

Tai Jacob March 6 2017

I want to thank all the other trans folks and allies who have been brave enough to speak today. I also want to point out that none of us should have had to speak today in defence of this Protocol. What we are asking for is so basic. When I need to get up here to ask that the City respect my name and pronouns or to ask that the City provide a safe space for me to go to the washroom, I also feel inclined to ask, who has never had to ask these questions? Who doesn't need to worry about someone using the wrong name and pronouns for them? Who doesn't need to worry about finding a safe space to go pee? City councillors, have you ever been worried that you wouldn't be afforded these basic respects? Why must I and my friends come up here and ask for this?

We say that trans rights are human rights. So why must we come up here and prove to you that we are human enough, that we feel pain enough, that we deserve respect enough, for this Protocol to pass?

The protections granted to trans and gender nonconforming folks through this protocol tell us that we are welcomed in City spaces. If the Protocol doesn't pass, the message that the City is sending to trans and gnc folks living in Hamilton is that we don't belong here. And again, I ask you city councillors, have you ever had to speak in defence of your right to belong in city spaces? Have you

ever felt unwelcome simply because of who people assume you to be? If you have, you know you have to vote for this protocol. If you haven't, you should also know that you have to vote for this protocol, because you have forever had the privilege of never having to prove that you belong.

I urge you, don't vote for this protocol because it makes 'economic sense' and brands the city as inclusive, welcoming, and modern. Vote for this protocol because you recognize that it shouldn't be up for a vote in the first place. Vote for this protocol not because you think trans people add to the 'wealth' of this city; vote for it because you know recognize that everyone, no matter who they are, no matter what their gender or lack thereof is, no matter what the colour of their skin is, no matter how much money they have in the bank, deserves a city to call home. Hamilton could be this city. And it could be this city not because it is wealthy in money, but because it rich in love and respect. Because it is willing to listen and learn and be better every day. So, city councillors, I ask — are you listening and learning right now? Are you willing to make Hamilton a city everyone can call home?