

PFLAG Hamilton-Wentworth
hamiltonwentworth@pflagcanada.ca

2 July, 2019

To: Fred Eisenberger, Mayor
Cc: Eric Girt, Chief, Hamilton Police Service
Maureen Wilson, Ward 1 City Councillor
Jason Farr, Ward 2 City Councillor
Nrinder Naan, Ward 3 City Councillor
Sam Merulla, Ward 4 City Councillor
Chad Collins, Ward 5 City Councillor
Tom Jackson, Ward 6 City Councillor
Esther Pauls, Ward 7 City Councillor
John-Paul Danko, Ward 8 City Councillor
Brad Clark, Ward 9 City Councillor
Maria Pearson, Ward 10 City Councillor
Brenda Johnson, Ward 11 City Councillor
Lloyd Ferguson, Ward 12 City Councillor
Arlene VanderBeek, Ward 13 City Councillor
Terry Whitehead, Ward 14 City Councillor
Judi Partridge, Ward 15 City Councillor

Dear Mayor Eisenberger,

PFLAG is a long-standing group originally made up of parents and friends of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. In Hamilton we offer events and support to this community and their families and friends. We are affiliated with PFLAG Canada and the International PFLAG organization.

We see firsthand the challenges and marginalization this community can experience in Hamilton. This is particularly true for the transgender population and people of colour.

We are an organization that believes in education and dialogue. We believe that, wherever someone starts, there is learning to be done, and that productive dialogue is how

learning and systematic change happens. Gaining an understanding of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and their needs is the first step toward creating safety in Hamilton.

Recent events involving hate speech and violence actively obstruct that learning and put the already marginalized 2SLGBTQIA+ further at risk.

As we have had dialogues with government officials and council members after 2019 PRIDE and the violence this year, we have deep concern over the way the Mayor, City Council, and the Hamilton Police Service have responded and communicated. Having considered your public statements in the media, reviewed conversations on social media, and spoken personally with members of the queer community in Hamilton, we believe the 2SLGBTQIA+ is being viewed as more homogeneous than it is and that city officials are arguing over semantics rather than responding with empathy to a community that has been intentionally brutalized and bullied. This community is incredibly diverse and thus the needs of people are exponentially different. We believe the city leadership needs deep, regular and continuing learning over the next 2-5 years to improve their ability to govern and keep safe the Hamilton 2SLGBTQIA+ community. It is not the role of the community to do this. This effort needs to be led internally. One training does not make someone an expert in this community.

As an organization made up of 2SLGBTQIA+ Hamiltonians who serve members of our own community, we ask you to take the following actions:

1. We request that you apologize for the ways you have blamed our community for your inadequate responses to the events of Pride 2019. In particular, we seek a public apology for the way you blamed your own poor relationship with the organizers of Hamilton Pride for the unprofessional response of the Hamilton Police Service to the violence that occurred at Gage Park. We further request a public apology for the blame you assigned to 2SLGBTQIA+ people who were the victims of violence at Hamilton Pride 2019 for not coming forward. It is unacceptable for you to blame members of a vulnerable community for not trusting the Hamilton Police Service in this situation.
2. We ask that you direct City staff to bring a proposal to Council in a timely fashion, outlining a clear, transparent process for how people are placed on the LGBTQ Advisory Board.
3. We request that you increase your visibility at 2SLGBTQIA+ events year-round, not just in PRIDE season, in a good faith effort to facilitate relationships with our community. For instance, learning about the work that has already been done in the community is important in creating a positive relationship with the community. Recently a study was released (Read it here: <https://labourstudies.mcmaster.ca/news/mapping-the-void-two-spirit-and-lgbtq-experiences-in-hamilton>) that gave data from over 900 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents in Hamilton. An earlier report was written in 2016 by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton with recommendations (read it here: http://www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/SpeakOUT_2016_WEB.pdf). Please read these reports. Researchers and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community have put in countless hours to

produce work to help the city understand this community. It is your job to become aware of the results of the work already done.

4. We ask that you direct City staff to bring a plan to Council for increasing diversity in your hiring at the City of Hamilton and in the Hamilton Police Service. Recent research suggests that diversity training actually makes things worse for minority populations (see, for example, <https://hbr.org/2012/03/diversity-training-doesnt-work>). Best practices in organizations that actually want to improve the experience of minority populations involves introducing policies to include minority people in all levels of the organization.

In order to be 2SLGBTQIA+ friendly as a city, it is the work of all officials to do their own work to understand community issues. While we support naming Deirdre Pike and Cole Gately as special advisors for an 2SLGBTQIA+ Action Plan, it is not their work to make the city a friendly place. It is not possible for queer activists to make the city a safe place-- it is everyone's work to do. This will only happen through significant, sustainable, and regular high quality education and continued dialogue with the whole spectrum of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Along with members of my community, I am ready to enter a dialogue with you about these issues.

Sincerely,
Melanie Parish
President, Hamilton Wentworth PFLAG Chapter

From: [Carson, Katie](#)
To: [Kolar, Loren](#)
Subject: 5.5 Correspondence Melanie Parish
Date: July 2, 2019 9:37:28 AM
Attachments: [PFLAG Hamilton Wentworth.pdf](#)

GIC – July 8th

From: Melanie Parish <coachparish@gmail.com>
Sent: July 2, 2019 9:27 AM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Cc: Office of the Mayor <mayor@hamilton.ca>; Wilson, Maureen <Maureen.Wilson@hamilton.ca>; Farr, Jason <Jason.Farr@hamilton.ca>; Nann, Nrinder <Nrinder.Nann@hamilton.ca>; Merulla, Sam <Sam.Merulla@hamilton.ca>; Collins, Chad <Chad.Collins@hamilton.ca>; Jackson, Tom <Tom.Jackson@hamilton.ca>; Pauls, Esther <Esther.Pauls@hamilton.ca>; Danko, John-Paul <John-Paul.Danko@hamilton.ca>; Clark, Brad <Brad.Clark@hamilton.ca>; Pearson, Maria <Maria.Pearson@hamilton.ca>; Johnson, Brenda <Brenda.Johnson@hamilton.ca>; Ferguson, Lloyd <Lloyd.Ferguson@hamilton.ca>; VanderBeek, Arlene <Arlene.VanderBeek@hamilton.ca>; Whitehead, Terry <Terry.Whitehead@hamilton.ca>; Partridge, Judi <Judi.Partridge@hamilton.ca>; info@hamiltonpolice.on.ca; eric.girt@hamiltonpolice.on.ca
Subject: Letter on Pride and Post Pride Happenings in Hamilton

Attached is a letter from the Hamilton Wentworth Chapter of PFLAG.

Thank you,
Melanie Parish