

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Open Letter to Council on Ending Hate and Citizen Safety

From: laura babcock

Sent: August 14, 2019 9:16 PM

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August 14, 2019

Dear Councillors and Mayor,

It's time.

Time to address the growing threat in our community.

Time to stand together and to speak with a united voice against hate.

Time to ensure residents are protected as they stand up against hate in our community, whether in the forecourt of City Hall, or anywhere else in our city.

Despite the great turnout this past Saturday in the City Hall forecourt, including many community leaders, people who were there to stand against hate, some with their children, felt threatened.

They felt threatened when police allowed a bus to drive up onto the sidewalk where adults and children were standing. It was a brazen act of intimidation. Police then negotiated with the driver of the bus for over half an hour, resulting in them letting him drive the "Hate Bus" away and park it at the rear of City Hall before he joined the Yellow Vests. The driver faced no consequence. The video of the crowd calling for the "Hate Bus" to leave has been viewed almost 8,000 times. The nation is watching how we deal with this threat.

They felt threatened when the driver of the bus posted a video on YouTube where he claimed he planned to return to a future rally and once again park his bus on the sidewalk in front of City Hall!

They felt threatened when police decided to arrest a known anti-hate protestor, resulting in all officers leaving the scene to escort the lone protestor to the rear of City Hall, leaving anti-hate protestors unprotected. A video has been posted showing the Yellow Vest group celebrating the police arresting the anti-hate protestor.

Now, people are expressing concern about bringing their children to a unity rally this Saturday in broad daylight on the forecourt of our City Hall. They are now afraid to bring their kids to our Hamilton sign where kids routinely play! Our city's front porch is considered a threatening environment.

Our inertia has allowed this threat to grow.

Yes, it's time.

It's time to show up and to speak up. Not just as individuals, as some have done already, but also as our Council. Your primary responsibility is keeping Hamiltonians safe.

In response to this serious threat, we respectfully request:

1. As many councillors and city staff as possible show up Saturday between 10 - 2 to send a message of unity and repudiation of hate. A few minutes will not suffice as the hate groups waited for the crowd to thin out last week and felt emboldened when it did.
2. A clear, equitable and unambiguous strategy communicated by Police before Saturday that commits to them attending the event, protecting all residents and enforcing the law on any illegal activity.
3. Ensure the City's new consultant, hired to deal with hate, report directly to the City Manager so the community is reassured that this role is of critical importance to the City and not merely a public relations exercise. No other reporting structure will suffice.

The threat is not just about a small group promoting hate at our City Hall. According to Statistics Canada Hamilton has the most reported incidents of hate crimes in Canada. Our citizens deserve to live in a safe, inclusive, united community.

It's time.

Sincerely,

Laura Babcock & Graham Crawford