

From: Caitlin Whitworth [REDACTED] >
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2024 3:05 PM
To: David Turton <dturton@town.minto.on.ca>; Jean Anderson <janderson@town.minto.on.ca>; Judy Dirksen <jdirksen@town.minto.on.ca>; Ron Elliott <relliott@town.minto.on.ca>; Geoff Gunson <ggunson@town.minto.on.ca>; Ed Podniewicz <epodniewicz@town.minto.on.ca>; Paul Zimmerman <pzimmerman@town.minto.on.ca>; davida@wellington.ca
Subject: Pride Flags -

Some people who received this message don't often get email from [REDACTED] [why this is important](#)

Hello Mayor and Council,

My name is Caitlin Whitworth and I am a resident in the Town of Palmerston.

I have worked within the Economic Development and Tourism division within the municipal government for over 15 years and have seen my fair share of opinions, opportunities, objections and optimism. I have often not felt so compelled to voice my concern and opinion unless there is what I believe to be harm or damage to be done to the community and that is what I believe will happen if you were to remove the pride flags and crosswalk from within this township. I cannot stay silent on the sidelines and not stand up for what I believe is right.

"Minto is a progressive rural community where **all people are welcome!**" The proud and bold statement made within the opening of the Town of Minto Strategic Plan. The Strategic plan that was developed with community engagement, staff knowledge and input, provincial legislations, and more. The plan is to act as the guiding principle in decision making amongst council and staff. The goals identified and specifically highlighted:

Goal 2: Quality of Life

Goal 4: Inclusive Community

If a segment of people within our community are made to feel unwelcome by the removal of any symbol, then we are not fulfilling those goals. I am asking you, as the representatives elected to be the face of our township, the voice of the citizens to please recognize that this group who is voicing their disdain and hatred for a segment of our local community under a guise of concern and continue to allow the LGBTQIA2S+ community to feel a sense of growing inclusivity.

I wanted to note a history point from another municipality who was faced with the same opposition you are currently facing and made the incorrect decision to not fly the pride flag. In 1995, The City of London was found to have violated the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Mayor and city were each fined and then a formal apology was provided to acknowledge the discrimination.

In 2023, Oxford County has had an Ontario Human Rights Code violation being launched on them as they tried to create a 'neutrality' standpoint for flags being flown. This situation is ongoing. Does Minto want to be the next bullet point in the Municipal history of Human Rights complaints over a flag?

I cannot imagine living such a privileged life where the mere sight of a rainbow banner up high on a flag pole, or coloured pavement I am walking or driving across is the biggest concern of my day. That the sight of a rainbow coloured banner fills my soul with so much disgust, hate and anger that I feel compelled to 'gather the troops' and fight against it. It is truly astonishing. Could you imagine if this group had felt the same about members in our community going without food, and instead of collecting signatures they collected 900 items of food. Imagine if the group found a solution for a real problem within our township instead of creating it? Do they know the large and positive impact a \$900 donation would have on the Snack Bin program within our schools?

On the other hand, can you imagine being part of a minority group and seeing a rainbow banner and see that symbol making the invisible struggle visible? These symbolic banners and crosswalks are important and help deliver a strong message about our community, our values, our goals, and acceptance.

I would love to question this group of 'advocates' if they feel the same way about the hurt and pain the pro-birth (they cannot say pro-life, if they don't want anything to do with the living LGBTQIA2S+ community members) signage along our roadways brings to others? After all, the roads are public space. Why is that signage with images and messaging, not a symbol, allowed to be showcased for those to see while driving?

Equity, diversity and inclusion should be the guiding principle for the use of public space – from banners to events, to design and development.

While I know this email is convoluted in thoughts, I hope that my message in support of the continuation of the pride banners and flags is still prevalent.

Thank you,

Caitlin

Food for thought from my work portfolio – as this issue spreads further than just local contentment. There are economic benefits to show Minto truly is “a progressive rural community where **all people are welcome!**”

The North American Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two Spirit and Queer travel market (referred to as the LGBT+ travel market going forward) spends:

- over \$70 billion USD on travel annually*
- the global LGBT+ travel market is valued at \$200 billion USD per year*
- Canadian LGBT+ travellers alone spend \$12 billion per year – a 43% increase since 2014*

Canadian LGBT+ travellers have income levels that mirror that of the general population, but only 30% have one or more children living in their household, which generally results in higher discretionary income. On average, Canadian LGBT+ travellers spend \$1,855 per trip compared to \$265 per trip for the general travelling public – which is seven times higher.

Source: https://cglcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CGLCC_Travel_Market_Guide_2020-EN.pdf