



July 1, 2019

To the Hamilton Police Service, Mayor Fred Eisenberger and City Council, and the wider Hamilton community,

Environment Hamilton's Board of Directors stands in solidarity with the city's 2SLGBTQIA+ community against the hatred, bigotry, and violence that has taken root in our city. We denounce the fascist organizations poisoning our public discourse, and we call on the City's leadership to do more to acknowledge, affirm and protect Hamilton's most marginalized residents.

We firmly believe a healthy, sustainable environment is inclusive, safe, equitable, and free from discrimination, exclusion, and abuse. The fascist movement that has been organizing in Hamilton is antithetical to a sustainable environment, as they maintain and further entrench an unjust system of oppression that concentrates power in a few hands while denying the full humanity of others.

Their hateful agenda ranges from terrorizing the 2SLGBTQIA+ community through supporting oil pipeline expansion, opposing carbon pricing and fear-mongering against immigrants, refugees and racialized people. The common theme in these seemingly disparate positions is the fascists' determination to impose a brutal hierarchy that privileges them while scapegoating and gaslighting the victims of their oppression and exploitation.

Their agenda disproportionately visits injustice on the marginalized people that the fascists seek to oppress. Whether championing resource exploitation that violates treaties and degrades Indigenous land, racist immigration policies that discount racialized people and demonize refugees, or political violence to suppress and expel marginalized communities, fascists consistently target the most vulnerable.

These fascists have been conducting weekly demonstrations in front of City Hall for many months, mostly ignored and unchecked by city leadership while anti-fascist volunteers have organized counter-protests to show that Hamilton does not accept fascism.

This year's Pride celebration was already clouded by a growing sense that the City has not taken this threat seriously enough. The LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee withdrew its endorsement of the City raising the Pride Flag this year following the revelation that a notorious white supremacist has been working for the City as an IT professional for the past 15 years. Their concern is that Hamilton is not as safe a space as its leaders would like to think.

That concern was validated at the Pride event in Gage Park on Saturday June 15, when a group of fascists, emboldened by their weekly protests, joined right-wing religious zealots to attack the Pride participants with both words and fists. Anti-fascist volunteers organized a brilliant strategy to block the hateful signage brought by zealots with a large black cloth screen and kept the lot of haters from intruding on the Pride celebration.

We are dismayed with the response of Hamilton Police Chief Eric Girt, who came right out and [said](#) the police response would have been more robust if the Pride organizers had allowed a police recruiting table. This is unacceptable: the police are supposed to serve and protect everyone.

Despite clear documentary video evidence of fascist violence, the first police arrests targeted those folks who stepped forward to protect the Pride's participants. We admonish the Hamilton Police Service for the arrest of Cedar Hopperton, trans person, long-time environmental activist, and former member of the Environment Hamilton board. Cedar's arrest appears to be an act of retaliation for Cedar's brave speech against police violence at the City of Hamilton LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee meeting. Against all evidence, the police claim Cedar was one of the Hamilton Pride defenders present at Gage Park on June 15th. Police claim Cedar violated the conditions of their parole by being present at a public demonstration "where peace was disrupted" — an absurd condition of parole in the first place. We call for the immediate release of Cedar from jail, where they have been on hunger strike since their arrest on June 22nd. We stand in solidarity with all queer activists in Hamilton who are facing repression from the police and the courts for their courage to stand up to the attackers at the Pride festival.

This past Wednesday June 26, City Council added further insult to injury when one Councillor trivialized the violence and openly goaded the outraged citizens who were watching the proceedings in shock, while Mayor Fred Eisenberger ordered the protesters removed from the gallery. And this was literally one day after the Mayor put out a press release promising he would do better to listen.

As an organization, Environment Hamilton is committed to improving and extending our reach to allies. We are enhancing the important work of reaching out, listening, building bridges, and honouring and fulfilling our responsibilities under the Dish With One Spoon Wampum, which calls on all of us to share what we have, ensure everyone has enough, keep our environment clean, and create the space for peaceful resolution of differences.



Cindy Gangaram
Chair of the Board of Directors
Environment Hamilton