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**Mayor Horwath**

% City Hall  
71 Main St W,  
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

Greetings Mayor Horwath and City Council,

First I would like to thank you for listening to Pride Hamilton's perspective on the upcoming motion to prevent us from having fencing that blocks the paths at Pier 4 Park.

My name is Steph; I am a mom and advocate for many causes. In my time on the board of directors I have witnessed a lot and been a part of many aspects of planning our events, including meetings regarding the safety of our event. Thinking back to 2019, many safety concerns were brought forward. These concerns were brought forward not only from the community but also the Event Planning Committee as there were various groups of protestors from the U.S making efforts to disrupt Pride events. During this time, the committee was informed that it had been previously decided that HPS was not going to be at the event, but that there was a security plan in place that included security guards. The reasons expressed for not including police included community members not feeling safe due to incidents of discrimination and members of the board did not want police recruitment booths at the event.

In 2019, all members of the Event Planning Committee were at Gage Park setting up for what we thought would be a great event. The committee was eventually made aware that police and protestors were

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on the premises and to notify the Treasurer of Pride Hamilton as such. We know the details of what proceeded as it is public record and was covered all over the news; local, national and international outlets. Could this disaster be prevented? I don't know but I believe that if the board at that time kept the safety of the community as a focus and left their personal feelings aside it could have been less traumatic. We should have been doing what we have been doing for the last 3 years and working with the police and security company to ensure the safety of everyone.

Post 2019, I took on a larger role in working with the city, HPS, and our security company to come up with a plan to ensure everyone who is at our event is safe. We tried to keep the thoughts/feelings from the community in mind, but at the end of the day facilitating a Safe and Fun event was our key focus. In 2022, we held our event inside based on the premise of providing a safe atmosphere for everyone alongside working with the aftermath of the global pandemic. One of the biggest concerns was that Police would be visible in uniform which could be triggering for members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community; the HPS was very mindful of this concern and did everything that they could to ensure that they were not visible to our guests unless necessary. That year we had ZERO issues inside or outside our event of protesters. In 2023 we were finally able to bring our event back outside at Pier 4 Park, where we again worked with the HPS and our security company alongside the city to ensure our event was safe. A key component of that was having a barrier around the perimeter of the park with only one entrance and one exit. One of the key items that arose during the security planning stage was that we needed to have the path from Bayfront Park to the other side of Pier 4 Park open for public and emergency access; which we did. Again last year the HPS did their best to do their jobs and restrict themselves from triggering any of the community while being onsite. There were even some officers around that were out of uniform but wore an HPS Tshirt to have their presence known. On August 27, 2023 we had the pathways blocked off from about 11am to 11pm (possibly early the next morning) for our event. In the morning people were walking by and at no point expressed their concerns about blocking the path; they stopped to ask what was going on and would say things such "thank you good luck" and go on their way. There were no visible indications that would imply that the individuals passing through Pier 4 Park that day were unhappy. Last year, we had another year of no security issues or incidents. We

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received a significant amount of positive feedback from both individuals and families, who shared they were thrilled to be able to come to the event and not be fearful for their safety.

We are asking for 1 day of blocking the paths at Pier 4 Park to ensure that those who attend our event are safe. The past few years are all examples of the importance of barriers and a perimeter to creating a safe space. I understand that that one of the arguments for the motion being brought forward is that "parks are a place for communities to recreate together safely and walking can improve fitness, health and mental well being"; is one day really negatively impacting the safety, health and mental wellbeing of those that reside in Ward 2?

Maintaining our current footprint, with the pathways blocked, allows us to protect and safeguard the health and mental well-being of the 4000+ people that attend our event each year.

Our chair, Kiel Hughes, pointed out in his letter that security guards do not hold as much strength and power in Canada. If someone is coming to Pier 4 with negative intentions, a security guard will likely not pose a significant challenge to seeing those negative intentions through. This poses a significant risk to both security guards and the members of the community at risk. Is this motion worth a repeat of 2019? Do we really want to show our younger generation that the city that they live in does not care about their well being? If that's the case, the city should be prepared for people to start taking things into their own hands more often.

I would like to make note of something that may provide more clarity to my statements and those of my colleagues. Cameron Kroetsch, the Ward 2 Councillor, is a founding member of the Pride Hamilton Board, was the treasurer in 2019, and the chair of the city liaison committee. Cameron has expressed his differing views on what the Pride Hamilton event should look like, along with his personal beliefs against having the HPS at Pride Events. Throughout the time that he has been preparing for this motion he has never contacted us to discuss a possible alternative to our plan nor has he shown any support of our organization/event by attending or sharing support of our event on his social media.

I could go on and on about more reasons why the fencing of the perimeter of the park is essential in providing the 2SLGBT+ community a safe and happy Pride at the Pier but I think my colleagues

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have touched on the other aspects of why this is so important for the community.

Thank you for taking the time to read all of our letters and hearing Pride Hamilton's side. We hope that you take this matter seriously and look at the bigger picture of how this decision will form the future years for our events and the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Hamilton

Sincerely,

*Stephanie Adams*

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*Co-Directors of Fund Development*