

ALLIES ON GENDER DIVERSITY

As a cisgender person, you can be an ally in many ways. Your allyship is necessary to end discrimination and violence against trans, two-spirit and non-binary people.

- Trans:** a person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Non-binary:** a person whose gender identity does not fall within the binary of “man” or “woman”.
- Two-spirit:** an Indigenous person who is LGBTQ2+ may identify as two-spirit.
- Cisgender (cis):** a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

None of these categories are fixed. Not everyone whose gender differs from their assigned sex at birth identifies as trans. Not everyone who rejects the categories of man or woman identifies as non-binary. Not everyone who is Indigenous and LGBTQ2+ identifies as two-spirit, and pronoun usage can vary in different Indigenous languages and communities. People can also change their gender identity and have multiple gender identities. Everyone has the right to decide what is best for them.

Being an ally is about taking action. Here are some of the actions you can take at this CUPE event.

Use gender inclusive language

~~The brother who just spoke:~~ The member who just spoke.

~~Brothers and sisters:~~ Brothers, sisters, friends.

~~Hey guys:~~ Hey folks. Hi everyone.

~~Did he leave his badge?~~ Did they leave their badge?

Use people’s pronouns

See CUPE’s info sheet on *Pronouns and Gender Diversity*.

Use the person’s pronouns. These are not “preferred” (suggesting optional); they’re simply the person’s pronouns.

Don’t assume anyone’s gender identity. Listen and ask, don’t guess. You cannot tell someone’s pronouns just by seeing or hearing them.



How do I ask someone about their pronouns?

Listen for the pronouns they use. Share your pronouns before asking for someone else's.

You can say: "I go by she and her. What are your pronouns?" It can feel awkward at first, but using the wrong pronoun is worse. Share your own pronouns, even if you think your gender identity is obvious.

If you are asking as part of an introduction exercise, try something like this: "Tell us your name, where you live, and your pronouns. For example, I'm Xena, I'm from Calgary, and I go by he and him. For example, you could say, 'he forgot his keys' if you were talking about me."

Don't pry. If someone doesn't share their pronoun, don't press. A two-spirit, trans or non-binary person may not want a spotlight on their pronoun, for a bunch of good reasons.

What if I make a mistake?

If you stumble over someone's pronoun, practice in your head or with other cisgender folks. If you address someone with the wrong pronoun, apologize and move on.

Don't make it about you. It can be tempting to say how bad you feel or how hard you're working. That won't help. The person you misgendered might already be hurt and exhausted. It's not their job to educate or comfort you.

Why is it important to respect pronouns?

Using the wrong pronoun for someone can lead to that person feeling devalued, dismissed and even harassed. It can also lead to discrimination. Respecting pronouns communicates respect for human rights; it makes us stronger as a union.

What if I notice someone else misgendering a person?

If you hear someone using the wrong name or pronoun for someone, correct them in a way that doesn't further embarrass the misgendered person.

"Sam has been gone for a while; can someone check up on him?"


"I'll go check on her. By the way, Sam's pronouns are she and her."

If someone keeps using the wrong pronouns, be more assertive; explain that repeatedly misgendering someone can be harassment and a violation of the CUPE Code of Conduct and Equality Statement. It works against our goal of worker solidarity and strength.

Respect privacy and confidentiality

Do not 'out' a person as trans, two-spirit or non-binary to others. It is their private information to share, or not.

Don't ask invasive questions. You do not need to know someone's birth name, medical history, or anatomy. If someone tells you something about their transition or experiences, do not share this information with others. You may be curious about someone's gender experience, but invasive questions can be hurtful. Ask yourself: "Would I be comfortable if someone asked me this question?" or "Do I need to know this information to work with my colleague?"



Respect gender diversity

Believe people when they identify as two-spirit, trans or non-binary. Don't question, ridicule or challenge them.

There is no "one right way" to be trans. Some trans people choose to medically transition, and some don't. Some trans people choose to legally change their names or ID documents, and some don't. Some trans people choose to change their appearance (like their clothing or hair), and some don't. Safety and access to these processes can be reasons, but not always. A trans person's identity does not depend on what things they have or haven't done to transition, and no two trans people's journeys are exactly alike. Every person has the right to decide what is best for them.

Use the language people use for themselves. Different people use different words to describe themselves. Follow their lead; they know what language is right for them.

Dismantle the gender binary. Avoid compliments or advice that are based on gender stereotypes. Examples of compliments that are hurtful: "I never would have known you're trans." "You would look so pretty with makeup."

Don't confuse gender and sexual diversity. Pronouns are about gender identity and expression, not sexual orientation.

What can I do beyond this event?

- Lead the way as an ally for equity in your union and the labour movement.
- Be aware of your cis privilege, and use it to challenge oppression.
- Challenge hurtful behaviour that you see or hear.
- Educate yourself about trans, two-spirit and non-binary histories, cultures, and concerns.
- Ask CUPE Education Branch to deliver the gender diversity three-hour workshop with your local.
- Get involved; support organizations and campaigns of trans, two-spirit and non-binary groups.
- Create an LGBTQ2+ committee at your local, or expand your human rights committee.
- Advocate for gender-inclusive washrooms, uniforms and other gendered spaces and rules, and respect a person's choices.
- Bargain equity on gender diversity, for example in benefits, anti-discrimination, employment equity, transition workplace plans and other clauses in the collective agreement.
- Make way for trans, two-spirit and non-binary activists in the union; support their leadership.

For more information, see the *Canadian Labour Congress Workers in Transition Guide* and *The 519 Creating Authentic Spaces toolkit*. For definitions, see those resources and the **Government of Canada Translation Bureau Gender and sexual diversity glossary.**

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