



## CITIZEN COMMITTEE REPORT

<b>To:</b>	Audit, Finance and Administration Committee; General Issues Committee; and City Council
<b>From:</b>	LGBTQ Advisory Committee  Cameron Kroetsch, Chair
<b>Date:</b>	May 18, 2021
<b>Re:</b>	Recognition of Pride in the City of Hamilton

### Recommendations

That the City of Hamilton raise the Pride (social justice flag), Trans, and Indigenous flags, as has been done at its request in the past through the Flag Protocol (Governance Review Sub-Committee Report 11-003), in recognition of Pride in the City of Hamilton, throughout the month of June.

### Background

The City of Hamilton's LGBTQ Advisory Committee has held an event at City Hall to recognize Pride for many years, though it did not hold an event in either 2019 or 2020.

In 2019, given concerns raised by members of Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ communities, the Committee recommended that the City of Hamilton not raise the Pride, Trans, and Indigenous flags and not hold a flag raising ceremony.

In order to have a public discussion about the Committee's decision, and in an effort to bring the community's voices together, the Committee planned an event, with a panel of speakers, to discuss its decision. The event was held on June 18, 2019 in Council Chambers. While the intention of the event had been to unpack and discuss the

Committee's decision around the flag raising publicly, the program for the event was greatly altered in light of the violent attack on Pride 2019 (just three days prior).

The event was held in Council Chambers and facilitated by the Committee's Chair. It was a very impactful and thoughtful discussion attended by hundreds of Hamiltonians. The feedback that was shared that day overwhelmingly supported the Committee's decision and gave the community a chance to speak out about the violent attack on Pride 2019.

The Committee publicly stated that it would conduct further outreach with members of Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ communities in time for Pride 2020 before making a recommendation about that year's flag raising and event. Due to circumstances outside of the Committee's control, virtual meetings were not permitted to take place between April and July 2020, so the Committee was unable to advance the discussion or make any decisions related to Pride 2020. The Committee chose not to meet in person in March 2020 after hearing news of the pandemic and to ensure all members of the Committee were safe.

After the permitted resumption of Advisory Committee meetings in August, the LGBTQ Advisory Committee met virtually in September and began to discuss the issue of a survey amidst a backlog of items that needed to be addressed. After addressing the backlog of items, the Committee planned a survey that was disseminated from April 29, 2021 to May 13, 2021. The results of that survey are available through the Committee's May 18, 2021 meeting Agenda.

Overall, the survey results concurred with the recommendation as outlined above.

The LGBTQ Advisory Committee will plan a public virtual event in place of its June 15, 2021 meeting.

The event scheduled for June 15, 2021 will take place as follows -

- In recognition of Pride in the City of Hamilton, the Committee will hold a virtual event to recognize Pride, as it has done many times in the past in person. This event will be held in place of a flag raising ceremony.
- The event will be made as accessible as possible given the City of Hamilton's resources and given the budget available to the LGBTQ Advisory Committee,

which will fund the event and cover honoraria for speakers.

- The Chair, in collaboration with other members of the Committee, will invite members from Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ communities to speak at the event. The Committee will aim to feature voices from members of these communities who have been traditionally underrepresented.
- Members of City Council will be invited to attend the event in order to listen to the speakers and the roundtable discussion (but not as speakers themselves). The event will be focused on hearing from members of Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ communities.
- The program will be as follows -
  - An introduction from the Chair, including introductions of speakers
  - Speakers will each be given a set amount of time to speak
  - Roundtable discussion at the end

### **Analysis / Rationale**

The results of the survey, in their entirety, are available to review as part of the Agenda for the LGBTQ Advisory Committee's May 18, 2021 meeting.

This was the first time that the Committee conducted a survey of this kind and it was clear from the results that there was some misunderstanding from survey respondents as a result of the wording of some of the questions.

It was, for instance, unclear whether or not respondents realized that they were answering questions about the City of Hamilton's recognition of Pride or if they were answering questions about events planned more widely in the city by Pride Hamilton.

It was clear that some respondents thought it was the latter, which had an impact on the results. Overall, the responses appear contradictory to one another in places with some comments in favour of and others against the Committee's current recommendation.

In part, the Committee's recommendation reflects some of these results, but this is not the only reason that the Committee put forward its recommendation. As stated at the

May 18, 2021 meeting, there were a number of other factors which distinguished this year's recommendation from the recommendation that was made on May 15, 2019. They are as follows -

- The Committee's previous decision to recommend that the City of Hamilton not raise the Pride, Trans, and Indigenous flags and not hold an event to recognize Pride in 2019 was highly contextual to the events that were unfolding at that time.
- Our Committee was formed and met for the first time officially to elect its Chair on May 15, 2019, just 2 weeks before the start of Pride month, and on the same day it was tasked with making this recommendation. This left the Committee little time to plan an event or seek wider community feedback.
- Several of the incidents that were outlined as part of the Committee's recommendation in 2019 stemmed from media stories and other reports which detailed issues that had a significant impact on Hamilton's Two Spirit, LGBTQIA+, and other marginalized communities. The Committee felt a responsibility to make its decision given that context.
- At the time of the Committee's 2019 recommendation, the matters it raised in its recommendation were unresolved. The Committee made its decision based on the information it had at the time.
- When the Committee made its initial recommendation in 2019, the violent attack on Pride 2019 had not yet taken place. Since that time, there have been many incidents which have had a negative impact on members of Hamilton's marginalized communities.
- The results of the community survey put out by the Committee favoured making the recommendation as outlined above. Members of the Committee expressed that it was important to honour the feedback provided and to make the recommendation as outlined above.
- The current pandemic has had a disproportionately negative impact on members of marginalized communities. Members of the Committee reflected on the importance of displaying flags as a symbol of hope during a time of great uncertainty.

- In April 2021, the Halton District Catholic School Board (HDCSB) made a decision not to raise Pride flags at its schools. This decision received widespread attention and, in response, all 9 of the HDCSB's schools proudly made social media posts denouncing this decision through a "virtual flag raising". There was overwhelming support from school communities and members of the wider community, including in Hamilton, to see the flags flown. Members of the Committee highlighted how important it can be to see symbols, like flags, raised to support those who are in the process of coming out.