

Queer Events

Queer History of Canada

1969-1979

1969

- On May 14, 1969 Canada decriminalized homosexual acts between consenting adults with the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Act first introduced in December 1968. It receives royal assent on June 27. One day before the Stonewall Riots took place in New York.

1971

- In August, the first protests for gay rights took place in Ottawa and Vancouver, demanding an end to all forms of state discrimination against gays and lesbians.

1973

- Pride Week 1973 was a national LGBT rights event held in August 1973 in several Canadian cities, including Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Saskatoon and Winnipeg. Programming included an art festival, a dance, picnic, a screening of a documentary and a rally for gay rights that occurred in all the participating cities.

This event represented the shift from the homophile movement into the gay liberation movement, showing the emergence of the concept of gay pride, and can also be considered the first pride parade in Vancouver.

- Homosexuality is removed as a "disorder" from the Diagnostics and Statistics Manual of mental disorders.

1974

- In January, The Brunswick four are arrested at the Brunswick Tavern in Toronto. Some



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historians believe that the arrest and its consequences was a key incident ushering in a more militant gay and lesbian liberation movement in Canada, much as the Stonewall Inn Riots politicized gays and lesbians in the United States.

This was also one of the first occasions that a gay or lesbian topic received extensive press coverage in Canada. The women brought charges against the officers subsequently for verbal and physical police harassment, however the officers were acquitted due to their switching their hats and badge numbers making them unable to be accurately identified.

1976

- Police crackdowns against gay bars in Montreal's Stanley Street gay village, widely perceived as mayor Jean Drapeau's attempts to "clean up" the city in advance of the 1976 Summer Olympics, lead to riots.

1977

- In October, two gay establishments in Montreal, Mystique and Truaxx, are raided. A protest organized the next day attracts 2,000 participants. By December, the province of Quebec becomes the second jurisdiction in the world, behind only Denmark, to pass a law banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
- The Canadian Immigration Act was also amended, lifting a ban prohibiting gay men from immigrating.

1978

- Buddies in Bad Times, Canada's oldest surviving theatre company dedicated to LGBT theatre, is launched by Matt Walsh, Jerry Ciccoritti and Sky Gilbert.

1979

- Montreal and Vancouver become the first Canadian cities to host an official Pride march



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and festival.

1980-1989

1980

- Edmonton holds their first ever Pride Festival.

1981

- The catalyst for Toronto's Pride events was the Bathhouse Raids that occurred on Feb. 5, 1981. Police stormed four gay bathhouses in the city as part of what they called "Operation Soap," and arrested just under 300 men. For the majority, charges were later dropped or dismissed.

Rallies were held in response to the injustice and it was these mass protests that evolved into the first Toronto Pride celebration.

To this day, "Operation Soap" is one of the largest mass arrests in Canada and it was 35 years later in 2016 that Toronto's police chief formally apologized for the raids.

1985

- One of Canada's first programs to combat anti-gay discrimination and violence is implemented by the Toronto District School Board after a hate crime in which their employee Kenneth Zeller is murdered in Toronto's High Park.

1987

- Winnipeg holds its first-ever Pride on August 2, with a turn-out of 250 LGBT community members, supporters, and allies. Some the first participants of this event actually wore paper bags over their heads out of fear of rallying in public. The event has since grown to a vibrant, annual festival with an attendance of 35,000.

1988



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- British Columbia MP Svend Robinson came out as Canada's first openly gay member of parliament.

1990-1999

1990

- On July 15, Police raid The Sex Garage's After Party. The violence ignited 36 hours of clashes between Montreal's LGBT community and the police force, which was accused at the time of harbouring a culture of homophobia. The Sex Garage raid is now widely considered to be Montreal's Stonewall, after the New York City riots in 1969 that marked a turning point for the LGBT rights movement worldwide.

Sex Garage politicized a generation of LGBT activists who would change the Quebec political landscape, uniting gays and lesbians, and francophones and anglophones, in a common front. These activists would establish the Divers/Cité Pride March and political-action groups like La Table de concertation des gaies et lesbiennes du grand Montréal to successfully fight for LGBT civil rights and improve gay life in Montreal.

- May 17, the World Health Organization (WHO) voted to remove 'homosexuality' from being designated a mental disorder in the 10th revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10).

1991

- City of Toronto officially endorses the Lesbian and Gay Pride Day in Toronto.

1992

- The Federal Court lifts the ban on gays and lesbians in the military.

1994



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- The Supreme Court rules that gays and lesbians could apply for refugee status on the basis of facing persecution in their countries of origin.

1995

- The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Section 15 of the Charter — which guarantees the "right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination" — should include sexual orientation, even though it is not specifically named in the section.
- Ontario Courts rule that same-sex couples are allowed to adopt.

1996

- Sexual orientation was added to the Canadian Human Rights Act, which covers federally-regulated activities.

1999

- The Supreme Court rules in case *M. v H.*, that same-sex couples must be afforded the same rights as opposite-sex couples in a common-law relationship.

