

**From:** [marg\\_mclean](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride in the park  
**Date:** June 3, 2024 2:37:41 PM

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CAUTION: This email originated from outside of The Town of Minto. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and/or know the contents to be safe.

I am writing Express my disapproval and concern Regarding the “pride in the park” event In the town of Minto Specifically the planned interactions between drag performers and children. I believe that this aspect of the event is Not appropriate for children. My primary concern is The involvement of Drag performers and activities aimed at children. Drag performances often include Themes and Content that is not suitable for Younger audiences. It is essential to maintain A clear distinction Between events Intended for adults and those intended for children To ensure that the content is age-appropriate.

I urged the town of Minto council to Reconsider The inclusion of drag performances in the Portion of the event directed at Children.

It is Crucial to ensure that town events Reflect sensitivity to Values and concerns of all residence Thank you for your attention To this matter I hope that the town Council will Consider my concerns and Make adjustments to the event To ensure that it is suitable For all members of our community.

Sincerely  
Margaret McLean

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Roxy](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Gay Pride  
**Date:** June 3, 2024 7:04:55 PM

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To the town of Minto:

I'm so sorry to see that our community does not have the backbone to stand up to this ridiculous and obscene Gay Pride Party! Rainbow signs and wanting a flag with our Canadian Flag! Not a good idea! Totally not in favor! I hope someone from council goes to monitor their festivities at the Palmerston Heritage Park on Sunday! We disapprove of flaunting normal sexuality in front of our children so why in the world would you ever allow this? Have you heard of sexual grooming! You are now a Consenting part of this. There is no place for this in our communities! Minto is opening doors that will jeopardize our children! We are to love one another but this doesn't mean we need to agree to this . We can respect each others choices but a normal heterosexual person doesn't need a month to do so! There are more important issues in our community to be addressed ! Don't let the doors open to confuse our young children.  
Young people are being butchered!  
In the future consequences will occur! Please wake up!  
Roxanne Lashbrook  
Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Dennis Kaufman](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Cc:** [David Turton](#); [Jean Anderson](#); [Judy Dirksen](#); [Ron Elliott](#); [Geoff Gunson](#); [Ed Podniewicz](#); [Paul Zimmerman](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 4, 2024 10:18:12 PM

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

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As a taxpayer and resident of the Town of Minto I wish to add my name to the petition that was recently presented to the Town Council.

Sadly I was not approached in person to sign it but our house hold including my wife Sherry supports the petition in principal.

I do not envy the position that the Council and staff are currently placed in as emotions are always running high on both sides of this issue. I find it interesting while following posts on Face book over the past few days that have anything to do with "Pride Month" have mostly had commenting shut off by the person or group posting. I take Face book comments and posts with several grains of salt as surprisingly not everything you read may be true or accurate.

I do believe as a taxpayer of the Town that our resources and time could be put to better use. I know the argument that the Pride committee pays for banners and what not, but I am pretty sure the staff and equipment are installing them on Town time.

This upcoming weekend is the event in Palmerston which I will certainly not be attending, my choice, what does trouble me the most however is the featured activity of the Drag Story Time. I cannot comprehend why a "male person" while dressed as a female needs to have a audience of children to perform to.

I have not or will get into the discussions in public or open forums about my distain for the activities because immediately anyone who does not embrace the Pride ways is branded as a hater , bigot or other phrase of the day.

In closing, please consider the many others like myself that often tolerate or say nothing for fear of the outrage that is often too common for not agreeing with the Pride Community.

I recent seen a quote that reads

" Dear Pride community , Don't tell me I have to accept you for who you are when you couldn't accept yourself for who you were"

Thank you for your consideration in the matter

Dennis & Sherry Kaufman  
Proud citizens of Minto



**From:** [Gavin Brown](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Date:** June 5, 2024 12:40:37 AM  
**Attachments:** [Screenshot\\_20240605-003540.png](#)

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Hi , I am not in favour of such entertainment in our public parks , please include my name on the record for being against this , thx gavin brown

**From:** [Adele Campbell](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Message in support of Minto Pride and Pride decorations  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 1:35:49 PM

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**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of The Town of Minto. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and/or know the contents to be safe.

Hello,

I am writing today to express my support for the Minto Pride committee and the important work they do in our community. Symbols of Pride in public spaces convey a message of a community that supports diversity, equity, inclusion and accepting of all people regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, culture or sexual orientation. There is time and space for all groups to display signage and decorations throughout the year, such as Legion Veteran banners in the weeks leading up to Remembrance Day, or promoting Black Heritage Month and other cultural events. Removing Pride decorations would be a step backwards and send a wrong message that those identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+ are not able to live openly, free from discrimination or stigma in the Town of Minto. Pride decorations are not a political statement, they are a representation of human and civil rights.

Kind regards,

Adele Campbell

*(Harriston resident, parent, spouse, dance teacher and Youth Education Chair Harriston Legion Branch 296)*

**From:** [Alex Wilson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Public neutrality bylaw  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 3:46:14 PM

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Hi Annilene,

Please use this email as a letter to address the current "public neutrality" petition.

Dear Town of Minto,

I was very saddened to hear about the petition for public neutrality. As someone who considers herself an ally of the LBGBTQ2S+ community, I was very upset to hear about this petition. Growing up 15-20 years ago in our town, kids who identified with the LBGBTQ2S+ were bullied and made to feel ashamed. After going away to school for the last 8 years, I have been very pleasantly surprised to come home and see all the business' supporting the pride flags. This community has come leaps and bounds from where we were. It is important for us to have to flags up to let young children know that it's okay to be who they are. They should not be ashamed of it; they should embrace it.

If we take down these flags, it's like we will be re-winding the clocks and going back to the 2000's where people were made to feel ashamed, when they shouldn't. The town has done such a great job of making this community feel inclusive, it would be a step in the wrong direction to go back. Keep the flags and signs so the youth of our community know it's okay to be who they are.

This petition is not about keeping the community neutral, it is about how uncomfortable people in our community are with diversity and inclusion. To me, that is a shame. If the council supports this by- law, they are essentially saying that this group of people doesn't belong. Again, that would be a shame. To be clear, this petition is against a specific group- that remains evident.

Please consider how this would have detrimental consequences for the youth in our community.

Sincerely,

Alex Wilson



I am writing in response to the petition to remove rainbow flags in Minto and attain 'neutrality'.

I strongly support rainbow flags in Minto. As I explained to my kids the rainbow includes EVERYONE. Neutrality does not.

The idea of neutrality appears to offer equality and it does to some degree. Everyone gets the same.

However equality does not support everyone in the ways they need. It is black and white.

Equity supports everyone in the ways they need. The rainbow flag includes those who have a neutral stance.

Adversely in neutrality no one is represented or supported. Which can be dangerous to a community.

Those that do not fit the mold of binary identity do not see themselves represented in many schools, churches and communities and especially not in 'neutrality.' which denies them the basic human right of belonging to their community.

Research has shown that this leads to an increase in suicide rates.

Inclusivity is more than a rainbow flag, it saves lives and it shows to newcomers and the current population that Minto is a safe, inclusive space for EVERYONE. All religions, beliefs and identities.

Neutrality leaves out a large part of the population. The essence of the rainbow is ALL the colors. Not just black and white.

Black and white erases our differences and therefore hurts the community.

Studies have shown that inclusive communities that give everyone a voice and show people of different creeds and identities in their art, supports a healthy, thriving community.

Which is why the Government of Ontario supports equity and inclusive strategies.

As written in the 'Equity and Inclusive Strategy' by the Government of Ontario

'Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.'

<https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ffiles.ontario.ca%2Fedu-equity-inclusive-education-strategy-2009-en-2022-01-13.pdf&data=05%7C02%7Cannilene%40town.minto.on.ca%7Cb8b168d8f0d3467cc1f808dc8677f73b%7Ca63fda7a29ae4b3eb07d4e5ff4c3a891%7C0%7C0%7C638533097389300503%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWlloiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ik>

[1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Zlq2kZ7dPwFbKZbu7DUP%2FJX0tZdDiHwHV8ofzMzJ3y8%3D&reserved=0](https://www.linkedin.com/company/minto-queensland/)

Neutrality is the current state. It is in everyone's best interests to create a new, safer space for everyone and the flags are a visual representation of this that everyone can enjoy and look up to for inspiration and courage to be their authentic selves.

Those that are secure in themselves have the capacity for peace and prosperity. Which is what Minto both aims to sustain and achieve more of.

Thank you for your time,

Amy Sjaarda (she/her)

Minto Pride #harristonrising Harriston Rising #mintopride

**From:** [Andrew at OSiM](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** A Letter In Support Of Municipal Pride Symbols In Minto  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 12:06:04 PM

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Minto Town Council,

As a Minto resident, I express to you my profound gratitude and support for the Town of Minto continuing its allyship in 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion, expression, and rights in our community, allying with the Minto Pride organisation, and the public display of Pride symbols and banners throughout our municipality.

I was saddened to learn that there are groups and outside influences employing underhanded techniques to persuade or force Minto's Town Council to remove the Pride banners and other public symbols around town. The fact that they are using false submissions and trickery to push an agenda borne out of fear and hate should ensure a swift dismissal of their appeals without any serious consideration.

These groups are frenzied to draw more regions backwards, particularly after losing ground in places like Oxford County, which has now chosen to join in public support for Pride and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Hate and fear mongers are losing ground and they're becoming desperate.

We cannot give in to these fearful and hateful groups. We cannot step backwards when we have the opportunity to lead by example, showing unequivocal support for those in our community who need to see and feel our love and protection more than ever. The 2SLGBTQIA+ community is under attack, and Council cannot give honest consideration to the demands of their bullies and harassers and oppressors, those who would deny them their human rights given the opportunity, who wish to harm and traumatise members of our community and those we care about in the name of their own twisted values.

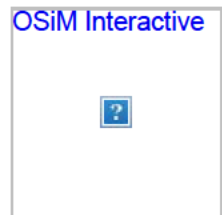
Council and Minto Residents need to continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our vulnerable communities, with our friends and family who are constantly threatened and told to hide or deny their own existence. Public support for Pride is as vital as ever, and the Town of Minto's support to this point has been appreciated and celebrated. It's one of the primary reasons I am proud to call Minto home.

It would do incredible harm to actual residents if the Town of Minto was to pull away from their public support of Pride. If the Town of Minto withdraws its visible public shows of support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community by way of removing banners and other symbols, I will no longer be proud to be a Minto resident. I will be ashamed. The majority of residents throughout the municipality will be ashamed of their home town if this tiny minority of hateful people, many agitators who don't even live here, gets their

way.

I implore you to continue setting the example in support of Pride with open and loud allyship, protecting human rights and the oppressed from forces of ignorance and hate, and to do it unabashedly without hesitation or question.

Ensure your votes are for supporting the vulnerable and in favour of love and self-expression, keeping Minto an inclusive community while supporting equity and diversity. Don't let hate and cowardice win, not here too.



**Andrew Gowan - Director of Digital Marketing**

Direct: [REDACTED] | Office: [REDACTED]  
Working Flex Hours - [Book Appointment](#)  
[Contact Support](#)



**From:** [Ashley McIntosh](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride decor & support  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 4:14:16 PM

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Hello,

I'm writing as someone who no longer resides in Minto but grew up in Minto and surrounding areas, moving away in my early 20s.

5 years ago I heard that Minto was running it's first ever Pride festival and was so happy and excited for the area. Growing up in Minto I had no experience with or understanding of the queer community. I knew that I was interested in other women, but could not comprehend that a same-sex relationship was even an option. I wasn't in a closet and afraid to come out, I recognized my feelings but didn't think that anything could be done about them so chose to repress them. I did this by doing what I felt was expected in any life course - married a man, had a couple kids, and settled into a life that really didn't fit me or fulfill me.

In my early 30s I was introduced to the queer community by a friend and a whole new world opened up for me. These were people that were living a life I'd always craved but never even imagined was possible.

I am now living my best life as I've learned to embrace all parts of myself and be authentic. I am a drag performer and was honored to be invited to come back to my hometown and perform to raise funds towards future Minto Pride events (later this month). Out of my 6 year drag career THIS is the highlight for me. Being able to go home and feel safe and accepted. Seeing the posts on social media of the streets I grew up in being decorated for Pride has given me such hope for a future where no children will have to deny their identity.

I understand Minto Council has recieved some requests to "stay neutral" in respect to Pride matters. I have shared with you some of my personal journey on why Minto's embracing of Pride is important to me, but let me share my opinion as a social work student...in matters of human rights and social justice, in matters that truly impact the life and death of minority groups, one cannot be "neutral." One either visibibly sides with those most vulnerable or one is complicit in perpetuating harmful systems.


I urge Minto Council to look at the statistics in regards to mental health and suicidality in the queer community (especially youth) and examine what factors reduce those risks. You will see one of the main factors is a supportive environment and you have the means of contributing to that. If you would like more information on specific statistics, there are many locations for such, but I highly encourage you to review reports completed by the Trevor Project, which focus on queer youth.

