

Mr. Jonathan Hesler

Hamilton, Ontario

December 13, 2022

Hamilton Police Services Board

I would like to take this opportunity to raise issue with regards to ongoing discrimination and hate crimes against the 2SLGBTQI+ community within the City of Hamilton. Unfortunately, I am not the first person or citizen to bring this issue forward before the Hamilton Police Services Board.

THE ISSUE:

2SLGBTQI+ Drag Performers within our community are being targeted against at least two protected grounds under the Ontario Human Rights Code; sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

On November 14, 2022, drag performer HexE Noire attended the Binbrook Public Library to offer education to members of our community and for social and cultural expression of our 2SLGBTQI+ identity. The event ran smoothly, many families and their children were in attendance.

INCIDENT #1:

HexE Noire had a planned a subsequent Drag Storytime event, this time at the Terryberry Public Library in Hamilton. She received advance notification on November 20, 2022, concerning protestors who were spreading messaging about satanic and evil behaviour that drag performers were promoting, specifically using a photos of HexE Noire in a Halloween and devil costume marketing their message of hate. The organizer of this hate group and protester, known as "Crystal Peters", had also been arrested previously in Gravenhurst at a different Halloween Drag Storytime event. There is reportedly video evidence of these protests on her social media account on Facebook, along with another protestor/co-organizer identified as "King Nicol" on Facebook.

Safety plans, including an entry and exit strategy were identified in advance of this event. Discussions had been made about arriving and leaving in an unmarked vehicle for reasons concerning personal safety. These plans were reportedly facilitated by Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton Police Service, and a private security business contracted to provide security to Hamilton Public Library.

On November 24, 2022, HexE Noire's Drag Storytime event took place at Terryberry Library for thirty minutes. During that time, a hate group had been pre-assembled at the Terryberry

Library. This group was met by the Hamilton Police Service's 2SLGBTQI+ Liaison Officer, Sargent Moran, other uniformed members of Hamilton Police Service, and the contacted security guard business. With over 138 families in attendance, this event continued inside the library's basement. The protesters were permitted to remain on premise while outwardly protesting it. The protestors reportedly used a megaphone, shouting, chanting, and promoting further hate speech on-towards the 2SLGBTQI+ community. Protestors had hate-speech on shirts, photographic signs and other outward signs of prejudice against our 2SLGBTQI+ community.

In front of the Hamilton Police Service, stood members of our own community, who were showing support in solidarity for HexE Noire as a both drag performer and brave member of our 2SLGBTQI+ community. Again, these supporters were not behind Hamilton Police Service uniformed constables, but rather in front of them faced by the protestors.

INCIDENT #2:

Most recently, on December 11, 2022, another drag performer Crystal Duartz organized a Drag Event at Boston Pizza. They were met with an even greater amount of hate speech and protestors at Centre Mall on Barton Street. Again, there had been advance notice made that protestors would be arriving to this event. Protestors had even reportedly purchased tickets in hopes of selling-out the event, so that real/actual community members could not attend or purchase tickets. These protestors identities and names were even allegedly printed on these "occupied" tickets. Hamilton Police Service uniformed members were once again in attendance, but for two hours the protestors were allowed to remain on premise, chanting again with megaphones under the guise of "Free Speech" and "Freedom of Expression".

In advance, these protests and incidents appear to be organized through social media. Specifically, there are private Facebook groups/events where hate-organizers rally protestors to further their hate speech and prejudice against our community.

HISTORY:

On June 23, 2021 Hamilton City Council unanimously supported, and carried forward, the Community Safety and Well-Being plan. On June 24, 2021 this same plan was both received, and carried by the Hamilton Police Services Board.

The report listed three key priorities, in that;

- Everyone is safe and has a sense of belonging
- Everyone has access to services
- Individuals and families can meet their needs for education, healthcare, food, housing income, and social and cultural expression

The plan spoke specifically to hate incidents, and how advance measures could be taken for Social Development, Prevention, Risk Intervention, and Incident Response.

Numerous additional reports and plans have been drafted, including the Hate Prevention and Mitigation Initiative (Rebecca Sutherns, Sage Solutions) and the independent report of Mr. Scott Bergman following the Pride Hamilton incident. Falling short, we require Hamilton Police Service to act on hate incidents directed towards the 2SLGBTQI+ population within the City of Hamilton immediately.

THE IMPACT:

The impact has had for me both personally and toward members of our 2SLGBTQI+ community has been far and wide. My desire is for Hamilton to be a safe and inclusive space where we can promote both social and cultural expression of our own 2SLGBTQI+ identities.

I am extremely fearful of this known hatred within the City of Hamilton. Close to our own borders, in the United States, 2SLGBTQI+ bars and nightclubs have become targets from those with deep rooted hatred and violence against our community. We are fortunate to have one safe space in Hamilton, a bar known as “The Well”.

It is my hope that, one day, our drag performers and artists will not require arrival by private unmarked vehicles, into the basements of our public libraries.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS/ACTIONS:

Actions to address the hatred and prejudice against members of our community requires swift intervention by Hamilton Police Service.

Remaining stagnant and allowing these events to escalate may bear the ultimate consequences and perpetuate violent acts. Too many lives have been lost of those because of hate crimes, so we require intervention now – the plan has been written, so it’s time to work collaboratively.

Public messaging concerning the reporting of hate crimes must occur. Investigation of these hate crimes must occur. Applicable/appropriate charges and prosecution of these crimes must occur.

Simple inaction is not action.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Hesler