



CASE president Ellen Bolger thinks Men's Rights Edmonton is misguided.

**Photo By: Michael Grondin/the Gauntlet**

# Men's Rights comes to YYC

**A look at the Edmonton based organization expanding to Calgary**

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The group behind Edmonton's controversial "Don't be that girl" posters has brought its message south.

Early this September, Men's Rights Edmonton, a group of self-proclaimed men's rights activists, expanded its organization to Calgary. A founding member of the group — who only gave the alias Raz — said they are now looking to grow.

"We are in this for the long haul," Raz said. "Every day, more and more people come to the movement. Over these past few years it has been exponential growth and we are excited for what's to come."

Raz estimates Men's Rights Edmonton has up to 50 members. At this point, Men's Rights Calgary is in the recruitment process.

This past summer, Men's Rights Edmonton gained national media attention with its notorious "Don't be that girl" poster campaign. One of their posters reads, "Women who drink are not responsible for their actions. Especially when sex is involved. Don't be that girl."

Raz said the posters were put up in response to the Edmonton Police Service's "Don't be that guy" posters.

The Edmonton Police Service launched their campaign to discourage sexual assault victim-blaming and to target potential offenders.

President and co-founder of the Consent Awareness and Sexual Education club Ellen Bolger expressed concern over Men's Rights Edmonton's growing membership and stressed the importance of educating the public.

"I think it's sad. The people who are joining [Men's Rights Edmonton] might have good intentions because there are many issues that men do face," Bolger said. "But I think that the outlet that they are going through is almost dangerous because it is based on facts that aren't true. It is important for other groups to speak out so that the public can hear the truth instead of just believing what these groups say."

During his interview, Raz made many claims.

"If you look at any real statistics," Raz said, "you'll see that the overwhelming majority of rapes are committed by a small percentage of men and women, on men and women. So to say, 'Don't be that guy' is just intellectually dishonest and a very bigoted statement."

A study done by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics titled "Sexual Offences in Canada" found that upwards of 85 per cent of sexual assault victims were females. According to the 2002 "Uniform Crime Reporting Survey" done by Alberta Justice, 97 per cent of persons accused of sexual offences were male.

Raz defended 'Don't be that girl' posters by raising concerns about false sexual assault reports.

"We have good evidence that roughly 40–60 per cent of all rape accusations are indeed false," he said.

Raz said he got this information from the False Rape Society. The only information the *Gauntlet* could find about this group came from their blog.

But the National Post and Huffington Post recently reported that false accusations of sexual assault are somewhere between 2–4 per cent — the same rate of false reporting for most criminal offences.

When presented with these statistics, Raz offered his rebuttal.

"If you ever actually see how they achieve these numbers, it's in how they ask the questions and the kind of questions they don't ask," Raz said. "Feminists are so deeply ensconced in the government. No government statistic is going to reveal what they don't want it to."

More recently, Men's Rights Edmonton was responsible for creating a poster condemning the chair of University of Alberta women's and gender studies, Lise Gotell. The poster shows an illustration of Gotell, labeling her a bigot who is paid to "demonize men." Gotell was a major collaborator on the "Don't be that guy" poster campaign.

In an email, Gotell declined an interview on the grounds that she did not want to give the group any publicity.

Others feel that Men's Rights Edmonton's rhetoric needs to be confronted.

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse educator Joe Campbell takes this view. Campbell views Men's Rights Edmonton as misinformed and said that it's important to challenge them.

"Sexual violence is an issue that matters to many Albertans," Campbell said. "When opinionated groups come forward dispelling nothing more than harmful and misinformed beliefs, those messages really hurt those who have been impacted by these crimes and serve to deepen those opinions and beliefs of people who don't truly have an understanding of this issue."

"I think it's important to talk about that those beliefs do exist, but also that those beliefs need to be challenged in order to create a society where we can see these levels of violence drop and see more people being able to come forward for support," Campbell said.

Men's Rights Edmonton plans on expanding to other Canadian cities in the future.