I'm not sure how much value you will give to my opinion, considering I haven't been able to vote in Minto since before the towns amalgamated, but I do hope that you really consider the positive impact a supportive community can have on minority groups, especially queer youth,

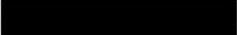
and keep making the right choices for those who are most vulnerable.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.  
Ashley Aikens-McIntosh

Sent from [Outlook for Android](#)

**From:** [Ashley Fox](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** DEI - delegations  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 11:38:52 AM  
**Attachments:** 

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Hello Annilene,

Please include my email in the council's briefing information for the decision on public neutrality. I had previously emailed Mayor Turton on the issue in the past year but didn't hear back. I will emphasize the same points I made to him and include a recent email as I feel this is important for all councillors to take into consideration.

This is no longer a request for neutrality. The hatred shared in various town posts, comments and personal posts are very clear to anyone that this "request for neutrality" is a direct attack on the Pride and members of our community. To claim otherwise with the evidence presented on various forums is misinformation – call a Spade a Spade. The day after Pride décor was placed in Clifford Ontario, the town was overwhelmed with calls and emails to remove the décor. In Palmerston, the décor has been removed from some areas as well. We also have local community members demanding that businesses be boycotted for supporting Pride events.

The banners placed in Minto had no concerns for me as a community member – in fact, I was delighted because it means that cost savings for ongoing replacement of décor items that the small vocal minority in our community seem to find time to destroy.

Minto's tagline is "You belong here". If Council chooses to accept a "Public neutrality" decision, hate wins. I'm raising a toddler in our community Councillors, and I look to you for leadership. This is your chance to send a clear message and take an unequivocal stand against hate in our community. Leadership is making difficult decisions; I hope that Council will make the right one.

Previous email communication:

*On Friday, September 8, Premier Doug Ford, speaking at an event in Kitchener, made several anti-LGBTQ+ comments including the idea that school boards are "indoctrinating" students on issues of gender. Has there been any form of communication from our Town Council or staff condemning his harmful anti-trans comments? I believe a statement condemning his remarks is an important action to show the LGBTQ+ community in Minto that they are respected and*

welcome.

*In the past, I reached out to our Town Council regarding a statement about the hate crime at UW in neighbouring Kitchener-Waterloo (as many of us commute there for work and education), but no public statement was made.*

*Minto pride, the diversity committee, and the annual anti-hate event are all important and helpful but we need leadership from you and the other elected officials. We need leaders to send a clear message and take an unequivocal stand against hate.*

Ashley Fox

[REDACTED] Palmerston Ontario

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



**From:** [Brook Iden](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pro pride  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 9:34:13 PM

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As a queer who grew up in harriston years ago and had no supportive community I am so happy that now those growing up have access to support and a compassionate community. It would be a shame to see that end and have them go through the loneliness and isolation I did when I was growing up. Please don't cancel pride or any events related, let people love and be free to be who they are

-Brook Iden

**From:** [Cayle VanSickle](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 9:33:47 PM

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Good Evening,

I am writing in support of the importance of the Minto Pride Committee and having pride symbols in the Town of Minto.

“Where your family belongs” is the Minto motto – as shown on the Town of Minto's Facebook page's header. How can the Town of Minto continue to have that motto if there were abandon the LGBTQ2+ community?

I have lived in the Town of Minto for majority of my life, except for the few years I went to college. Growing up, I had multiple classmates come out as being apart of the LGBTQ2+ community, however, quite a few only came out to close friends and struggled coming to terms with this. Some struggled more than others, and I only wish that they had the community we have now.

By going back on the decision to show Pride flags and symbols, the Town would be sending the following messages to the community:

- Being apart of the LGBTQ2+ community is something to be ashamed of and hidden
- Only families that match the stereotypical nuclear family belong in Minto
- Hate will always win

I have been so incredibly proud of my small community in their Pride month efforts. It would be extremely disappointing to see all this reversed. We cannot let hate and prejudice define the Town of Minto.

**From:** [Chantelle Wilson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support for pride, lack of neutrality  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 12:56:11 PM

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Hi there - I am a minto resident living on the north side of our township, and I just wanted to stress my pride in our community for embracing all people. The town of minto has done an excellent job in creating festivals/events/activities and I am so proud to be a resident here. Even in comparison to Listowel (where I grew up), the town of minto does so much for our people. Comparing the differences in highschools between the towns, students appear to feel safer to express themselves as they come here in Minto. Everyone is welcome, but hate is not, and I am saddened by the continous uproar by narrow minded citizens. Especially rurally we need to protect our youth and minority citizens and ensure they feel welcome and able to be whoever they are.

Keep up the great work and never strive to be neutral. Continue to be welcoming for all. You're doing a great job.

Chantelle

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Cheryl Touchie](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** PRIDE LETTER OF SUPPORT  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 11:53:41 AM

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Hello

I want to take a moment to say how proud I am to live in such a diverse and inclusive town. That we accept others based on just being ourselves. We should never judge others until we walk in their shoes.

I grew up in a home surrounded with love from 2 parents in a same sex relationship for over 42 years and we were all raised to respect others as we have no right to judge. I hope we can continue this solidarity without unnecessary hate. As we are here only for a short time and to spend it hating and pushing others out...is a waste of time.

Thank you for continuing to support every person in this township that we may continue to be a place more people want to call home.

*Cheryl Touchie*

[REDACTED]  
Harriston, On  
N0G 1Z0

[REDACTED]

**From:** [Dallas Hall](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto - A Community of Acceptance and Belonging  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 8:33:58 PM

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Dear Council,

I write to you as a frequent visitor of Minto and beyond that, I am someone who once called Minto home. I have recently become aware of delegations who have demanded the removal of symbols of Pride. I am no longer a resident and therefore do not have the ability to sign a petition, however I feel compelled to write to you to share my thoughts.

I must admit, I was upset when I learned this. I was at a loss of understanding. Why is this even a conversation?

After some reflection I wondered if maybe, just maybe those of you who made these demands are missing some information. My hope is that you, and your colleagues will have a better understanding of what the Pride colours and the Pride flag actually represent.

**Red - Life** - A representation of all that lives in our communities, no matter the size/shape or who they love

**Orange - Healing** - Symbolic of healing that has happened from hatred and ignorance

**Yellow - Sunshine** - Representing the light we need to grow

**Green - Nature** - I am sure that since you represent a rural community, you can appreciate the importance of the natural world we walk on, learn from, and survive on because of its gifts harvested each year.

**Blue - Harmony** - Growing up in a rural community, harmony was demonstrated to me by my community leaders as a way to support one another (everyone) to overcome challenges and support those in need

**Purple - Spirit** - The spirit of our rural communities spread far, it is supportive, it is welcoming, it is vibrant

**Black - Diversity** - Diversity is what defines a community. The opportunity to work together and learn from a variety of perspectives is what builds a stronger, accepting, more welcoming community.

Now let me tell you a little bit about myself. I am a white heterosexual female, married to my highschool sweetheart. We have two beautiful young adult daughters who are navigating their way through this complicated world. We are fortunate enough to come from a place of privilege. We have been fortunate enough to travel to different parts of the world, experience a variety of foods and cultures and ways of life. As parents we have made our best efforts to demonstrate love, acceptance and a sense of curiosity to learn more about what we don't know. I am an ally of the LGBTQ2+ community.

I implore you, your colleagues and the members of the delegation who have requested the removal of symbols of acceptance and belonging to reflect upon your own unconscious bias, challenge your thinking and think about the community members you represent.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Kindly,  
Dallas Hall

**From:** [Deb Langlois](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 6:21:31 PM

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Good Evening:

I have been a resident of Palmerston for 45 yrs. I raised My children here..I ran a very successful business here for 25 yrs. I have been happy to see the town promote inclusion over the past few years. The pride banners and rainbow crosswalk brighten the downtown cores.

It saddens Me that a small group has decided to attack and demand neutrality..If that is the case then everything other than a Canadian flag or remembrance day banner should be cancelled..

When our business closed in December ( retirement) myself and business partner donated money to Minto Pride as We felt that they promote positivity in Our community . The amount of hate that they continue to endure is wrong. I support the Town Of Minto allowing the banners,flags and post decorations to continue.

Deb Langlois

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Glen Hall](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Symbols of Pride in Minto  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 10:15:15 AM

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**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of The Town of Minto. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and/or know the contents to be safe.

I am writing to express my strong support for the inclusion of Pride symbols within our community. These symbols are vital in promoting openness, inclusivity, and diversity—values that are essential in 2024 and beyond.

Pride symbols help businesses thrive, showcase our community as a friendly and safe place for all, and contribute to the overall well-being of our residents. They are more than just symbols; they represent a commitment to creating a safe environment, which can significantly impact mental health and save lives within our at-risk community.

As a business owner, member of the Pride community, and advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusivity, I fully support initiatives that embody these pillars. Minto has done an admirable job in promoting and embracing these values, and I believe that for our community to continue growing and flourishing, we must further embrace and integrate these symbols.

Thank you for considering my perspective. I look forward to seeing our community continue to lead in fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone.



**Glen Hall - President**

Direct: [REDACTED] Office: [REDACTED]  
Working Flex Hours - [Appointment Times Available](#)  
[Contact Support](#)



**From:** [Heather Reed](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride Support  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 9:29:41 PM

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Good Evening,

It has come to my attention that there are groups within Minto that are for 'Neutrality' rather than Equity. I feel it is setting a terrible precedence to remove the Pride Flags and other DEI work that have been fought so hard for- and won- to create inclusion and equity for all.

Symbols of Pride in our community are not something to be ashamed of, but rather something to build relationships and support for everyone with. I am a proud ally and I want my children growing up in a town (and a world) that accepts and loves all people.

I applaud the Town of Minto for taking the stance for standing with the LGBTQ and being an ally to those who need their voices heard.

Please reconsider the delegations to remove the flags and other important symbols, and know there are many who are for Equity in our community.

Sincerely,  
Heather Reed-Cox

**From:** [Jennifer Hall](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Keep the flags - Letter to Council  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 3:05:42 PM

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To Minto Council,

Pride is not about a select group of individuals. It is about all people, all human rights. It is a representation of equality for all people, regardless of colour, creed, religion, orientation, preferences, social or economic status or background.

The demographics of our community are not a mixture of differences. Our community is mostly white, conservative and christian. When people live, work, gather and learn only with others that are all the same, it is hard for them to see others as not included. It is only when someone listens and learns from those that are different from themselves, that we can grow as an individual and a community.

The people that are speaking for inclusion and for these flags are speaking from experience. I am a taxpayer living in Minto. I have experienced first hand the lack of inclusion in our community. I have been told " to pray the gay away". I have been forced to remove myself and my children from spaces that are not safe in this community.

The delegation of people who wish to have "neutrality" in our community are missing the point. The world is not neutral or beige. There are people in this world being killed because of who they love. People are being limited and restricted and their rights and freedoms are being taken away because of who they are.

We live in a world full of colour. These flags represent that. They represent each and every person. The base flag represents life, healing, sunlight, nature, serenity and spirit. If that does not represent all people, I don't know what would.

I choose to live in a world of colour and not a world of beige.

Please, Keep the flags.

Jennifer Hall

**From:** [Karson Wick](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Letter in support of Pride  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 4:26:28 PM

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**\*\*DISCLAIMER\*\*** I am a resident of Listowel, and as such this should not be included in the “delegation”.

The Town of Minto,

The recent statements, actions, and demands for removing Pride decorations in our local community both frustrate and disappoint me.

For hundreds of years, all forms of sexuality have been prevalent, both in humans and other living species. Until the last few decades, many of these individuals have been forced to reside in silence, conforming to societal norms, and often living falsehoods for most of their life. The notion that these individuals cannot express their true selves and feel safe in our communities in the 21st century is disheartening. As groups like Minto Pride make strides toward togetherness and community cohesion, we become confronted by those who are misinformed.

Pride month, and the events that come along with it, have been created to celebrate and to bring us together, regardless of who we love. There is no hidden meaning, vindictive agenda, or attempt to cause discomfort for others in our shared spaces. The prejudicial treatment toward these events must end. Although unbeknownst to some, celebrating Pride brings extreme warmth to the hearts of countless people as struggles with sexual orientation and identity are had by many. Oftentimes, these are our neighbors, teachers, friends, family, colleagues, and children. I believe that hate is something we are taught, and not innate, and I have an example of this.

I wasn't your stereotypical boy growing up. Sure, I played with trucks, enjoyed soccer, and ran through backyards with my friends. However, as I grew older, I realized that I may be different than what I saw in society as “normal”. After coming out to my parents as gay, I was extremely relieved. I had finally come to the point in my life where I no longer had to pretend or live in fear. I have a 7-year-old brother who understands that I am gay, and doesn't look at me any different. He was always taught to love and accept everyone, regardless of who they love. He doesn't understand why people may look at me differently, or say hateful things.

It is our duty as citizens to ensure that our children and the future of this community are not raised to hate. When you raise children to hate, you take the voice of others. When you raise children to hate, you perpetuate a society where it is okay to treat others as second-class citizens simply because of who they are.

These Pride events do the opposite. They create space, they give voice to those who were too afraid to speak, and they educate our future generations on the importance of kindness and love in our communities. For those who believe that Pride is unnecessary in our community or find it uncomfortable, I would like to leave you with a few facts to paint the harsh reality behind the reasons we make June a celebration of loving everyone.

