

Dan Perrins: Reflections on My Hunger Strike for Boys and Men

I, Dan Perrins, have ended my hunger strike, as of today, Saturday May 16th at 3:00PM here at the Canadian Centre for Men and Families. Many of you have supported me throughout this period while some have questioned my motivation and goals. So let me offer some reflection.

My decision to begin my hunger strike was not taken lightly. It was a decision I came to at the end of my 120 km walk from Dundas, Ontario to Queen's Park as I considered what I could do next for those in need. It was motivated out of a deep sense of injustice at the lack of social support for men. I know this well as I am a victim of PTSD brought on by abuse and trauma. When I needed help there was nothing for me. I hoped that a shocking act like a hunger strike might firstly jolt people out of their complacency and secondly, earn a commitment from our government to open the province's first shelter for male victims of abuse.

I end my hunger strike having made a real breakthrough in opening up a frank discussion about men's health, and yet with much work yet ahead of me. The public has responded with resounding concern for my cause. The disconnect between those loud voices of support and the deafening silence from our elected officials toward an invitation to meet with me, is telling of a real problem that confronts our society.

But I recognize that just as my walk gave way to a hunger strike, with both acts having succeeded in advancing awareness, it is now time to transition to something new and more appropriate for the road ahead. To lay the groundwork my friends at the Canadian Association for Equality have already picked up the ball. In the last two weeks, motivated by my actions, CAFE has met with elected officials from each political party, including the chief-of-staff of a provincial cabinet minister. They have received interest in government partnership for their programs aimed to address violence against men, the social harms of fatherlessness and mentorship for at-risk boys.

I am cautiously optimistic that these are positive signs that doors are starting to open. It suggests there is, after all, some appetite by politicians to discuss men's issues openly. If that is the case I believe it is time to move on from my hunger strike and work with CAFE and other organizations that care about these issues, to pursue other more traditional channels of awareness and advocacy. I am open to participate where appropriate in meetings with policy makers so I can share my experiences.

I know CAFE was never comfortable with my hunger strike because of the risk it posed to my health, but I want to thank them for respecting my decision and being there to make sure I got through it. Thank you so much to all those who have wished me well during this journey, and please do not let the momentum we have built together be wasted.

It is ironic, given that the whole point of my hunger strike was to improve men's health and well-being, that the health and well-being of *this* man had to be compromised. As activists, such a sacrifice is sometimes necessary, but to each of you, please find your own way to make a contribution while taking care of yourself and your loved ones. We are all in this together.

Sincerely,



Dan Perrins,
May 16, 2015