

June 18, 2024

Dear Chief Frank Bergen,

As the Executive Director of the Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre (HARRC), I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the established selection process for the Hate Crime Case Review Team (HCCRT). It has come to my attention that this process requires marginalized communities to vote along personal attributes and protected grounds (race, ethnic origin, gender identity, and religion to name a few) when selecting candidates for the committee.

While I appreciate the intent behind involving diverse voices in the decision-making process, I believe this approach is fundamentally flawed and counterproductive to the goals of inclusivity. By asking specific communities to vote for candidates primarily along race, gender identity, and religious lines, the process reinforces division, acts of tokenism, and unethical community practices, and undermines collaboration and mutual understanding. Moreover, it signals that individuals from different backgrounds cannot come together to make unified decisions, which contradicts the very essence of anti-racism efforts. The current process consequently dismisses the fact that members of the community may have varying identities that contribute to the conversation of hate prevention. Marginalized individuals often belong to multiple communities and possess intersectional identities. The current voting process does not adequately account for the complexities of intersectionality and may exclude those whose experiences span multiple identities.

For example, if you are queer and disabled, Muslim and Black, how do you decide which group to represent? Moreover, as the current process only allows Black community members to vote for the Black HCCRT candidates, it reinforces tokenism. We also need a process that ensures members have an anti-racism anti-oppression (ARAO) lens with which to enact systemic change. It reduces the selection process to an exercise in fulfilling quotas rather than providing a coalition of communities impacted by hate crimes the opportunity to select from an entire applicant pool of diverse individuals who possess relevant experience, background and are connected to ongoing hate prevention/mitigation work to serve on the HCCRT. Ultimately, it undermines the integrity and effectiveness of the HCCRT and perpetuates a view that selected candidates are chosen to represent their select community. In turn, this signals that the Hamilton Police is promoting segregation-style voting, which is the action of separating people, historically based on race. It sets the wrong precedent and may serve as an example for others to justify a subsequent act when or if other police services create an HCCRT.

It is important to note, that while recognizing specific communities have expressed a willingness to select a lead on the HCCRT, it does not negate the concerns raised in this letter.

The selection process, as it stands, raises serious questions regarding the Hamilton Police Service's ability to recognize the harmful impacts of systems of oppression. This failure may leave communities impacted by racism and discrimination to perceive the HCCRT as an attempt to address diversity without genuine consideration of the community's needs and perspectives.

I urge you to reconsider this approach and adopt a more inclusive and equitable selection process.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I look forward to your positive response and I am hopeful for constructive dialogue moving forward as we work towards confronting hate and racism in Hamilton.

Sincerely,



Executive Director
HARRC

Cc. Hamilton Police Service Board