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 10 to 14, and the third leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds
- LGBTQ+ young people are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020).
- The Trevor Project estimates that more than 1.8 million LGBTQ+ young people (ages 13-24) seriously consider suicide each year in the U.S. — and at least one attempts suicide every 45 seconds.

- The Trevor Project's 2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People found that 41% of LGBTQ+ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year

So, before you decide to spread hate or create false narratives around why we celebrate, and the reason behind filling our communities with rainbows of support, I ask you to reflect. I invite you to consider how your personal biases reflect on those around you. And finally, I ask you to consider how you make some of those around you feel unsafe when you feel the need to spread hate.

**From:** [Kathy Cameron](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 3:42:52 PM

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As a resident of Minto I am writing today to let it be known that I am in full support of the Pride celebrations and decorations in Minto. Council should be proud of their efforts to show that our community supports diversity, equity and belonging. Pride is a time to celebrate our common humanity. A time to show solidarity for those who still struggle to live a life free from abuse and discrimination. Our LGBTQIA+ community need our continued support. Our youth need to know we proudly support them in their life journey and that they will always have allies to support and protect their human rights. Visibility is essential in that journey. Please continue to support the effort of Minto Pride to keep asserting our common humanity by breaking the silence and celebrating our true selves.

Thank you.

Sincerely

Kathy Cameron

Harriston, On.

Thursday, June 6, 2024

Dear Minto councillors,

I am writing this letter **in support** of Minto's visible support of Pride month.

According to the most recent national statistics, over 10% of the LGBTQ+ community lives in rural areas. ([Socioeconomic characteristics of the 2SLGBTQ+ population, 2019 to 2021 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/98-646-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)) They are homeowners, business owners, employees, neighbours, and volunteers in our community. They are valued, they are loved, and I refuse to silently stand by while they are being persecuted and discriminated against for pursuing their well established, 21-year-old LEGAL rights. Same sex marriage was legalized in Ontario in 2003, and nationally in 2005.

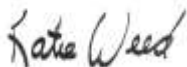
Minto Pride is about celebrating all types of love and providing a safe space for people to be themselves, with their loved ones. The negative comments towards the visibility of pride in our downtowns is hate fueled. Minto provides several safe spaces for people to worship weekly, that are allowed to advertise, have year-round signage, festive displays. Nobody is starting a petition to remove religious signage. I've never heard of a petition about a nativity scene or Christmas parade.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the obvious benefit of visibly supporting pride- it can and does save lives. Here are some sobering statistics to consider from [thetrevorproject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/):

- LGBTQ+ young people are **more than four times as likely** to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020).
- When LGBTQ+ young people report feeling accepted by an adult, their odds of attempting suicide are significantly lower. In many instances, by more than 40 percent.
- Research suggests that among LGBTQ+ young people, only one-third experience parental acceptance, with an additional one-third experiencing parental rejection, and the final one-third not disclosing their LGBTQ+ identity until they are adults (Katz-Wise et al., 2015).
- Many LGBTQ+ young people lack access to affirming spaces, with only 38% of LGBTQ+ youth reporting that their home is LGBTQ+-affirming and just over half saying that their school is LGBTQ+-affirming. Just over 1 in 3 transgender and nonbinary youth found their home to be gender-affirming, and 52% found their school to be affirming. The Trevor Project's research consistently finds that LGBTQ+ young people report lower rates of attempting suicide when they have access to LGBTQ+-affirming spaces.

I urge Minto council to choose love and acceptance. I urge them to celebrate the people who are creating positive change and building communities. Please do not listen to the voices negative voices of grown adults that are trying to bully our youth.

A very vocal ally of Minto Pride,



Katie Weed

**From:** [Leah Mensinga](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto pride decorations  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 9:41:55 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I just spent the entire day with my child, who is represented within the pride flag. We had a fabulous day, but it was not always like this.

I consider myself, and always have, a very inclusive person but it wasn't until it impacted the family within my 4 walls that I realized just how much learning I had to do. There was almost a year where my preteen and I couldn't talk, because no matter how supportive I tried to be, it never came across in the right way.

It took a lot of time, work, communication, learning and patience from BOTH of us to reach where we are now; spending tons of time together, laughing together, singing in the car together and just being close. She has even said I'm her best friend. And the first thing I see online when we get home is that they want to erase visible pride in Minto. I'm beyond heartbroken that this could even be an option.

I have heard firsthand from my child of numerous other children through the last few years, that can't be their authentic selves because of parents not being open or supportive, even disciplining because of who their child is. I know how hard it was for my child, and that was with a well-meaning parent who wanted to learn and support. I can't imagine how hard it is for the others. They are treated as outcasts and bullied at school, my child had someone say "if I was you I would kill myself. I'm going to push you in front of a bus." I'm sure I don't have to tell you how well that went over with me.

To remove visible pride decorations in Minto would be to sentence these children to a life of never knowing support, of never knowing who has their back in town. It is moving us backwards in time just as the states are doing right now by limiting abortions and trying to take away contraceptive use. It is saying, why stop there. Some don't celebrate xmas, should we be removing the Christmas parade? Halloween? Remembrance day?

If looking at a rainbow flag, some signs, and some coloured materials tied to posts for one month of the year is enough to bother someone, then that person is heartless and shouldn't be in my town. If a town showing support to people who need it, in particularly children and teens, bothers someone then it means we have a lot more work to do than we know.

Instead of removing love and support, remove the people that are against it. Show them that hate and indifference will not thrive in Minto.

Sincerely, a concerned mother.  
Resident for 21 years

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

**From:** [lyndsey wilson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Cc:** [David Turton](#)  
**Subject:** Thank you  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 4:35:30 PM

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Good afternoon,

I want to start by saying thank you to the Mayor and Council for the continued support towards the importance of symbols of Pride in our community. The presence of both the Mayor and Council members at such events does not go unnoticed.

I was born and raised in Palmerston and have lived here for the majority of my adult life. I can honestly say that watching the last Council meeting online and listening to the views and opinions of some of the people involved during the question period, was the most embarrassed I have ever felt to live here.

The petition and request for bylaw that has been brought forward by Jim Dopfer and Co. is a direct violation towards human rights. As someone who grew up here, I have witnessed acts of violence and have seen people target individuals strictly because who they chose to love. In my opinion, people who brought forward the petition are grown up versions of this who know they can't get in a bar fight anymore. I thought our community had grown and changed perspective, but have quickly been humbled in that impression as of late.

The symbols of Pride that the Town of Minto display are a reminder to those who have felt different their entire lives that they do belong. Isn't our logo "where your family belongs" after all? To me that means we include everyone; it doesn't discriminate against race, gender, etc... We encourage people to move here because of the acceptance and inclusivity we are trying to promote as a community.

On top of that, suicide remains the second leading cause of death for children between 10-14 and LGBTQ+ kids are more than four times likely to commit suicide. If one Pride flag, one walk, one show of support, can possibly have the ability to save one child from our community, is that not worth it?

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. And again, thank you for your continued support of this very important issue. I do appreciate your time.

Lyndsey Wilson  
[REDACTED]



**From:** [Lynn Philp](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Thoughts in support of Minto Pride, flags, crosswalks and a safe environment for all.  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 8:44:49 PM

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Hi Annilene,

I am writing in response to the petition to remove rainbow flags in Minto and attain 'neutrality'.

I strongly support rainbow flags in Minto. I also support rainbow light posts, Minto Pride, Pride in the Park, and i love our rainbow crosswalk! The symbol of the rainbow includes EVERYONE. Neutrality does not.

The idea of neutrality appears to offer equality and it does to some degree. Everyone gets the same.

However equality does not support everyone in the ways they need. It is black and white.

Equity supports everyone in the ways they need. The rainbow flag includes those who have a neutral stance.

Adversely in neutrality no one is represented or supported. Which can be dangerous to a community.

Those that do not fit the mold of binary identity do not see themselves represented in many schools, churches and communities and especially not in 'neutrality.' which denies them the basic human right of belonging to their community.

Research has shown that this leads to an increase in suicide rates.

Inclusivity is more than a rainbow flag, it saves lives and it shows to newcomers and the current population that Minto is a safe, inclusive space for EVERYONE. All religions, beliefs and identities.

Neutrality leaves out a large part of the population. The essence of the rainbow is ALL the colors. Not just black and white.

Black and white erases our differences and therefore hurts the community.

Studies have shown that inclusive communities that give everyone a voice and show people of different creeds and identities in their art, supports a healthy, thriving community.

Which is why the Government of Ontario supports equity and inclusive strategies.

As written in the 'Equity and Inclusive Strategy' by the Government of Ontario

'Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.'

<https://files.ontario.ca/edu-equity-inclusive-education-strategy-2009-en-2022-01-13.pdf>

Neutrality is the current state. It is in everyone's best interests to create a new, safer space for everyone and the flags are a visual representation of this that everyone can enjoy and look up to for inspiration and courage to be their authentic selves.

Those that are secure in themselves have the capacity for peace and prosperity. Which is what Minto both aims to sustain and achieve more of.

Thank you for your time,

Lynn Philp

I just wanted to write in as support and appreciation for the pride decorations in Harriston, Clifford and Palmerston. As a queer person they make me feel welcome and that there are others in the community that support my existence. I work in agriculture and it's tough facing the phobia and living in a rural area I know that many people aren't progressive but the decorations make me feel some sense of safety here. Grey and Bruce counties are known to be worse for queer people and POC and I feel the displays show that this last area of Wellington before shifting to grey Bruce shows that we are doing better than them and that it is a safer place and there is less of a chance of getting the crimed in public for existing.

These displays also show queer children they have a place in rural communities, which is so important. Suicide rates for queer kids are higher per capita than in cities and the pride displays are a are in the right direction to help reduce the stigma and make these kids feel more welcome. The only gay agenda is to make sure queer kids turn into adults and celebrating Pride is part of that.

Please don't allow Minto to be part of the problem and going backwards in time.

Thanks for listening.

Have a great day,  
Lyss

Lyss Gingras  
They/He  
BSc. ENVB, MES  
CCA-ON



Greetings,

Town of Minto Council

June 6 2024

I am writing this letter today both in my official capacity as the Executive Minister for Antler River Watershed, Horseshoe Falls and Western Ontario Waterways Regional Councils of The United Church of Canada, but also as someone who lives in Harriston.

I am writing in support of the Pride decorations that are displayed in the Town of Minto. As a faith organization The United Church of Canada believes that we are all created in the image of God, and that nothing separates that, not ethnicity, culture, gender identity or sexual orientation. I know that there are faith organizations within the Town of Minto who do not share this view, who do not treat everyone as a child of God made in God's image, which is why it is all the more important that these symbols be present in our community. Everyone deserves to be respected for who they are, and these symbols show people that they are respected and valued members of our community.

In my experience as a clergy serving in this community, I have come across countless people who are afraid to show who they are because of the hate that is demonstrated against the 2SLGBTQIA community. I wish it wasn't the case but sadly it is. By having the symbols displayed for the month of June it is a visual reminder to people who are a part of the 2SLGBTQIA community that they matter, that they are seen, when for most of their time in our community many do feel they have to be more hidden, especially the youth.

The support that the town has given to the work of the DEI committee has been truly wonderful to see. It does matter. It matters to me and my family. It matters to members of our community who don't feel like they belong. Your Move to Minto YouTube video speaks of home, "A place where people stand united and come together", while showing pictures that promote Pride. It also says "Home is a sense of community down every street." Please continue to support the work of diversity and inclusion, we are all better when we can celebrate our diversity together, it makes us stronger as a whole. If you truly stand by what is shouted at the end of that video "You Belong Here!" then please do not weaken the community, my home, by removing such a strong sign of pride in who we are together.

Rev. Mark Laird (he/him)



Executive Minister

Antler River Watershed Regional Council

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

Horseshoe Falls Regional Council

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████████████████████

████████ Harriston On N0G 1Z0

**From:** [Mary-Beth Wilson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 10:25:21 AM

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Sent from my iPhone

Please extend my thanks for all the work Minto has done to be certain that EVERYONE feels welcome here. Discrimination is never okay.

And as I understand it, the park in Palmerston is owned by the Town, maintained by the Lions Club members.

Public spaces must be safe for everyone!  
Keep up the good work!

Mary-Beth Wilson

**From:** [Mhairi](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Letter of Support for Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 5:32:14 PM

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Dear Councilors of the Town of Minto,  
cc: Minto Pride Committee

I wanted to write a letter of support for the outward public displays of Pride we have seen over the last few years. They are not unnoticed, and they are crucial to our town being a welcoming community for everyone. Minto is known as being fairly conservative, and it is not yet a safe space for everyone to call home and be their most authentic selves- the push back for having neutral pride decor up in the month of June is a prime example of that. We cannot let this intolerance stand in our community as a demonstration of hatred over love.

The work of the Minto Pride Committee has been overwhelming over the past years, and I cannot believe the amount of courage it takes to keep going with this type of work when there can be still so much hostility and homophobia in Minto in 2024. The decor they have chosen for public spaces is tasteful, overall very neutral with banners on lamp posts and signs in public places that are appropriate. Minto's campaign of course is "Where your family belongs" and I want to say that it is important to see outward reflections of this for all families and people here in all spaces.

