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**PRESS RELEASE - May 28, 2004**

**EGALE SADDENED BY ONT. DECISION TO KILL  
FUNDING FOR SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY**

**Decision shows lack of concern for vulnerable minority group**

Toronto, May 28, 2004: It has been widely reported that senior Ontario government officials stated the province will not go ahead and reinstate funding for sex reassignment surgery for transsexual people, but will instead wait for the results of a hearing before the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal.

"It's a sad day for the treatment of minorities in Ontario," said Laurie Arron, Director of Advocacy of Egale Canada. "Transsexual people are among the most vulnerable people in society. The government knows that. We thought they would support vulnerable minorities, but it appears that's not the case."

"The Ontario government was only spending about \$120,000 a year on sex reassignment surgery," said Gilles Marchildon, Executive Director of Egale. "This amount is negligible whereas the impact on affected people's quality of life is immense."

"The lack of funding for sex reassignment surgery further marginalizes trans people," said Julie Hill, member of the Ontario Public Health Association Board of Directors. "Denying them access to this medical procedure will prevent them from achieving optimal health and satisfying lives. It is an unfortunate decision that ignores the profound need for this surgery."

"I am outraged and disheartened," said Tami Starlight, Co-chair of Egale's Trans Issue Committee. "The Ontario government is out of touch with the reality of our lives. It has cut blindly rather than intelligently. People will turn to the streets and to suicide, rather than face the hardship and frustration of continuing to wait for surgery."

"My clients are devastated," said Susan Ursel, lawyer for four transsexual people who launched a case before the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal and who were in the midst of negotiations with the province. "They are people of modest means with legitimate health issues. They have been held in limbo between two genders for years because of the government's de-listing of their surgery. The government lured them into extensive and time consuming settlement

discussions, diverting them from the hearing of their legal issue at the Human Rights Tribunal. This delay will undoubtedly impact their health further."

"Now the Human Rights Tribunal will resume its hearings," said Susan Gapka, Co-chair of Egale's Trans Issues Committee. "It is expected that the Tribunal will rule that de-listing sex reassignment surgery in 1998 was discriminatory and will order the Ontario government to re-list this service that is so critical for transsexual persons."

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*The Ontario Public Health Association provides leadership on issues affecting the public's health. It is a member-based organization representing 3,000 individuals in public and community health in Ontario. For more information on OPHA, visit [www.opha.on.ca](http://www.opha.on.ca).*