

## **2SLGBTQI+ VETERANS**

- Veterans Affairs Canada Community Engagement Division promotes equity for 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans, identifying systemic barriers and unique service-related needs and working collaboratively across the department and with communities with lived experience to shape solutions.
- In April 2024, Veterans Affairs Canada sent the first ever 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans delegation to France and Belgium to visit historical sites and participate in commemorative events. The delegation was made up of members from Rainbow Veterans of Canada and The LGBT Purge Fund. The delegation also took part in a Battle of Vimy Ridge ceremony on April 9 to honour all First World War 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans, particularly Frederick Hardy, whose name is listed on the monument.
- The 2024 Forum for 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans was held on August 28-29. The forum aimed to broaden participants' understanding of diverse Veteran identities and lived experiences and to hear about gaps and needs of equity-deserving Veterans, particularly 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans.
- The Government of Canada recognizes the sacrifices and achievements of all Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and additional

sexually and gender diverse (2SLGBTQI+) Veterans in Canada.

- The [historic apology by Prime Minister Trudeau in 2017](#) was recognition for survivors of the LGBT Purge and the LGBTQ2 communities in Canada for their historically unjust treatment.
- The [LGBT Purge settlement](#) in June of 2018, provided LGBTQ2 Veterans and their survivors with recognition and payment for the suffering of survivors of the LGBT Purge. The [Emerging from the Purge Report](#) (2021) provided 23 recommendations to respond to equity, diversity, and inclusion needs of 2SLGBTQI+ people working in federal workplaces.
- The [first-ever Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan \(2022\)](#) presented a suite of measures to advance equality and protect the rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canada, while tackling discrimination against 2SLGBTQI+ communities.
- 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans face significant challenges – including negative mental health impacts, underemployment, homelessness, harassment, bullying and violence. These challenges are further amplified for people with intersecting lived experiences, including Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities, Black and racialized 2SLGBTQI+

communities, and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans with disabilities.

## **WHEN PRESSED:**

### **Q1 – What is the VAC doing to support 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans?**

Veterans Affairs Canada continues to work with Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), which developed the first ever 2SLGBTQI+ Federal Action Plan by consulting with Veterans and LGBT Purge Survivors about their unique service-related needs, and systemic challenges or barriers they face in accessing programs and services. In addition, VAC works with academic partners, Veterans organizations and other stakeholders to study best practices in meeting the needs of under-represented Veterans through direct engagement with staff to foster a culture of openness, understanding, and trust.

VAC continues to work towards mainstreaming GBA Plus, through the implementation of the VAC Gender-Based Analysis Plus Strategy to fully integrate GBA Plus into our work at all stages of design, development, implementation, monitoring and decision-making.

VAC will continue to ensure that Women and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans are considered as part of our Ministerial Advisory Groups, are highlighted in communications products. VAC continues to increase the presence of modern-day Veterans in commemorative content.

VAC has established positive working relationships with the LGBT Purge Fund and Rainbow Veterans of Canada (RVC). VAC has also made advances in allocating targeted funding for projects that support the unique needs of 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans, most notably through the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund (VFWF), which provided funding for three organizations supporting projects with positive outcomes for 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans. Furthermore, we are committed to hosting an annual Forum for 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans to identify systemic barriers, inequities, and gaps in our existing policies, programs, and services. We will work collaboratively with these Veteran communities, stakeholders, partners, and academia towards achieving equality for all Veterans.

Lastly, VAC is working to improve and expand commemorative materials to ensure inclusive recognition and honour 2SLGBTQI+ military history, as well as educate on the history of the LGBT Purge and historical discrimination.

### **Q2 – Was VAC aware of the challenges faced by 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans while seeking services?**

VAC has been working towards implementing more inclusive services for 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans and their families through the modernization of Sex and Gender Information Practices, which outlines best practices for reporting on information related to sex and gender and supports evidence-informed decisions.; VAC also promotes relevant training among employees, such as trauma-informed training, bias awareness training, and training on 2SLGBTQI+ history (including the LGBT Purge).

2SLGBTQI+ Veterans

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### **Q3 – What is VAC doing to provide more inclusive services for 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans?**

VAC continues to evolve our training and services, using Gender-Based Analysis to ensure our services reflect and respond to the intersectional needs of our Veterans. We are committed to making our applications for services and benefits more inclusive and reflective of the needs of diverse Veterans, including 2SLGBTQI+Veterans. VAC continuous building relationships with members of the community and learning about grassroots community partners.

### **Q4 – Why did the terminology change from LGBT to LGBTQ2 to 2SLGBTQI+?**

During the engagement process for the 2022 First Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada called for the acronym to be used by the Government of Canada to be updated. The Government of Canada adopted and encouraged the use of 2SLBTQI+ as a more inclusive term.

## **BACKGROUND — 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans**

Veterans Affairs Canada supports 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans and their families; a broad community that includes diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The 2SLGBTQI+ community includes those who identify as Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex, as well as Veterans who identify as part of sexual and gender-diverse communities and use additional terminology.

Between the 1950s and mid-1990s, 2SLGBTQI+ members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and the federal public service were systematically discriminated against, harassed and often fired as a matter of policy and sanctioned practice, in what came to be known as the “LGBT Purge”. In June 2018, a historic settlement was reached, including a global settlement of \$145 million, including \$110 million for LGBT Purge victims. The LGBT Purge Fund administers a settlement of \$23 million to support reconciliation and memorialization of the LGBT Purge.

Veterans Affairs Canada works collaboratively with the LGBT Purge Fund to identify and address systemic challenges facing 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans.

Veterans Affairs Canada has committed to making space to build community with 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans, hosting the landmark 2020 virtual roundtable on 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans and guiding the implementation of Gender Inclusive Services to ensure the representation of transgender and gender-diverse Veterans and their families.

In 2023, Veterans Affairs Canada hosted the Women and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans Forum, on February 9<sup>th</sup> and February 16<sup>th</sup>. The intent of the Forum was to continue to provide an opportunity for Veterans Affairs to elevate the experiences of underrepresented Veterans and encourage conversations and linkages with stakeholder that respond to the needs of women and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans. This Women and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans Forum built on the 2020 Women Veterans Forum, 2020 LGBTQ2 Veterans Roundtable, and 2019 Women Veterans Forum.

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In August 2024, VAC partnered with Rainbow Veterans of Canada to host the first annual 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans Forum. The event was held in Fredericton, New Brunswick on August 28-29.