Minto's Pride committee is showing this not only with their online support, but it is the events that they are holding *in* public spaces which are crucial to ongoing acceptance when people in Minto may not find that yet elsewhere. Assuming the general statistic of 4% of people in Canada being part of the LGBTQ community, in Minto alone this public support is a crucial sign of safety for almost 400 individuals. The events and support that are the direct work of the Pride and DEI committee are welcoming, supportive, connecting, and accessible to families throughout the area who need it. Pride in the Park has happened in Palmerston for some years, and it is not lost on me that while we are celebrating a component of diversity in Minto, that a local business across the street is allowed to freely advertise the sale of Nazi items (relevant of course with the massive slaughter of the queer community during WWII) safe from critique of course because it's a business, not a public property- yet does that business not pay taxes to the Township? There are little things we see every day that tell us if we are safe and welcomed here or not, and it is the month of June when we can gather together and say, despite all that we hear on a day-to-day basis, yes we are welcome here! We can find joy and community and support! When we consider removing access from public spaces, we are sending a message that your family is not meant to be public, it's not meant to be *here*.

It makes me saddened and ashamed to see that there was even a call for this topic to be held at council, though I understand your obligations to hear all members of the community when enough people sign a petition. I would be curious to know of the letters you have received against pride, how many are from people who call Minto their primary residence, and how many spoke up unprompted by others? We have seen over the years that groups of narrow

minded people are targeting small towns to rally to their cause because they believe they will have the most success and impact in spreading their message of hate. The world is watching our response as a rural community and if we will fall prey to demonstrating that we are made up of values that only support the few who already hold many privileges, or if we are a community who can leverage our privileges to support and welcome those who many not share in these experiences and need some extra love and pride! Oxford County was an exceptional example of a community who, when faced with the decision to pursue support, or intolerance, chose to outwardly support their community. Canada watched Oxford, and it will be watching us too.

Homophobia in 2024 it is a tired and out of touch thing to hear from closed minded people. It is dangerous and a legitimate threat to the community. My personal experience with this is that it's typically from those who have the privilege of seeing themselves reflected *everywhere* in Minto as the "default", and they do not question that it's a privilege to see themselves represented "first" or "only". Their expectation may not be to see pride decor up for the month of June, but these same voices seem very keen to see Christmas decor up in parks from November to March with no acknowledgement that this is a public display of a singular group denomination in a community of many- albeit, an elective one! Please don't get this paragraph wrong, I also love the twinkly joy of holiday lights- but there is no reason to enjoy the privilege of seeing your community represented in a public space, while 6 months later deciding that another joyful celebration should not be tolerated there. The queer community is often sensationalized by the virtue that it incorporates sexuality which is often still a taboo topic. When concerns come up around LGBTQ issues, I'm often left to wonder, if this topic was about another community protected by the Human Rights Code of Ontario, would we see the same hesitations? Can you imagine if we had been asked not to hold the march in Harriston responding to anti-Islamic violence that took place here? What if someone created a petition to remove all Black, or People of the Global Majority members from Minto's public advertising? What if we were asked not to show any public support to those who are disabled? The queer community is protected by the HRCO in the same way, and when we remove the component of sexuality it seems absurd, we wouldn't even entertain these ideas! You would be horrified to receive a public letter even suggesting these things! Yet the queer community is about so much more than sexuality! We are individuals and families who still experience oppression and a visible demonstration of support is crucial to our wellbeing.

I love public displays of pride in Minto, and I truly hope to see them continue. When I drive past a building that is flying a pride flag I can see our community reflected in that space. I believe that someone in that building has made a conscious effort to represent our community and show us that we are welcome to use their business, service, or live there just as we are without having to hide. It is visibly clear that in Minto, there are a few voices that are trying hard to encourage a welcoming and friendly environment, and I would ask the Council of Minto what message they are sending with their vote(s) if they consider removing the public display of pride, and if it is aligning with the message that "your family belongs"? I encourage you to vote today for the ongoing support of our community, as well as the efforts of the people who are trying so hard to keep Minto welcoming to all.

Councilors of Minto, does my family belong here? I want to see reflected in your votes that it does.

Thank you for listening,



Mhairi Colgate

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Voicing our concern with the Pride celebrations  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 10:50:59 PM

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Hi Annilene,

We are emailing you to voice our concern about the Pride Celebrations in Minto. We absolutely agree that people should feel loved, included and part of the community, but we don't agree with the Pride celebrations put on by the township. It is more polarizing and actually perpetuates more hate and causes more division when we draw attention to and celebrate ideas that only represent a small portion of the community. Furthermore it is incredibly inappropriate to subject children to a drag queen story time. Drag queens are not children's entertainers. We feel that it is important to keep our communities a neutral space where everyone feels comfortable and welcome regardless of religion, colour, sexual preference etc. Let's celebrate the things that join us together, not pull us apart. Thank you for your time.

Richard and Shauna van de Pol

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Rickson Jewelry](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Inclusivity vs Neutrality in Minto  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 10:27:43 AM

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Hi Annilene,

I am writing in response to the petition to remove rainbow flags in Minto and attain 'neutrality'.

I strongly support rainbow flags in Minto. As I explained to my kids the rainbow includes EVERYONE. Neutrality does not.

The idea of neutrality appears to offer equality and it does to some degree. Everyone gets the same.

However equality does not support everyone in the ways they need. It is black and white.

Equity supports everyone in the ways they need. The rainbow flag includes those who have a neutral stance.

Adversely in neutrality no one is represented or supported. Which can be dangerous to a community.

Those that do not fit the mold of binary identity do not see themselves represented in many schools, churches and communities and especially not in 'neutrality.' which denies them the basic human right of belonging to their community.

Research has shown that this leads to an increase in suicide rates.

Inclusivity is more than a rainbow flag, it saves lives and it shows to newcomers and the current population that Minto is a safe, inclusive space for EVERYONE. All religions, beliefs and identities.

Neutrality leaves out a large part of the population. The essence of the rainbow is ALL the colors. Not just black and white.

Black and white erases our differences and therefore hurts the community.

Studies have shown that inclusive communities that give everyone a voice and show people of different creeds and identities in their art, supports a healthy, thriving community.

Which is why the Government of Ontario supports equity and inclusive strategies.

As written in the 'Equity and Inclusive Strategy' by the Government of Ontario

'Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.'

<https://files.ontario.ca/edu-equity-inclusive-education-strategy-2009-en-2022-01-13.pdf>

Neutrality is the current state. It is in everyone best interests to create a new, safer space for everyone and the flags are a visual representation of this that everyone can enjoy and look up to for inspiration and courage to be their authentic selves.

Those that are secure in themselves have the capacity for peace and prosperity. Which is what Minto both aims to sustain and achieve more of.

Thank you for your time,

Rickson Sharkey

**From:** [Bert Langlois](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#); [Bert Langlois](#)  
**Subject:** Promotion of Gay Pride and Similar Pro Social Acceptance Events and Decorations  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 5:09:51 PM

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Good Day ... I would like to add my voice in support of Town and Community Action to Promote Acceptance of Various Populations that have experienced significant degrading and ignorant actions by a number of groups rejecting acceptance and the acknowledgement of the historical and ongoing rejection of these people and groups ... freedom and liberty should be the standard, only limited by rule of law responding to actions which harms others ... the debate then becomes the definition of harm .... Thx for the opportunity to add my input .... Robert Langlois [REDACTED] Palmerston ON

**From:** [Robin Sharpe](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Positivity for Pride  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 10:32:57 AM

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Hello Annilene,

My name is Robin Sharpe. I am a resident of Minto, and an advocate for my community in many forms.

I have noticed ebb and flow in the negativity towards Pride events and acknowledgment of Pride over the years; but this year there seems to be a steady flow of misunderstanding, aggressive negativity and misconstrued ideas of what safe spaces look like.

We should all feel safe in our community. We should all feel safe enough to celebrate together. The flying of Pride flags and the presence of pride events and colorful decorations is a visual representation of people who are actively trying to help others feel safe in the community I call home.

The neutrality petition is dividing the community because it is not neutral. It is targeting Pride events and Pride celebration. If the Neutrality petition is to be taken into consideration by council - it needs to be re-written to include neutrality of everything in the community. No more religious holidays - including Christmas. No more cultural celebrations - including Canada Day. No more decorations - only information signs. No more red or blue flowers - those are gang colours.

Pride events are inclusion.  
The Neutrality Petition is exclusion.

Pride events are a safe space for everyone.  
The neutrality petition is creating an exclusionary space based on personal bias.

Pride events celebrate everyone including veterans.  
The Neutrality Petition would create an opportunity for people to celebrate veterans less.

Pride events and the presence of Pride flags and decor help our school aged kids feel safe in their community and might even keep them in the community.  
The Neutrality Petition is making kids feel unsafe in their community. It makes them feel unrecognized, unimportant and makes them want to leave the community to find a place where they can feel safe.

My question to those who have kick started the neutrality petition:  
what is the goal of the petition?

There should be one main reason behind every petition: "I want to help people in my community feel safe," and if by chance they actually say safety as their main goal for this

petition - you can list off all my above reasons they are not fulfilling their intended goal because people are feeling very unsafe based on some people's behaviour who are advocating for this petition.

Thank you for your time Annilene. I fully support Minto Pride Committee and their endeavors in making Minto an inclusive, safe space for everyone.

-Robin Sharpe

**From:** [Sarah Kramer](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Thank you for hosting Pride in Minto  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 11:15:15 AM

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Hi,

I'm not a resident of Minto but I grew up in the area and went to Norwell for high school. My Dad and Step-mom live on [REDACTED] St. and my kids spend about a month of summer there each year.

When I was growing up in the 90s, all of the LGBTQ+ kids were closeted for fear of their safety. Anti-gay slurs were used routinely and there was a general level of intolerance or outright hostility to the LGBTQ+ community.

To see the level of progress, not one of just tolerance, but one of welcoming and acceptance warms my heart and makes me so proud of the Minto community. I'm a Christian and I see Pride as embracing the example Jesus set to love everyone, to welcome everyone and to live together in a beloved community.

Thank you again for your support of ALL members of the Minto community.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Kramer



**From:** [Cori & Steve MacDougall](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support for pride/ minto initiatives - 3 people voting you have our support  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 10:00:07 PM

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Please consider this email for 3 Minto residents in our home supporting pride and other Minto initiatives.

Sad I had to email this. People need to allow joy in the community and all its events.  
Steven MacDougall  
Cori MacDougall  
Brett MacDougall

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Susan Winger](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 4:28:27 PM

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I do not agree with the church at all. My partner and I were married in the United Church of Palmerston. We should be able to express ourselves and decorate how we want. We have never pushed our ideas on no one and to me the church needs to back off.

**From:** [R&T Zemmeling](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Pride Celebrations in June  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 5:08:28 PM

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Hello town of Minto,

This email is in support of all celebrations of Pride in our community during the month of June and on going. Whether this be planned celebrations or simply community decorations, it should be done loud and proud.

We are an amazing community and we need to celebrate all our diversity.

I sincerely hope the town council does not intend to modify anything, and should continue to support all Pride Month celebrations. If anything, each town community should have a rainbow crosswalk. They are beautiful .

Thank you,

Tracy Zemmeling

**From:** [Valérie Groulx](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 12:41:33 PM

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To whom this may concern,

Minto Pride is an important part of our community. It ensures all can feel safe being who they are. Especially in a rural community where views are more conservative, having the Pride decorations up is crucial for young and older community members to feel loved, accepted and celebrated.

Taking these decorations down during Pride month would send the opposite message. Queer youth are at higher risk of suicide, mental health issues, homelessness, etc. We need to support them no matter what others say to protect our youth.

Taking down these decorations would be a big mistake.

Remember that Pride started as a protest. We need to fight for our queer community. These decorations and celebrations are important.

Thank you for your time  
Valérie Groulx

**From:** [Cassandra Angst](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto pride  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 2:05:32 PM

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Hello!

I'm just writing to say that I would be very disappointed if Minto decided to take down our pride decorations. We live in Palmerston and seeing the pride flags and other decorations around town is something we look forward to seeing and it is what makes minto so great and welcoming. It is also something very important to the youth in the community.

Cassandra Angst

**From:** [Chantelle Koeslag](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 3:13:48 PM

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Hello Mayor and Town of Minto Council,

As a person who lives and works within the town of Minto, I support the Minto Pride initiatives and would be against any change in Town policy that would limit Pride celebrations.

I was born and raised in Palmerston and made the choice to return to Minto in order to raise my family. Seeing Minto as a leader in Pride inclusivity has brought me a lot of hope, towards improving diversity and celebrating the differences that make up our community.

Having known multiple individuals who have specifically indicated they've left this area due to their treatment as a result of their sexual/gender identities as well as others that never felt Minto is an area inclusive of non-traditional lifestyle, I view Minto Pride as a way to address this problem.

I want to raise my children in a place that is accepting of others-whether it be their race, their gender, their sexual orientation or their religion. I want everyone to feel safe and secure to be within their own community, and to feel accepted and cared for.

It would speak against any effort to have the Town of Minto remove any flags or decorations that are not associated with the Province, the Country or the Town itself. Additionally, I would suspect, for reasons of fairness, that a policy of neutrality should be applied broadly and include a ban on Christmas, St. Patrick's and Agricultural events and decorations, given that it excludes certain members. It likely goes without saying that removing any event would be a shame and ultimately our children would really be missing out.