2000-2009

2000

- In February, the Liberal party introduced Bill C-23, the Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act, in response to the Supreme Court's May 1999 ruling. The act would give same-sex couples who have lived together for more than a year the same benefits and obligations as common-law couples.

In March, Justice Minister Anne McLellan announces the bill will include a definition of marriage as "the lawful union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others."

On April 11, 2000, Parliament passes Bill C-23, with a vote of 174 to 72. The legislation



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gives same-sex couples the same social and tax benefits as heterosexuals in common-law relationships. In total, the bill affects 68 federal statutes relating to a wide range of issues such as pension benefits, old age security, income tax deductions, bankruptcy protection and the Criminal Code. The definitions of "marriage" and "spouse" are left untouched but the definition of "common-law relationship" is expanded to include same-sex couples.

- The Supreme Court ruled in favour of Vancouver's Little Sister's bookstore that gay publications, even sexually explicit ones, were protected under freedom of speech provisions in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The store had filed suit against Canada Customs for repeated seizures of LGBT material.

The problem persists, however, with gay bookstores alleging that Customs guards disproportionately cite the Supreme Court's 1992 Butler decision against gay and lesbian publications which ruled that material containing scenes of sex mixed with violence and cruelty could be seized.

- In September, six male officers from the Toronto Police raided Club Toronto during an all-female queer and trans event known as the "Pussy Palace." This event resulted in protests and pickets of the Toronto police's 52 Division. In 2002, an Ontario provincial court judge ruled that police were wrong to raid the party and a 2005 class action lawsuit and complaint to the Ontario Human Rights Commission resulted in a \$350,000 settlement which included a formal apology in writing and required the force to establish cultural competency training for all members regarding the LGBT community.

2002

- The Ontario Superior Court rules that prohibiting gay couples from marrying is unconstitutional and violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The court gives Ontario two years to extend marriage rights to same-sex couples.
- In May, Ontario Superior Court Justice Robert McKinnon rules that a gay student has the right to take his boyfriend to the prom.

Earlier, the Durham Catholic District School Board said student Marc Hall couldn't bring his 21-year-old boyfriend to the dance at Monsignor John Pereyema Catholic high school in Oshawa. Officials acknowledge that Hall has the right to be gay, but said permitting the date would send a message that the Church supports his "homosexual lifestyle." Hall



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went to the prom.

2003

- Michael Leshner and Michael Stark became the first same-sex couple to marry in Canada.

2004

- The Quebec Court of Appeal rules that homosexuals have the right to marry, and that the traditional definition of marriage is discriminatory and unjustified. The ruling upholds a lower-court decision and follows similar decisions in Ontario and B.C.

2005

- Bill C-38 bill became federal law which gave same-sex couples the legal right to marry. This made Canada the fourth country in the world to allow same-sex marriage.

2010-2019

2013

- The House of Commons passes Bill C-279 in March, a private member's bill sponsored by Randall Garrison, which officially extends human rights protections to transgender and transsexual people in Canada.
- Kathleen Wynne wins the leadership of the governing Ontario Liberal Party on the 3rd ballot in its leadership election. She is formally sworn into office on February 11, becoming both Ontario's first female Premier and Canada's first openly LGBT Premier.

2014

- Pride festivals launch for the first time in the Ontario cities of Sault Ste. Marie and



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Timmins.

2016

- For the first time in Canadian history, a pride flag is raised on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.
- The Canadian government lowers the blood donation deferral period, clearing gay and bisexual men to donate blood after abstaining from sex with other men for one year, instead of five. But it did not eliminate the ban.

2017

- Bill C-16 is passed by federal government. The bill updates the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code to include the terms "gender identity" and "gender expression." The legislation also makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender identity or expression.

It also extends hate speech laws to include the two terms, and makes it a hate crime to target someone for being transgender. The bill also amends the sentencing principles section of the code so that a person's gender identity or expression can be considered an aggravating circumstance by a judge during sentencing.

2018

- An electronic petition filed with the [House of Commons, E-1589](#), calls on the Liberal government to stop a practice it says imposes a stigma on gay and bisexual men. Petitioners say the policy also bars Canadian Blood Services — which routinely faces donor shortages — from a potential pool of healthy, safe donations.

2019

- On May 23, the World Health Organization (WHO) voted to remove 'transgender' from being designated a mental disorder.

The WHO will now use the term 'gender incongruence' to describe people whose gender



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identity is different from the gender they were assigned at birth. This term has been added to the sexual health category of the 11th revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-11).

- Health Canada lowers the blood donation deferral period, clearing gay and bisexual men to donate blood after abstaining from sex with other men for three months, instead of one year. But it did not eliminate the ban.
- University of Winnipeg launches the first Two-Spirit archives in Canada. The collection — mostly donated by long-time Winnipeg two-spirit activist Albert McLeod is believed to be the most comprehensive collection of two-spirit materials in Canada, The archives will be used by researchers, historians and two-spirit people to tell the story of the movement's 40-year history.



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