous sworn officers and civilian employees faced discrimination, shame and job loss merely because of their sexual orientation. Many lived double lives because regardless of who you were, being “outed” meant persecution, violence, personal and economic hardships, and for some, even suicide.

We will never fully comprehend the damage our actions and decisions inflicted on countless Canadians we had a responsibility to support, protect and serve. If we truly desire to repair the harm we caused, we must be accountable for the damage we contributed to and take purposeful, public steps to repair the damage. Now is the time for reconciliation and healing.

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, I want to sincerely apologize for the harm we caused by not fully supporting Two-spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Transgender, and Queer Communities. We now have a better understanding of the impact that specific laws, policies and decisions had on the community and how we contributed to institutional bias, intolerance, and the violation of human rights.

We acknowledge the pain our actions have caused, the personal suffering, shame and trauma our public positions contributed to, and the deep distrust and divide that was created by the positions we took. Our decisions and actions legitimized attitudes and beliefs that were discriminatory. We take responsibility for our past wrongdoings and, on behalf of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, I am sorry.

In recent years, there has been unprecedented progress in ensuring the rights of Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, Transgender, and Queer Canadians. The calls for change across the country and around the world have been profound. This includes changes in the attitudes, opinion and positions within the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police membership as well.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee has helped us achieve an understanding and establish the momentum to announce the apology I share with you today. While we cannot apologize for the wrongdoings of individual police agencies, we can and we must set an example for them to follow.

Apologies are important, but they are insufficient to create the required change needed. In order to improve, and for sexual and gender diverse communities to see and feel our genuine commitment, we need to do more. In issuing this apology today, it was important to us to follow our words with action.

As such, we have created and are releasing a Two-Spirit Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, Transgender, and Queer Equity and Inclusion toolkit of policing specific guidelines, best practices, and recommendations that will support organizations in understanding why an apology is necessary. This toolkit provides local police agencies with the tools required to initiate changes within their own organizations, the resources to begin the reconciliation process, and the support to engage with the Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, Transgender, and Queer Communities in their own way.

We cannot do this alone. We need the support of one another if we are to move forward and we are thankful to the members of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the community who have helped us take this important first step.

Despite any progress, 68 per cent of “queer” individuals have been harassed, physically attacked or sexually harassed simply for their orientation. 30 per cent will not seek emergency medical care for fear of discrimination and are 14 times more at risk for suicide and substance abuse. It is abundantly clear that more has to be done.

It is critical for all of us in law enforcement to show our support to Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, Transgender, and Queer members within our community and organizations, to stand together against homophobia, transphobia, and any other kind of marginalization, shaming, disrespect or hate.

Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, Transgender, and Queer rights are human rights. Nobody should ever be persecuted simply because of who they are, and everyone should be treated fairly, with compassion and respect. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police is committed to supporting you. I acknowledge our past and I am sorry for the harm we have caused. We seek the opportunity to build a relationship of respect, understanding and trust. We look forward to working with you.

Thank you.