I support diversity in Minto and I hope that we can continue to grow together as a community that is welcoming and accepting of all people.

Thank you,

Chantelle Koeslag  
Minto Township

**From:** [Chris Williamson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Inclusivity  
**Date:** June 6, 2024 11:38:28 PM

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Short and sweet, the paintings and decorations helping represent inclusivity hurt noone. The people trying to get rid of it are just hate filled bigots. Keep the inclusivity.

**From:** [Crystal Hartung](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride support  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 11:49:35 AM

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Hi there,

To whom this may concern,

My family and I are heavily involved in all things minto and volunteer in the town. We are apart of the farmers market and Palmerston fair.

We are inclusive to everyone that comes to town events. Pride groups of individuals aren't doing anything wrong. They aren't vandalizing property or harmful to anyone. They are happy and loving. Why would we turn that away.

There's many events and cultural events going on that some people don't wanna be involved in and so they don't have too. Same goes for pride. If you aren't comfortable- then don't go - they still can happen, in my option.

Sincerely  
Crystal Hartung

I think town of minto does a wonderful job in events and great stuff for families. Keep up the good work



**From:** [Dwayne Kave-Peck](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support for the pride initiative  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 9:40:02 AM

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Hi, I thought I would hope on and say thank you to any and all who began the Minto Pride committee. Even though most people in Minto are anti pride I am so thankful that I feel welcome and represented in my town, I am not extreme out like some others in the community I feel represented when the pride decorations are out up in Palmerston, as I said I am not as out as a character from some of those LGBTQ+ series like Heartstopper or Love, Victor, because let's be honest, the way they represent it isn't accurate. But thank you for being a small impact on helping anyone in the community feel accepted in Minto

Thanks,  
Dwayne KP

**From:** [Ella Kieftenburg](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride in town  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 9:34:27 AM

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Good morning Annilene,

Just read that town council is looking for input about the pride in town symbols. I would like to let you know that I am absolutely not in favor of all this "pride". Seeing the rainbow colors used for the sexual immorality in this world just saddens me. And then to have a drag queen or king read to little children really gets my blood boiling. Drag queens and kings are for adult entertainment and not for children in my opinion. And seeing that on original posters mentioning all the happenings on this weekend the drag queen and king are mentioned but on the following posters it just reads story time for children without mentioning the drag queen or king makes this look very deceptive. I request that this email gets shared with other council members.

Thanks,

Ella Kieftenburg

**From:** [Elyse \[REDACTED\]](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Importance of Pride in the Town of Minto  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 7:58:15 AM

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Hi there,

I have seen there are people pushing back against the beautiful symbols of Pride in the Town of Minto. I would like to say, that as a resident of North Perth, I find it so amazing that the Town of Minto has been so active and supportive in its DEI initiatives including the symbols of Pride and the events during Pride month.

Pride is not about hiding, it's about showing who you are and loving yourself. Those who want "neutrality" are always allowed to be themselves without fear of discrimination or harm.

Please keep these decorations flying so that we can show everyone, not just Minto residents, but also visitors, that we are all human and deserve to have a safe space to celebrate this.

All the best,  
Elyse Critchlow

**From:** [Jenni Linthorst](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** In support of Rainbow flags  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 12:24:37 PM

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I support rainbow banners & crosswalk.

I am proud of the Town of Minto for supporting LGBTQ+ people

I am a longtime current volunteer at :

- 1) Blessings Center
- 2) Minto Hikers (founder / leader)
- 3) Palmerston Traditional Scouts

I will be extremely disappointed if they change the rules for the people who lack kindness/tolerance for others

LGBTQ+ people have been persecuted since the earliest times of human history. It has been beautiful to see kindness towards this group.

I hope that Town of Minto upholds their noble support. It's not easy, but it's important.

No one knows how their children's sexuality will turn out. Banners can assist in saving lives.

Sincerely,  
Jenni Linthorst

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

June 7, 2024

Town of Minto Council  
c/o Annilene McRobb

We are writing in response to the petition to remove rainbow flags and crosswalks in Minto so that Minto can achieve 'neutrality'.

We support rainbow symbols in Minto. The rainbow represents and supports inclusion. Neutrality is the absence of decided views, expression, or strong feeling. The petition expresses a strong feeling against seeing Pride displayed in Minto. In philosophy, neutrality is the tendency to not take a side in a conflict, which may not suggest neutral parties do not have a side or are not a side themselves. In colloquial use, neutral can be synonymous with unbiased. We are not at war as residents of Minto, we do not have to participate in Pride activities.

In the past, Minto has always embraced inclusion in the community, supporting diverse groups and activities for all the residents. Singling out Pride flags and crosswalks expresses a desire to exclude residents of Minto who are members of the Pride community and the people who support Pride.

Sincerely,

John Burgess  
Wendy Lockwood

**From:** [Juanita Wilkins](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** PRIDE!!!!  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 8:43:26 AM

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Dear Town of Minto, Mayor and Councillors:

As the parent of a gay son, I must reach out and thank the Town for the support you have shown to our LGBTQ+ community. It was SO difficult for my son, as a child and adolescent, to navigate the homophobic attitudes of many in small town rural Ontario. I understand that there is a vocal minority of persons in our community who are made uncomfortable by symbols that recognize the many different ways that human beings are oriented.

I am very proud of Minto for not caving in to the increasingly strident voices of bigoted individuals who are so intolerant of any ideas but their own. It is a joy for me to see all of the symbols of inclusivity placed around our community, and I am so happy that these symbols are on display when my son and his husband come to visit, in a way that makes them feel truly welcome.

PLEASE do not let the voices of ignorance and bigotry destroy the wonderfully inclusive nature of our community.

Sincerely,

Juanita Wilkins

P.S. Please share this letter as you see fit.

**From:** [Kelly Dunning](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** positive voice for Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 10:00:33 AM

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Dear Minto Councillors,

I am writing this letter in support of Minto's visible support of Pride month.

According to the most recent national statistics, over 10% of the LGBTQ+ community lives in rural areas. (Socioeconomic characteristics of the 2SLGBTQ+ population, 2019 to 2021 (statcan.gc.ca)) They are homeowners, business owners, employees, neighbors, volunteers in our community and for me they are most importantly my students at Norwell District High School and my relatives. They are valued, they are loved, and I refuse to silently stand by while they are being persecuted and discriminated against for pursuing their well established, 21-year-old LEGAL rights. Same sex marriage was legalized in Ontario in 2003, and nationally in 2005.

Every member of our community regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, deserves to feel seen, valued, and respected within our community. By celebrating pride and putting up decorations around our community we demonstrate our commitment to creating a culture of human rights and establishing a safe and supportive environment for all. It reinforces that everyone is valued and respected, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity in our community. I would hate for people to be discouraged from moving to Minto because they fear that small towns like Minto are full of people who are unwelcoming and homophobic and celebrating pride shows that we are actually far from that rumor. That we are a welcoming and diverse community. My sister in law recently moved to Minto and I can tell you this was definitely her concern .

Supporting and showing my support demonstrates my commitment to creating a culture of human rights and establishing a safe and supportive environment for all my students in this community . It reinforces that everyone is valued and respected, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. I ask you to do the same. Let's commit ourselves to making our schools and our communities places where every student and community member feels accepted, valued, and celebrated for who they are.

Minto Pride is about celebrating all types of love and providing a safe space for people to be themselves, with their loved ones. The negative comments towards the visibility of pride in our downtowns is hate fueled. Minto provides several safe spaces for people to worship weekly, that are allowed to advertise, have year-round signage, festive displays. Nobody is starting a petition to remove religious signage. I've never heard of a petition about a nativity scene or Christmas parade.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the obvious benefit of visibly supporting pride- it can and does save lives. I see the impacts every day that celebrating pride has on the youth in our communities, who desperately want to feel a sense of belonging which is so important for mental health. My students are already struggling with mental health and feeling like they don't have support from their communities makes the problem worse.

Here are some sobering statistics to consider from [thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org):

- LGBTQ+ young people are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020).
- When LGBTQ+ young people report feeling accepted by an adult, their odds of attempting suicide are significantly lower. In many instances, by more than 40 percent.
- Research suggests that among LGBTQ+ young people, only one-third experience parental acceptance, with an additional one-third experiencing parental rejection, and the final one-third not disclosing their LGBTQ+ identity until they are adults (Katz-Wise et al., 2015).
- Many LGBTQ+ young people lack access to affirming spaces, with only 38% of LGBTQ+ youth reporting that their home is LGBTQ+-affirming and just over half saying that their school is LGBTQ+-affirming. Just over 1 in 3 transgender and nonbinary youth found their home to be gender-affirming, and 52% found their school to be affirming. The Trevor Project's research consistently finds that LGBTQ+ young people report lower rates of attempting suicide when they have access to LGBTQ+-affirming spaces.

I urge the Minto council to choose love and acceptance. I urge them to celebrate the people who are creating positive change and building communities. Please do not listen to the negative voices of grown adults that are trying to bully our youth.

A very vocal ally of Minto Pride and a local resident and educator in our community ,



Thank you Kelly

**From:** [REDACTED] [Leola Hartung](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 1:30:02 PM

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Thank you Town of Minto for supporting Pride by having events, hanging flags, painted crosswalks. Everyone's family is touched by Pride, whether they choose to believe it & support it or not.  
I'm glad Minto is inclusive & welcoming to everyone.  
Sincerely, Leola Hartung

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Mandy Jo McMurray](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Cc:** [Jon McMurray](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 3:09:41 PM

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Dear Council Members of Minto,

I am writing to address the recent delegations and letters requesting the removal of Pride decorations and demanding public neutrality on matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

As a resident deeply invested in the well-being of our community, I want to share a personal story. I am the proud parent of a transgender child. My child found the courage to come out and live authentically because of the supportive and inclusive environment fostered by this very community. The visibility of Pride decorations played a significant role in creating a sense of safety and acceptance for my child, as well as for many others who might feel marginalized.

Neutrality, in this context, is not merely a lack of stance. It sends a message of indifference to the struggles and rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Choosing neutrality is akin to saying, "I won't stand up for you or help you feel safe. I won't protect you or make you feel welcome." Such a stance undermines the very essence of community—support, protection, and inclusivity.

The Town of Minto has been a remarkable ally and a steadfast supporter of DEI initiatives. The visible signs of support, such as Pride decorations, are not just symbolic; they are lifelines for many individuals who seek affirmation and acceptance. By standing firm in our support for DEI, we are saying that every resident, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, is valued and respected.

Your ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusion are making a tangible difference. They matter immensely to families like mine and to all who call Minto home. I urge the town to continue its exemplary support and to reject calls for neutrality that effectively silence and marginalize vulnerable members of our community.

Thank you for your commitment to making Minto a place where everyone can feel safe, welcomed, and celebrated for who they are.

Sincerely,

Mandy

[REDACTED]



June 7,2024

Dear Minto Councillors,

If there was ever a time of uncertainty whether our community took Pride in being inclusive, supportive and represented all of its residents, it appears now is the time. The year is 2024 and there are still uneducated, tunnel-visioned individuals who want to segregate and eliminate our beautiful diversity the minute our rainbows Proudly hang.

Religious groups are welcome to advertise, ring doorbells/leave flyers, share quotes/verses on letterboards and billboards in public sight and on personal property.

Highly attended/ populated clubs and organizations have the go ahead to advertise, share upcoming events with no reservations. Our streets are beautifully and proudly decorated with our country's flag and with lights, banners and respectfully expected faces of our veterans who paid the ultimate sacrifice for their families, friends and children's children.

Those children's children are here, today. We are all here and free to be exactly who and what we are meant to be, and to continue to protect our neighbours whom our veterans so bravely fought for, before us.

We have individuals in our lives, who are entitled to but are withheld the freedom to live their life the way others so comfortably do.

Let's be the community who is proud and protective of the the diversity which resides within it.

Let's live by our slogan 'where your family belongs' with no exception.

The day there isn't a groan, eye roll or plan to boycott any inclusive person/business within our community circle, is the day there doesn't need to be representation and displayed safe places for our community members; because that day, is the official day our community understands we are all officially equal.

Proud Ally,

Mary Ann Clark

June 7, 2024

Town of Minto Council  
5941 Highway 89  
Harriston, ON  
N0G 1Z0

Attention: Anneline McRobb, Clerk [annilene@town.minto.on.ca](mailto:annilene@town.minto.on.ca)

Dear Council

I am writing to express my support for the decision of council to hang the Pride Banners in Minto's three urban communities as well as the goal of the newly approved strategic plan to make Minto an inclusive community and "Foster a welcoming, accessible, and understanding community where your family belongs".

