



**Family Violence Death Review Committee:  
Case Review Public Report #6**

**May 2018**

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## Incident

In 2013, a victim was killed by their same-sex partner.<sup>1</sup>

## Background

The couple were both individuals who came to Canada as refugees under Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) claims, and had been together for approximately two years when the incident occurred. The couple had not sought assistance from social services, police services or mental health services for their ongoing relationship difficulties. While in Alberta, the offender frequently sought medical attention at urgent care sites and was diagnosed with having a neurological disorder. Clinicians later determined the offender's medical issues to be the result of emotional stress and trauma.

## Key Findings / Analysis

Both individuals were from a country where being in a same-sex relationship is a criminal activity that is punishable by law.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) newcomers who have made SOGI claims to enter Canada have fled because of widespread discrimination in their country of origin. They have faced threats and incidents that have caused them severe physical and emotional harm, and have often faced death threats because of their sexual identity. As a result, many newcomers do not want members of their cultural community in Canada to know of their orientation, and are faced with a difficult 'choice' – to freely express their identity at the expense of their cultural connections, or to keep their orientation private and maintain connections to their cultural community, at the expense of being able to live authentically, without fear of discrimination. LGBT newcomers face additional challenges as a result of identifying with several minority groups simultaneously.

Statistics Canada reports that one out of every five people in Canada and one out of every 10 Albertans is foreign-born<sup>2</sup>. Research and statistics regarding newcomer, LGBT, and newcomer-LGBT relationship violence are limited, however existing research suggests that these specific groups are at a higher risk of experiencing relationship violence, and have a harder time accessing services because they are under-represented in the scope of services available to victims of family violence.

Immigrant-serving agencies in Alberta that provide services to LGBT newcomer populations were consulted as part of this case, and unanimously advised that there is a lack of coordinated and appropriately-funded services for newcomer-LGBT populations in the province. Services currently available in Alberta are primarily provided by individual agencies and organizations, and each agency identified that if resources are not adequately provided to ensure that newcomers are well-adjusted and familiarized sufficiently to life in Canada, the more time it takes for newcomers to be productive and maintain employment, and function well in Canadian society with minimal interventions and minimal dependence on publicly-funded services.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note the pronoun 'their' has been used so as not to identify the gender of either individual.

<sup>2</sup> Report prepared by Tina Chui of Statistics Canada's Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division and John Flanders of Communications Division, with the assistance of Thomas Anderson and staff members of Statistics Canada's Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Census Subject Matter Secretariat, Geography Division, Census Operations Division, Dissemination Division and Communications Division. Report content was taken from the first release of data from the 2011 National Household Survey.

## Recommendations

1. To Alberta Community and Social Services (CSS), the Family Violence Death Review Committee (FVDRC) recommends:
  - CSS family violence public resource materials and website be updated regularly and modernized to include more public awareness and education information on the risks associated with family violence, including for new Canadians, newcomers and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) populations;
  - CSS establish an information 'hub' for the public to easily access family violence resources from funded partners and agencies, as well as links to current family violence research and best practices from other jurisdictions; and
  - *Family Violence Hurts Everyone: A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta* be updated to include more information specifically targeted towards diverse communities, and that specific provisions for newcomer and LGBT populations are addressed in the document.
2. To the Alberta Government, the FVDRC recommends:
  - the government lead, in collaboration with immigrant-serving agencies and community partners, a coordinated and culturally sensitive approach to increase awareness of and services to address family violence in newcomer-LGBT populations; and
  - consideration of family violence risks to all new Canadians and diverse groups are included in the development of this approach.
3. To Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, the FVDRC recommends:
  - continued family violence screening at hospitals and points-of-care, and recommends that the screening be monitored for compliance and consistency, and that the results be reported and are publicly accessible; and
  - ongoing family violence education is provided for health-care professionals concerning specific risks to the LGBT community.