



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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LIBERALS URGE HARPER GOVERNMENT TO END DISCRIMINATORY TOURISM POLICY

OTTAWA – In the wake of Conservative MP Brad Trost’s revelation that the Prime Minister’s Office has demoted Minister Diane Ablonczy for awarding tourism funding to the Toronto Pride Festival, Liberal MPs are calling on Prime Minister Stephen Harper to come clean on his government’s tourism policy.

“At best, this is another Conservative MP making rogue, homophobic comments while attacking a cabinet colleague – actions which are grounds for caucus dismissal,” said Vancouver Liberal MP Hedy Fry. “At worst, Mr. Trost is the only MP willing to admit his government’s discriminatory new tourism policy on record. Only Prime Minister Harper can clarify how far this intolerance extends within his government – and he needs to do so now.”

Minister Ablonczy launched the Marquee Tourism Events Program on April 23rd but has not made a single government announcement since awarding Toronto’s Pride festival a \$400,000 grant from the program on June 15th. Toronto Pride Festival is Toronto’s single largest tourist event, bringing \$100 million in direct economic impact to Toronto.

Mr. Harper’s failure to reject Mr. Trost’s comments calls into question whether similar events will now be subject to discriminatory treatment. The status of several outstanding Marquee program funding applications for other Canadian Pride events are now in doubt, given Mr. Trost’s announcement that “the whole tourism program and funding for major tourism events is being reviewed,” as a direct result of the decision to fund the Toronto Pride Festival.

“Conservative MPs now say the Prime Minister has formally reprimanded Minister Ablonczy for supporting the Pride Festival,” said Montreal Liberal MP Marlene Jennings. “If this isn’t the case, I look forward to obtaining a commitment from the Prime Minister that his government will continue to offer federal support for the Toronto Pride festival and other festivals that celebrate human rights.”

Dozens of projects and events that promote and celebrate human rights and sexual diversity rely on federal funding that may now be in jeopardy. Other organizations have reason to be concerned about this shift in government policy.

“Does the Prime Minister stand by Minister Ablonczy’s decision to support Pride Week? Or has he removed her from the tourism file?” asked Toronto Liberal MP Carolyn Bennett. “His answer will tell us whether his government supports the promotion and celebration of human rights, or if they’ve adopted new policies that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.”

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CONTACTS

OTTAWA
Katherine Day 613-220-0275

VANCOUVER
Zachary Mallett 604-762-4386
Barbara Snelgrove 604-202-1336