I have become very disheartened over the past several weeks to witness the amount of hate and negativity that has been spread throughout the town. Even though it is a very small percentage of people of Minto, their voices have been loud and hurtful, causing a division within the community, while hiding their true goals with a pretense of neutrality (If the banners were in support of any other cause, would there be a petition?), The underhanded way in which at least some signatures were gathered makes me question the validity of the number of people that signed the petition, but even if all signed with full awareness of the intention of it, it is a very small percentage of the voting population within the Town of Minto. There have been calls for a referendum and suggestions that democracy is not being practiced, which is ridiculous. The democratic process in the Town of Minto is working exactly as it should. Elections are held, people vote for their representatives and those with the highest number of votes are chosen to represent the people. If people don't like the decisions being made, they vote accordingly in the next election. Referendums are usually reserved for weighty issues like provinces proposing to separate from the country or, as will be the case this fall for our neighbours in South Bruce, whether the community is willing to host a nuclear waste dump in their municipality – not whether a few banners are raised or not. The claims of "not being informed" are also preposterous – this issue was presented at a public council meeting, discussed, shared online, included in council minutes, reported in the local media and discussed at every community event around, starting last October. If people want to be informed citizens, surely some of the onus is on them to make the minimal effort required to access easily available information.

Being a "neutral" community would result in a colorless and bland municipality to live in. I am proud of the vibrant town in which I live and volunteer in and have worked hard to be inclusive and welcoming to all. I am part of both the Cultural Round Table and the sub committee, for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and feel the work that is being done, which includes the Pride Committee, is extremely valuable. The CRT supports the cultural organizations and groups within Minto, assisting in promotion, networking, sharing information, participating in events,

implementing public art projects and offering Culture Days activities, to name a few. The DEI Committee is providing education and celebrations of various cultures and dealing with issues of accessibility, food insecurity, homelessness, safety circles, and racism and hate incidents. The budget of a mere \$10,000 per year is miniscule in comparison to the enhanced quality of life and economic impact the town receives from the work of these committees. I've heard a lot about what amount of the "tax payers money" is being spent on this but it is not just the tax payers that are positively affected – it is everyone. If you divide the \$10,000 by the 9000 people that live here, the cost is \$1.11/year per citizen. Is that too much to spend on human decency and kindness?

More directly, the Pride Banners are extremely important as a positive reinforcement to a population of people that have been historically repressed and discriminated against. It is a sign that Minto welcomes everyone here and if you live in a community that proudly raises a flag or banner, you are sending a message that support is found within the community. The Ontario Human Rights Code protects marginalized groups from discrimination and harassment. By hanging the Pride banners and flag, we are demonstrating our commitment to our community that discrimination and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

There have been suggestions that the government does not belong in these issues. I absolutely disagree! Governments are elected to take positive and progressive action. If they did not, we would all be living the past where women were not allowed to vote or hold public office, where people of colour were segregated or people with disabilities faced discrimination and lack of accessibility. The local municipal government should foster and support the basic human rights that are protected by the law.

There seems to be a misconception among some that by supporting someone, you are taking from someone else. This is so not true – by sharing the pride banners you are making a statement that everyone is welcome, you are encouraging kindness, acceptance and creating a community I and many others are proud of.

In closing, I offer a statement made by noted mental health professional, Dr. Ron Holt ***“Gay pride was not born of a need to celebrate being gay, but our right to exist without persecution. So instead of wondering why there isn't a straight pride parade, be thankful you don't need one.”***

**Respectfully**

**Peggy Raftis**

**From:** [Clifford Country Store](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 12:28:28 PM

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Hello,

I saw the recent FB post calling for supporters of Minto pride efforts.

I wanted to send a quick note to share my support for the pride activities in Minto.

As a resident and business owner, I fully support creating an inclusive environment within our community.

I am opposed to the removal of pride decorations and would fully support the expansion of pride activities.

As an ally I support members of the LGBTQ2+ community and the efforts of the Town of Minto to continue to make them feel welcome and accepted.

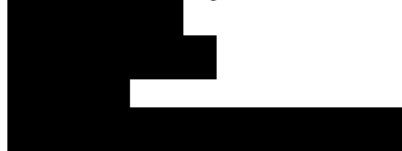
Please reach out if you have any questions,

Sarah

--



Clifford Country Store





**From:** [Scott](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** banners  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 12:44:47 PM

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Good afternoon Annilene, just wanting you and the town council to know that i support the hanging of banners, they are obviously not hung to hurt anybody.

thanks for your time, Scott Norman Norsco Sports

**From:** [Stephanie McIntosh](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Neutrality  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 9:34:54 AM

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I am writing to show support for the Minto Pride committee and implore council to vote "not in favour" to the idea of neutrality within the community.

The agenda brought forth recently to council by these delegates is clearly rooted in hate and prejudice for the 2SLGBTQIA+/queer community, or these delegates would have raised the issue in December when Christmas decorations were placed around all three towns. Those decorations should also be scrapped in effort to be "neutral".

The Town of Minto's early support for the Pride committee's efforts paved the way for other local communities to follow suit and it would be a great step backwards (and downright embarrassing, to be honest) to consider neutrality.

As a council, please show your support for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in our community and vote a strong NO to neutrality. Minto is a place where everyone should belong.

Sincerely,

Stephanie McIntosh

**From:** [Sue Hendrick](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 1:46:37 AM

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To Minto Council,

I am so glad when I see pride signs and symbols in our communities They are a message that all spaces should be safe spaces and that all belong.

The petition claims the pride banners are divisive. I'm confused as to how a banner or flag that promotes acceptance and love is divisive.

In my opinion, this petition seems to be anything but neutral and any actions to remove pride symbols in our communities will send a message that discrimination and hate succeeded.

Please keep the pride banners and flags up. I want to live in a community where all people are safe.

Thank you,

Sue Hendrick

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Ton Wils](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 5:14:27 PM

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Dear Council,

Pride means to me and my family inclusivity of all. That we all belong within the Town of Minto. Minto has done significant work within the community for all to feel included. Minto has been shown to be a leader municipality, which has set them apart. And, has been a supportive way for others to feel welcome to join our community. It would be a shame for all the hard work over many years to end or be decreased.

Please consider this a letter of support for pride and their decoration within the community to continue.

Thank you,  
Tonya

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** banners...  
**Date:** June 7, 2024 11:09:13 AM

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Hi there ! We in this household (4) and business stand behind the pride committee in the banner/flag/crosswalk issue as some call it because it goes way beyond a few banners. Also very upset that a pastor in Minto would tell others on fb to boycott businesses for the month that support the event on Sunday. I guess we will be boycotted by a few because we did sponsor the event.

Thanks for your time !

Tricia Norman

**From:** [Ben Bartley](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Making Minto Neutral  
**Date:** June 8, 2024 4:51:20 PM

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June 8, 2024

I am writing to show my support to make Minto neutral by removing flags and signs by private interest groups. I believe that having a neutral town will actually bring more unity. I am a firm believer that one should be able to post signs or flags on their private property, but as a tax paying member of this community, I feel it is important that public areas remain neutral. I wouldn't expect my personal values to be endorsed by the town in public spaces, which then would imply that everyone shares the same beliefs I do. I feel that everyone has the right to live whatever way they want and use their private property as they desire, but public space should remain neutral. I participated in collecting signatures. I went door to door to 30 properties and talked to a lot of different people, and I only talked to one person that was opposed to this petition. As democratically elected representatives, I believe you should listen to the people of your community. Thank you.

Ben Bartley

[REDACTED]  
Harriston, ON  
N0G 1Z0  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [Brooke Bartley](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Minto Neutrality  
**Date:** June 8, 2024 11:22:39 AM

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I would like to share my support for the movement to make Minto neutral and the removing of any flags and signs other than the Canadian flag. We are a community with varying ethnicities, lifestyles, and beliefs. We are seeing a small amount of groups getting a large percentage of public space, while many other groups are left in the dust. We are not seeing political or religious flags, so why are some allowed and not others? In order for the whole community to feel united, we believe that a neutral town will allow for everyone to be comfortable and proud of the town they live in. 900 signatures is very substantial in this small community and we believe this should be addressed with fairness. Thank you for your consideration.

Brooke Bartley

**From:** [REDACTED] [Robinson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** support of Equality and diversity  
**Date:** June 9, 2024 8:41:43 AM

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Hi Annilene,

The rainbow symbolizes and creates a safe space for EVERYONE, including those that want neutrality and no rainbow flags.

It's time to stop black and white thinking and embrace all the colors of our humanity to create a safe community with a higher capacity for thriving.

'Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.'

Thank you,

Connie Robinson



**From:** [Geri Nelson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support  
**Date:** June 8, 2024 10:25:06 AM

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I am writing to support the symbols of Pride and other positive symbols that support equity and inclusion for all residents of Minto.

The municipality of Minto has been a champion by demonstrating incredible leadership in this quest. Champions will experience both success and setbacks and many challenges will be faced. This recent tension within the community is the push and pull that will create change. Change is ongoing and Minto must navigate this and recognize that it is the norm to adapt to what is going on around us. Some residents are resistant to change as they feel more comfortable keeping things the way they were. However, change is inevitable and we must become strong allies for those who are most at risk. Real inclusion takes place when those already included in the “mainstream” learn from those who are excluded and initiate change. When a municipality works for those who are most at risk of exclusion, they work for everyone. Ask yourself the question, “who is not included and what can we do to increase inclusion all year long for everyone?” Minto must be an ally and commit to being lifelong learners and empower others to be allies as well.

I encourage you to continue to be a champion for all residents of Minto, to grow through what you go through, and to remember that if it doesn't challenge you, it doesn't change you. Thank you for all you do to make Minto a positive and safe space to live.

Geri Nelson

**From:** [Holly Armstrong](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride decorations in Minto  
**Date:** June 8, 2024 10:49:55 PM

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To the members of Minto Town Council,

I have been a resident of Minto for more than 10 years. My husband and I moved here to raise our family and were delighted with the friendliness and genuinely nice people that surrounded us. Recent events however, have given me doubts. I read that a community group has submitted a petition with 900 signatures requesting public neutrality. Although this is far from the majority of people in our lovely towns, it still hurts my soul. These people are most certainly only requesting removal of decorations they don't like, including Pride. The same group would likely sign a new petition if you refused to hang Christmas decorations to keep our public spaces "neutral". They will support religion (which is most certainly a choice) over homosexuality and gender dysphoria - which IS NOT A CHOICE.

When residents put forward this sort of nonsense, it echoes to all of our young people, loud and clear, that they will have to keep their secrets and hide who they truly are until they are able to leave home and find a more supportive community. It tells our LGBTQ2+ residents that we are close minded. It makes them feel scared, helpless and hopeless.

According to the Trevor Project, LGBTQ+ young people

are four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers. At least one attempts suicide every 45 seconds. A lack of social support and affirming spaces is a contributing factor. LGBTQ+ youth living in a community that is accepting of them report much lower rates of attempting suicide. Our rainbows can literally help save them.

A United States Gallup poll in 2022 noted that 7.1% of the population identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. The population of Minto in the 2021 census was 9,094. That would indicate 636 LGBTQ residents in our small town. 636 people that see our rainbow crosswalks and downtown decorations and know that we see them, we support them, and they belong here. We need to be careful who we hate, because it could be someone we love.

Holly Vallis Armstrong

(she/her)

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride  
**Date:** June 8, 2024 4:17:40 PM

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I'm writing to you today in support of Pride and showing the rainbow flags and colours all over the town. It is so important for anyone who feels lost and alone to know there are others out there to support them and know they are not alone.

Please do not remove these symbols of love, compassion and caring. There is already so much hate in the world, let's fight to keep some love in it too!!

Cheers,  
Jennifer Walker  
Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [kaylee rice](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of support  
**Date:** June 8, 2024 11:46:39 AM

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Dear Council Members of Minto,

I am writing to address the recent delegations and letters requesting the removal of Pride decorations and demanding public neutrality on matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

As a resident deeply invested in the well-being of our community, I am disappointed to hear of all the hate being spread throughout our beloved community.

Choosing neutrality is like saying, "I won't stand up for you or help you feel safe. I don't want you to feel welcome." Such a stance undermines the very essence of community—support, protection, and inclusivity.

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”-  
Desmond Tutu

The Town of Minto has been a remarkable ally and a steadfast supporter of DEI initiatives. The visible signs of support, such as Pride decorations, are not just symbolic; they are lifelines for many individuals who seek affirmation and acceptance. By standing firm in our support for DEI, we are saying that every single resident, regardless of who they are, is valued and respected.

I urge the town to continue its support and to reject calls for neutrality that effectively silence and marginalize vulnerable members of our community.

Thank you for your commitment to making Minto a place where EVERYONES family belongs.

Sincerely,

Kaylee Rice

**From:** [Mark Robinson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** support of Equality and diversity  
**Date:** June 9, 2024 8:41:08 AM

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Hi Annilene,

The rainbow symbolizes and creates a safe space for EVERYONE, including those that want neutrality and no rainbow flags.

It's time to stop black and white thinking and embrace all the colors of our humanity to create a safe community with a higher capacity for thriving.

'Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.'

Thank you,

Mark Robinson

**From:** [Miranda \[REDACTED\] Doan](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Neutrality bylaw -opposition  
**Date:** June 8, 2024 11:42:17 AM

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Hello.

I want to write to oppose the neutrality bylaw that is proposed.

I do support diversity, equity, and inclusion and feel that this proposed bylaw does nothing to move our society in a positive manner toward a community who is diverse, equal and inclusive.

