



Pride Update to City Councillors

May 4, 2011

Dear Toronto City Councillor;

We are writing to urge your continued support for Pride Week festival Toronto. Without the support of the City of Toronto, this year's festival, all future festivals and the Pride Toronto organization itself is in jeopardy. Without the City's ongoing support, World Pride in 2014 will not take place in Toronto.

We believe that the people of Toronto – within and beyond the LGBTTIQQ2SA communities - are proud to live in a diverse city that is host to one of the most successful Pride festivals in the world. We do not believe the people of Toronto would be proud to see it cancelled. We also believe that the City's economy should continue to benefit from the \$136 million in economic activity the festival generates, and the City's budget should continue to benefit from the \$4 million in tax revenues that activity creates.

The future of the Pride Festival now rests in your hands.

Pride in Jeopardy

Pride Toronto, host of the Pride Week Festival, sits at a precarious place. After the loss of federal government grants and some other major donors last year, the organization incurred a loss. This has resulted in a debt manageable only with the ongoing tolerance of our bank.

We have made a number of significant cuts in the budget and programming for this year's Festival. With City support, we will meet our budget targets. Without City support, this year's festival will almost certainly incur another deficit, which will push the organization to the brink of insolvency.

Withdrawal of City support would also act as a signal to the other major donors and other levels of government. We fear the result would almost certainly be cancellation of future festivals.

World Pride in Jeopardy

As you may know, Toronto has been honoured by being chosen as the host of World Pride 2014, which would put our city in the international spotlight as a global leader in human rights and social acceptance. The event would attract even more visitors than the 1.2 million who annually visit Pride Week.

As a condition of hosting World Pride, local Pride organizations must demonstrate a financial surplus in each of the three years prior. Loss of City funding would make that impossible. The loss of World Pride would put our city in the international spotlight in a very different way.

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No Reason to Remove Support

Some councillors have suggested that support to Pride should be cut because the Parade contains groups or messages that promote hate speech. That is not true.

- 1) Pride Toronto has clear policies that prohibit hate or anti-discriminatory speech.
- 2) Pride Toronto has now established an independent binding Dispute Resolution Procedure to evaluate any allegations that Pride Toronto policies have been violated.
- 3) The City Manager's report has determined that Pride Toronto has not violated hate speech laws, human rights laws, or the City's own anti-discrimination policy by allowing Queers Against Israeli Apartheid to march in prior years.
- 4) Further, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid has publicly declared that they do not intend to march in the Pride parade this year.

Given the above, there is no legitimate reason to cut City support for the Pride Festival. Indeed, any such cut would be singling out the LGBT community by imposing grant restrictions not imposed on other grantees adherent to City policy.

We urge you to voice your support for the LGBT community and for continued City support for the Pride Toronto Festival.

Sincerely

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glen Brown".

Glen Brown
Interim Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francisco Alvarez".

Francisco Alvarez
Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaret Ngai".

Margaret Ngai
Co-Chair