



Deputation to the Hamilton Police Services Board

Tuesday, July 18, 2019

My name is Tanya Hendriks and I am a member of Pride Hamilton's Board of Directors. I am speaking today on behalf of our Board to share not only some of our observations about what happened at Pride but to use our 5 minutes to attempt to begin to set the record straight about some of the events leading up to Pride and some of the comments that have been made since.

We realize that what we'll say today will not be enough, satisfactory, or even close to the full picture, but we hope it starts to clear up some of the misinformation being spread about what happened. We appreciate the interest that this deputation may inspire and are happy to take your questions back to the Board, but we will not be answering any questions today.

When Pride Hamilton incorporated in November of 2018, we were left with a mandate from the previous organizing committee to do 2 things:

- (1) Ask police what their requests were with respect to Pride 2019; and then
- (2) Hold a community consultation to discuss those requests and get feedback.

After numerous attempts to arrange a meeting with police, beginning in January of 2019, police were finally able to meet with us on April 15, 2019 (2 months before Pride). This did not allow for enough time to hold community consultations to get feedback on the requests made by police.

Police nonetheless submitted an application and Pride responded on May 20, 2019 to the Recruiting Branch to tell them that we would not be approving their request for a recruitment booth. The Recruiting Branch replied the next day thanking us and asking us to please consider their future participation.

That was the last we heard from HPS until Thursday, June 13, 2019, 2 days before Pride, when an Acting Sergeant called looking to speak to us about an operational plan they were putting together. This officer had a number of questions which we answered in detail.

At one point in the conversation, it became useful for us to ask the officer to pull up a map of Gage Park, so we could make it particularly clear exactly where our permit area was and exactly where we expected protestors to show up, based on the events that occurred last year.

There was no doubt in our minds that we clearly identified the threat, including both the time and location. Based on this conversation we believed and understood there to be an operational plan in effect that would involve police presence outside the event area to intercept those intent on coming to commit violence. In fact, we saw only two police cruisers on site, at the opposite end of the park, as far from the protestors as possible while still considered on park grounds.

There were many other opportunities for police to collect intelligence on their own. They were copied on our event application through SEAT, they were at Pride last year, and they have been a witness to weekly protests at city hall. In short, they had all of the same intelligence that we did, if not more.

Despite all of this, HPS was not on scene in sufficient numbers to do their jobs. Even if there were additional officers deployed in plainclothes, as has been suggested, they didn't stop violent white supremacists from attacking our community.

After the immediate violence at Pride, but still while the event was going on, a group of officers, initially led by Superintendent Martin Schulenberg, asked to speak with organizers about what happened. Accordingly, 2 members of our Board met with this group that included Sergeants, Acting Sergeants, and other officers.

Police used this opportunity to ask us why we didn't let them have a recruitment booth, why we didn't hire paid duty officers, and why we didn't want armed and uniformed officers in the event space. It was suggested to us, clearly, that had we decided to grant police a recruitment booth, hire paid duty officers, and allow armed and uniformed officers to participate in patrolling the event space, that things would have turned out differently. These chilling comments were made to us after we had just witnessed violent white supremacists physically attack members of our community. Those comments were unprofessional, harmful, and completely inappropriate.

Subsequently, our names, dates of birth, and phone numbers were taken down for follow up so that officers could get in touch with us individually as part of their investigation into the incident (19-648035). To date, neither of those members of our Board have been contacted in any way by the Acting Sergeant to follow up about the incident.

Since Pride, we've heard many statements made by the Chair of this Board, Mayor Fred Eisenberger and the Chief of HPS, Eric Girt, despite neither of them being present at Pride.

They've made statements about what happened that are completely outside of our experience as the event's organizers. They've made derogatory and inflammatory comments about our organization and our community and have contributed to an increased risk of violence to Hamiltonians who are part of marginalized communities. To make matters worse and additionally insulting, neither of these individuals has reached out to Pride Hamilton since the events that took place on June 15, over one month ago. Not a single email or phone call. They have not contacted us to talk about their concerns, to ask us what happened, or even to check in, just to see if people are ok, which, for the record, they are not.

Instead, they have spent time rounding up those who defended our event from Pride violence, even going as far as to intentionally report a trans person to the Ontario Parole Board for speaking truth to power at a community meeting.

This is deeply troubling to our organization as we contemplate planning for Pride 2020 in the wake of a rising tide of hatred in Hamilton.

In light of what we have shared today, and what others have shared with you, Pride Hamilton is asking this Board to hold its Chair and the Chief of Police accountable for their actions and the damaging statements they have made that continue to do harm to Two-Spirit, LGBTQIA+, and other marginalized communities in Hamilton. Thank you for your time.