Kind regards,  
Miranda Doan

**From:** [Nicole Luymes](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support of Minto Pride Initiatives  
**Date:** June 8, 2024 1:27:50 PM

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Hi Annilene,

This e-mail is to express my support of the Pride initiatives taking place in Minto.

It is imperative for every person to feel they belong in the community in which they live, including queer folks. Pride is still a controversial subject in small towns, and without public displays of support, the assumption/underlying atmosphere is not accepting of the queer community. Without the visible support of Minto Pride, the loudest voices - in this case, those in opposition to Pride - tend to dominate public spaces. To strive for "neutrality" in public spaces inadvertently supports those who are discriminating LGBTQS+ community members. For these reasons (in addition to many more), Minto Pride should continue to receive support from the Town for public displays of support for the queer community.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to support Minto Pride initiatives.

Keep up the great work!

Nicole (Palmerston resident)



**From:** [Tony](#) [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Letter to Council Re: Support for petition - Please include in Agenda for June 18 Meeting  
**Date:** June 8, 2024 7:20:07 PM

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Re: In Support of the Neutral Property Petition

To Town of Minto Council  
2024

June 8

Council and Mayor.

My Name is Tony Aasman and am a resident of Minto.

It is my view that the Town needs to represent all of its residents equally and not give preferential treatment to any one group. There is currently a very obvious example of where the Town is giving preferential treatment to the "Pride Community" by flying their flags and banners and by changing a crosswalk to be colored as a "Rainbow" crosswalk. I hear that this is being done to show "inclusivity". This flag, to me, and many of those I know in this community, does not represent us. Therefore, to us, this flag and other decorations from this group are "Exclusive" from us. It is not right that the Town would promote, or even use the taxpayer's money to fund a group that Excludes so many of its residents!

Will the town pass a bylaw requiring Town Property to remain neutral?  
If not, will the Town hold a vote for Minto residents on this issue?

Tony Aasman [REDACTED]

Harriston

**From:** [Vanessa Carney](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#); [David Turton](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Delegation petition for flag & crosswalk neutrality  
**Date:** June 8, 2024 1:31:42 AM

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Dear Mayor Turton and Council,

I am submitting this letter for your consideration in response to a petition to draft a bylaw requiring neutrality in flag and crosswalk standards within the Town of Minto.

To be quite transparent, I am not a resident of Town of Minto nor do I have any tax or business interests within the municipality. I am, however a frequent visitor to Palmerston to visit family. I have also had the occasion to attend a recent Minto Pride celebration in support of loved ones, friends and a whole community that continues to experience exclusion, harassment and fear for their safety, despite their sexual and gender identities being protected under federal Human Rights laws. What I experienced at that event was being amongst people expressing their joy and individuality in a multitude of utterly dignified, all-ages appropriate and 100% socially acceptable ways - dancing, laughing, marching, socializing and wearing colourful clothing. This took place under Minto's inclusive, welcoming rainbow flags and event decorations. Even a police officer's rainbow identifier patch caught my eye as that officer proudly walked with participants while performing his duty to protect everyone's safety. I met business owners, teachers and community leaders at the event who were wholly supportive of Minto's 2SLGBTQIA+ inhabitants and who were clearly proud of their community. I've always found Palmerston to be welcoming and a great town to visit and support local businesses.

What I didn't see at the Pride event is probably more notable in light of opinions being shared around Minto community social media pages about this weekend's Pride event. Let me be very clear that there appeared to be no coercive recruiting efforts at Pride in the Park to enlist straight youth into any nefarious 2SLGBTQIA+ 'cult' activities, no nudity on display, no overtly sexual or disturbing behaviours, and thankfully, no aggressive protesting or conflict. Just inclusion. Food. Fun. And face-painting for the kids.

The reason I describe my Minto Pride in the Park experience, and similarly, what prompted me to write you this letter, was a variety of hate-filled social media posts from members of your community aimed at the 2SLGBTQIA+ population. Though social media platforms tend to be the swamp of human communication these days, I have to admit I was still caught off guard when I started reading Minto Pride-related Facebook content. In contrast to the positive and peaceful Pride experience I'd been part of, conversations around the upcoming event and the circulating neutrality petition, spurred me to add my voice to numerous others urging Council to limit the attempt through this petition to stigmatize and exclude members of non-binary, gay and trans population from your town.

I'm sharing some of the Facebook content that caused my concern. I, of course, have no expectations of Minto Council to police or address individuals' social media posts - these are

being shared to solely highlight the interconnected nature between the neutrality petition and a dangerous intolerance towards an identifiable group protected under Charter rights.

These direct quotes were written by a local Harriston church leader's Facebook page. The pastor urges Minto residents to boycott local businesses that display any sign of support for Pride or the LGBTQ+ community and complains that Minto residents are "being forced for more than one month of the year to have gay pride, flags hanging in our communities where people do not want them BECAUSE OF WHAT IT REPRESENTS."

Within the post, the pastor of ██████████ Church encourages Minto residents to press Council to invoke a similar neutrality clause that a small handful of special interest groups in other municipalities have successfully snuck into local policy to foster hate and exclusion under the guise of 'depolicizing municipal policy'. The pastor stated 4 days ago on her Facebook page:

- That "the LGBTQ have an agenda that needs to be pushed back"
- That she is concerned about "the disgusting debauchery that takes place publicly in these parades"
- Expressed the belief that "the trans story time is simply a grooming of children"
- Claimed the 'gay lifestyle' "is being forced on our children", again referencing the widely used, yet false trope of "the LGBTQ have an agenda and they want our kids"
- Stated "the entire pride parade is all about sexual preferences and they're trying to push it down our kid's, throats and our community throats"

I'm referencing the pastor's Facebook posts both to highlight that, despite how the petition was presented to Council, the objections to Minto Pride's approved application to fly Pride flags on public infrastructure and host their event with decorations in a public park are grounded in philosophical anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment and aren't, as claimed, simply ensuring neutrality on public infrastructure. In her Facebook thread, the pastor condemns the 'chosen lifestyle' of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, as it conflicts with her specific religious belief system. In her multiple posts condemning the event and its participants, she advises local community members to contact the Town of Minto to specifically oppose Pride-related decorations and support the 'neutrality' bylaw efforts. While the pastor and Minto community members are entitled to whatever belief system they have, it crosses a line when it is weaponized to deliberately suppress others' rights to their own freedom of expression and the Town's responsibility and right to foster an inclusive, safe community for all of their residents.

Comments added to the pastor's page by other local Minto Facebook users were almost more worrisome to me, as they amplified routinely disproven, fear-mongering sound bytes like Pride events only exist as a cover for pedophiles to recruit straight youth, Pride parades are responsible for increased kidnapping rates of young children, and that depraved sexual practices are on display during parades. These harmful and inaccurate tropes and extreme religious-based views (e.g. the AIDS epidemic was punishment from God for practicing the gay 'lifestyle') articulated in the pastor's Minto Pride in the Park thread should not in any way be encouraged by public officials nor should they guide municipal law. This petition for neutral flags, crosswalks and decorations in Minto is simply a thinly veiled attempt to force a segment of your community back into the fear and isolation they have struggled for decades to overcome for the convenience of a relative few who are threatened and irritated by rainbows and the communities they now represent.

Treating this petition as a serious basis on which to create a new bylaw would be an incredibly regressive move by Minto Council and very much out of step with the vast majority of municipalities committed to the safety and inclusion of all of their citizens. However, the Town's reputation isn't the largest thing at risk...the costs of fueling anti-2SIGBTQIA+ sentiment are life threatening for those belonging to that community. Based on US research\*:

- Approximately 40% of LGBTQ+ identifying youth contemplate suicide, driven in large part by bullying and harassment about who they are.
- These youth are MORE THAN 4 TIMES as likely to seriously attempt suicide compared to their peers.

**Suicide is the second leading cause of death for non-binary, queer and trans children between the ages of 10 and 14\***. This alone should be the reason why we provide inclusivity, community and safety opportunities through Pride events, flags and symbols to let them know they're accepted in stores, communities and by public service agencies. As the Canadian community, we're long overdue for a revival of tolerance and kindness.

I urge you to take this as an opportunity to support your vulnerable community members by clearly communicating that you won't contribute to exclusionary tactics against queer/trans residents.

Respectfully,  
Vanessa Carney

\* The Trevor Project. (2024). Facts About Suicide Among LGBTQ+ Young People. Retrieved on 1 Jan 2024 from <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/article/facts-about-lgbtq-youth-suicide/>

**From:** [bdhollinger](#)  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Follow up from June 4  
**Date:** June 9, 2024 5:34:59 PM

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## Mayor Turton and council members

The current state between two sides is at loggerhead. Agreement cannot be achieved due to the fact that neither can expect the other to change **who they are**. Beliefs and values make us who we are. In this case we differ sharply.

**Neutrality** properly applied means the **Governing Body** has a policy where they **hold no position to either side in publicly funded permanent spaces** with regard to an **unresolvable sharp disagreement**. There is no satisfying either side in this case.

**Inclusion** need only be stated once or division is created as ALL wasn't meant initially. All inclusive colour symbols are also an addition and divisive as most do not identify with a colour. "ALL are included" is sufficient.

### **EXAMPLES of Neutrality in the community:**

**A PARADE FOR OR AGAINST PRIDE DOWN MAIN STREET**  
Town support would be required to comply with by-laws, traffic safety and the street cut off for all. An anti-pride parade creates similar challenges but both causing further division; neither productive but "poking the bear."

### **Pride says...we will pay for our own public display:**

This implies that ALL of Minto supports the display if done so in the public sphere as a community display; they do not. A prime reason for

a neutral stance by government in the public display.

### **A Pride or Petition party in a park totally funded by participants**

It is the public's park and not a permanent display. Provided town is not funding, it is open space used by anyone.

### **Drag Story**

Given heightened awareness of child abuse, how is an adult dressed as a provocative male/female looking to read stories to young children even entertained? Outright or questionable abuse in public casts a poor light on the community as a whole. Drag is designed for adult comedic entertainment. Hosting a self funded event in the park, while questionable, parents can choose.

**Minto is a democracy.** A petition of 900 is significant as Mayor Turton stated and is being taken seriously without additional names requested. Any future issues will serve Minto well by having a "neutrality" policy in place.

### **LGBT+ Take back your power:**

Individuals rooting for pride are demanding validation and approval through displays from people who can never provide due to moral convictions. Implied validation by the community as a whole through displays is expecting those who are opposed to change **who they are**; something LGBT+ are asking for... **to be who they are**. Neither can change the other. Inclusion, kindness and respect are fully recognized within this frame without validation or approval. We do not have to agree with everything in order to get along. Many of us have children whom we do not approve or validate some of their decisions or choices, but we respect and support them in their decision without the need for a display of any kind.

It is a win for anyone to be granted and receive inclusion, respect and kindness for living their life as they see fit. When an individual is comfortable with who they are, there is no need to request validation or

approval otherwise; especially not from individuals known to sharply differ in regard to lifestyle.

Requesting or demanding to have your lifestyle validated/approved by those who cannot provide it is **giving away personal power**. It is taking on the role of victim; a fruitless and very powerless position. There are numerous groups available to address needs for support.

### **Reflections/Observations:**

#1 Walking about shopping I noticed a couple of adults; both females who appear to be in a relationship. They are holding hands, walking about the store appearing somewhat like a pair of teenagers new to dating. There is obvious discomfort or a sense that they don't feel like they can be themselves as a couple in public.

Is that because of others around them or due to their discomfort being themselves? I observe that there is nobody making fun of, staring at or making a fuss except themselves. Where is their sense of internal empowerment to just be who they are; independent of anyone or anything else.

#2 I'm in IKEA, 2 adult females appear to be in a relationship. They are chatting, walking about and relating just like any other couple. They appear to be just going about their day. I perceive no level of discomfort but just a couple living the life they choose. I have respect for that.

LGBT+ can not be expected to change who they are or what they believe. Nor can others be expected to change who they are or what they believe. A shared understanding of this is vital. People can generally see just fine. They recognize individuals who openly have a differing lifestyle. Lack of education or misunderstanding is not required and to suggest a need for such is naive at best. Everyone is free to show up in the world as they choose. Inclusion doesn't arrive on your doorstep, one needs to step out and join in to be included. Grab a buddy if need be, but let's go out and join in together within our community.

bdhollinger





**From:** [Gertie Kramer](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** About "The Petition"  
**Date:** June 9, 2024 12:29:25 PM

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Greetings,

We are writing to encourage the council of the Town of Minto to affirm its commitment to the inclusive action of flying the Pride Flag in June.

It's important that the community shows its support of a vulnerable group.

It creates a safe space for those who have been harassed and whose lives have even been threatened.

Thank you for creating an inclusive atmosphere in our town.

We recently moved to Harriston and are so pleased with the progressive, welcoming and thoughtful thinking that is happening here.

Gertie Kramer

[REDACTED] Harriston Ontario.

**From:** [Heather Gray](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** PRIDE  
**Date:** June 9, 2024 9:05:54 PM

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Safety and belonging should never come second to ignorance and discomfort. As a mother of two small girls, I cannot tell you how devastating it would be to know they would not be openly supported and celebrated in their own communities, if either of them ever identified as LGBTQ+. As most parents do, I want to raise them in a community that supports love, equality and respect, and one that also has the courage to say NO to individuals that threaten that.

