

I recognize and acknowledge that Hamilton is located on lands protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Agreement, and the traditional territory and waters of diverse First Nations, including those nations' Two Spirit people.

The Ontario Human Rights Code has enshrined grounds upon which it is prohibited to discriminate against people based on gender identity and expression.

I am speaking here to show my support for the implementation of the proposed Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Protocol.

I transitioned while working at the City of Hamilton a few years ago. My experience was largely positive. I had supportive co-workers, and I have a lot of education, giving me the voice to stand up for myself and other Trans people when facing discrimination or exclusion. I spent most of my time advocating for the rights of marginalized people to have access to safe, affordable and sustainable housing. I am also very much involved, along with other Trans Hamiltonians, with over 20 doctors, nurses, social workers and pharmacists in building Hamilton's capacity to deliver evidence-based, accessible health care to Trans Hamiltonians. Trans people are contributing their skills, commitment and passion to helping make Hamilton a great place to live, work and play.

While I was working at the City, I worked with everyone experiencing barriers to housing and health care, regardless of gender identity. Something I learned very quickly is that our system is set up to privilege those who fit neatly with the status quo – white, middle-class, heterosexual, cisgender - and to marginalize those people whose gender identity, or sexual orientation, or cultural identity, or mental health is other than those in the dominant group.

We are hearing many statistics illustrating the struggles Trans people face in Canada today, so I will not spend too much time going over them again. But one stat that has always stood out for me is the one that tells us that 2 thirds of Trans people in Ontario have ever avoided a public place 3 or more times because of fear of violence or being read as Trans. A public place is the grocery store, the bus, the sidewalk, the hallway outside one's apartment, the public washroom. I know at least one Trans woman who was too uncomfortable to come to City Hall today. I have never read about anyone being threatened or terrorized by a Trans woman in a public washroom; yet I have heard many stories of Trans people being terrorized by cisgender people when using a public washroom.

Almost 10 years ago I volunteered my time to work with others to develop the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's Equity Policy steering committee to create policy that would protect LGBTQ students from bullying, harassment, and exclusion while at school. In those days one of the same groups that is here today to appeal to the worst instincts of City Council and encourage you to fail to carry out your duty to pass

this protocol, warned the Board that protecting children against homophobia would undoubtedly open up schools to child abusers, gay recruiters and who knows what else.

History has proven these dire warnings were devoid of evidence or merit.

Trans rights are human rights. Everyone has the right, in Canada, to access public services. As an educator, I urge you to help educate those who are fuelled by ignorance, hate and a stubborn refusal to be moved by the overwhelming evidence that Trans people are just people, by refusing to believe ideological rhetoric that has been over and over again debunked by the most basic evidence.

I call on the City of Hamilton to act in a way that shows solidarity with Trans people. Make efforts to hire Trans people to work at the City. I also call on the City provide funding to Trans Day of Remembrance where Trans people gather to remember those we have lost through transphobia and transhatred.

When developing policy, the City must consult with Trans communities for input about how Trans lives will be affected.

And, commit to a robust and sustainable training plan, developed and delivered by Trans facilitators for all City Councillors and employees.

Thank you.

Cole Gately
Hamilton, ON