There is no excuse in 2024. These arguments have been had. Marriage for same sex couples has been legal since 2003. Human beings are out and proud, and our small town will become known as bigoted and hateful if it cannot embrace the diversity of our fellow neighbours. I don't want to be labeled that way based on where I'm from - do you?

Removing rainbows is a very small step towards allowing prejudice and discrimination to become the louder voice.

Our Children deserve better than that.

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

**From:** [Kurt Faris](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride  
**Date:** June 9, 2024 9:24:25 AM

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Just another email in support for own town and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Regards,  
Kurt Faris

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Luke Hartung](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Cc:** [Crystal Wilson](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support—Neutral Signage Discussion  
**Date:** June 9, 2024 12:27:46 PM

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Hi Annilene,

We have been following the issue at hand present before council on public neutrality regarding signage, banners, etc in public places in minto. Although we are not minto residents, we do spend a lot of our time in minto and consider ourselves members of the community.

I (Luke) have watched the last three council sessions regarding this issue at hand. Although some group members and supporters have explained this is not directed at pride month/LGBTQ community, I struggle to find clarity on any other reason why or motivation behind it. I would also agree with a couple comments of the councillors is if they go ahead a ban/bylaw, it would have to include everything (pride flags, Christmas decor, etc). The group has proposed that the legion banners would be grandfathered, but I struggle to find sense on how one set of banners can be grandfathered in and others cannot.

As members of the minto's community, but residents of North Perth, we have always seen the town of minto as a social leader in rural Ontario and hope that council and the town will continue and grow this legacy. To conclude, we do not support the proposed bylaw by the group and the petition signees.

On a side, I would like to commend the council, Mayor and all members of the town for running excellent meetings. Kudos to everyone involved

Thanks  
Luke and Crystal Hartung

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** supporter of DEI work  
**Date:** June 9, 2024 1:13:36 PM

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To the Council of Minto:

My Husband and I moved to Clifford in 2018. We fell in love with this beautiful area. I was thrilled the first year when Pride was celebrated here. As the Mom of 2 Gay kids I felt like I had moved into a safe space for my Family. Both of my kids are adults now and both are very involved in their community. My daughter and her partner are actually one of the Food Venders today in Palmerston.

Pride month isn't about me, or the individuals who don't fall under the Rainbow. Pride month is for our LGBTQ+ Humans who are fighting still to have the same rights as everyone !!

It shouldn't be a debate !!

It's not about the people who feel uncomfortable, it's for possibly that one child who is feeling like they don't belong. The one who doesn't feel safe talking to their parents or friends about how they feel or who they are. It's so upsetting as a parent to read all the hate filled comments put up every June!!

People calling individuals like my Son and his friends pedophiles because they come out and read to children!! I don't have the luxury of staying "neutral" Whether people want to realize it or not Gay people live in our community and they deserve to be fully included, this means CELEBRATING PRIDE!!

YOU represent ALL people living in the community that you serve. This proud Mom really hopes that Pride and all it's glory continues to be Celebrated here every year moving forward.

Sincerely Mark and Tammy Johnson

HAPPY PRIDE!!!!

**From:** [mike mcphee](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support of Pride Displays  
**Date:** June 9, 2024 3:36:58 PM

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Dear Annilene

I'm writing today in support of the public displays of PRIDE that the Minto Pride Committee has created in our 3 town centres. It is important to me because I have family and friends who identify with some aspect of those symbols, and feel safer because it is obvious that the community supports them. The Rainbow Flag tells us that everyone in our community is welcome and respected and as our demographic look changes that is important.

In addition the colours have long standing meanings that focus on the good qualities of life.

Yellow is a symbol of joyfulness, happiness and energy.

White stands for perfection, honesty and cleanliness.

Pink symbolizes love, nurture and compassion.

Turquoise stands for wisdom, tranquility, protection and loyalty.

Brown for steadfastness, simplicity and dependability.

Black is the contemplative colour of reflection and mystery.

Red is for life, health, vigor and courage.

Orange is symbolic of optimism, happiness and youthful connection.

Green for growth, harmony and freshness.

Blue means serenity, stability, and inspiration.

Purple is the colour for spirituality, adventure and prosperity.

To be against such things as these does not show the forward thinking people we are.

Sincerely

Michael McPhee - Harriston

**From:** [REDACTED] [Wayne Sjaarda](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Crosswalks  
**Date:** June 9, 2024 5:24:55 PM

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Hi Annilene,  
Please forward the following note to the Minto Town Council.  
Thanks.

Dear Town of Minto Councilors,

My wife and I are recent additions to the Town of Minto. Something that struck us very early after moving here was the effort the town had put into promoting the town as being diverse and inclusive. We noticed the coloured crosswalk, the DEI committee and the events promoting Diversity and Inclusion. To say the least, we were impressed.

I encourage the Town not to succumb to the requests of the petitioners to repaint the coloured crosswalk. The colours include people of all types, Changing to a black and white crosswalk excludes.

Let's continue to be an inclusive, equitable and diverse community.

Regards,  
Wayne Sjaarda  
Harriston

**From:** [Allie Nickels](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** PRIDE! <3  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 1:38:51 PM

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Hello,

I am writing to encourage you to continue to support community based Pride celebrations.

I work full time as a primary healthcare provider in Minto and I wholeheartedly support Minto Pride. Community Pride helps our members feel a glimpse of representation within this very conservative town and this may help foster a sense of belonging. We know that rates of disordered mental health are much higher among queer populations and this is likely related to the ostracization, whether overt, subtle or systemic. Pride offers a moment of space to offset this marginalization. Neutrality supports oppression. And acting to remove queer celebration is a dangerous act fueled by groups that sit in immense power and privilege. Active liberation is the way we move forward toward inclusion.

Anecdotally my very best friend and I grew up in a small, rural, conservative town north of here. There were absolutely no Pride events locally and very little discussion of anything related to queer communities outside of the usual, harmful mockery. When he was 12 years old, and very aware of his sexuality, he was out-ed. He feared the community repercussions so gravely that he attempted suicide. Can you imagine? 12 years old. Getting out a rope, setting it all up. Luckily, his interest in art and music and culture left him ill prepared to choose an appropriate rope for his weight and his set up dropped him. He survived this moment but you can imagine the emotional turmoil and cognitive dissonance he faced living rurally and feeling unwanted and unwelcome. Pride celebrations in our community would have provided a space for his family to let him know that they love everyone. It would have let him see other boys like himself and healthy adults like him too!

Pride gives families and communities opportunities to discuss values and have conversations that folks might otherwise have trouble broaching. I think these small acts of acceptance have the potential to be life saving. I adore these sweet small-town Pride celebrations and I hope that all people and love will continue to be welcome in our little



towns.

Allie Nickels, Registered Midwife

**From:** [Barry Hewitt](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of Pride Symbols  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 8:33:45 AM

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Council,

As a Minto resident I want to share my praise for the Town’s current stance and public support of Queer inclusion and expression, your partnering with Minto Pride, and the display of Pride symbols all around Minto.

This is a *good* thing for our town. When I hear friends abroad admire our inclusiveness I know this is something we should celebrate. And seeing the underhanded tactics used by those who oppose this inclusiveness, I know it needs defending.

There are claims the town is not “neutral” on the “issue” of Pride. This language obscures the truth of things: there is no neutral position on inclusivity. There is no neutral position on being a welcoming community.

We are either welcoming, or we are not.

The agenda of these opposition groups is clear; they want to push Queer people back into the dark, and make them feel apart and alone in their own town.

Supporting Pride symbols is supporting our community. The public support of the town encourages those who live openly, and acts as a beacon of hope for those who still can’t.

If public support for Pride is ended, I won’t be proud to live here. I’ll just be thinking of all the people who’ll feel a little less safe in their community.

I ask Council to reaffirm the Town’s support of Minto Pride and commitment to being an inclusive community. Don’t let the fear and hate of these agitators change us for the worse.



**Barry Hewitt** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [Delaney Norman](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 6:55:42 AM

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Hi Annilene,

I'm writing in support of Minto Pride and their initiative to keep decorative/celebratory flags and banners displayed in the Town of Minto.

I encourage the Town of Minto to keep being an inclusive and progressive township.

Thanks!  
Delaney Norman

To the Town of Minto Council,

I felt an urge to write a short letter to you people. I have read a few articles in the newspaper addressing the subject of P.R.I.D.E. decorations in our towns here in Minto and wish to share my concern about this. I presume you know the stand we as the Mennonite Church take towards homosexuality and it does hurt us to see how it is promoted in our Town of Minto ie Pride in the Park etc. I would like to present the question, if we all are truly honest with ourselves, is this really what we want our children and grandchildren to have for the future? We do feel blest to have Minto for our home and are thankful for your efforts as our Council and Mayor. Wishing you wisdom as you endeavour to make sound decisions as the circumstances arise.

Humbly yours

Edwin M. Martin

**From:** [FRANK AND SALLY ANDRADE](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Petition re: Rainbow Flags  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 10:07:43 AM

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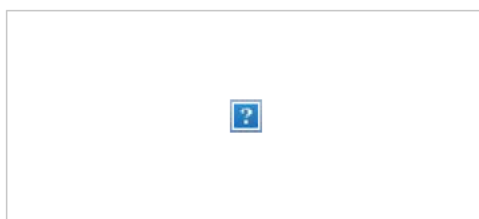
Good morning, Annilene.

I understand the debate on the issue of rainbow flags is raging hot and heavy in the Town of Minto. I think it is important for every town in Ontario to honour each federally recognized group and cause each month. By doing so, Minto would be following other major Canadian cities.

In addition to Pride month, June is also National Indigenous Heritage Month and Portuguese Heritage month. There is a good sized group of people of Portuguese descent living in Minto right now. In Toronto, Portuguese flags are also flown as well as a Portuguese heritage festival the weekend before Pride Fest. We are asking for the same consideration here in Minto.

Where I have my issue is when one group becomes more important than another. All 3 of these causes are **FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED** causes. I have attached a link to the actual bill for Portuguese heritage month. I think what the Town really needs to look at is that you cannot show preference for one cause over another. You recognize all or none. I know those in the Town of Minto and surrounding areas of Portuguese descent have had their own meetings and are more than willing to supply the flags for all those towns contained within the Town of Minto to also be flown during the month of June. We look forward to seeing inclusivity for everyone including us. After all, without the Portuguese people we wouldn't even have a country to be arguing about flags in!!

<https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-37/session-2/bill-120>



## Celebration of Portuguese Heritage Act, 2001

Bill 120 from Parliament 37 Session 2 of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: Celebration of Portuguese Heritage Act, 2001.

[www.ola.org](http://www.ola.org)

Thank you for your consideration.

Sally & Frank Andrade



Harriston, ON

**From:** [Haley Heise](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Banner Bylaw  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 7:47:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [apple-touch-icon.png](#)

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Hello,

I am writing in response to the recent delegations regarding neutral spaces/banners/crosswalks. I have had the opportunity to listen to the council meetings and question period regarding this matter and I cannot express the utter disappointment I have knowing the petitioners amongst our community and their agenda. I think it goes without saying the effort the town and economic development committee have accomplished to create a more attractive downtown. To bring more traffic into our businesses and bring Minto up to date with other municipalities. However, it seems perhaps the delegation does not see the benefit to display or show signs of support toward minority groups or organizations. Specifically, groups that have organized their own awareness, events and funding to display signage amongst the township. There is in fact many positive benefits to the town displaying signs of support for groups, organizations and or holidays but specifically a township supporting MARGINALIZED groups. Whether some feel they are "worthy" or not. This negative attitude toward such displays of support now, and in previous years, has resulted in vandalism to the crosswalk, hateful comments as signage is displayed and a number of signs or banners removed entirely. The Pride committee has continued to grow and adapt to these very disheartening circumstances with positivity and encouragement. In other townships and areas of Ontario we have seen similarities and I would imagine council has researched this for contrast but I would invite you to read a few links at the end of my letter that give some examples. Other areas of the world are not so lucky to feel safe being who they are and loving who they do. It is absolutely necessary in this era we live in to be a leader or role model amongst prejudice issues or discrimination. To not persuade the public with popularity but to speak to all walks of life and build connections and trust. We understand as a society the consequences of being a bystander and allowing hate or discrimination in the community. We understand the oppression and hardships that LGBTQ individuals, among others, faced when same sex marriage was illegal. We have grown AS A NATION from those archaic times. Times where many individuals didn't feel safe, just as the blacks, Jewish or slaves felt. Absolute discrimination. And absolutely WRONG. There is no room for hate here. We are Canadians. Peacekeeping and Free to live/speak but without hate or prejudice.

Minto is where EVERYONE is welcome.

Over the years as Minto has grown and committees have been created, I feel we are paving the way for other small rural towns to get involved with their community and create initiatives that are attractive to the community. You see that the community has become excited for these modern and colourful ideas and members of the LGBTQ community actually represented! I would call on council to report on the attendance of such events and how Minto Pride has grown in the committee size but also the active participation from the community. Sure it has made some people uncomfortable, but that is ok. We don't all have to agree, that is democracy. Some say they don't want the flags or rainbow colours because there is no month or flag for heterosexuals... but there is no need for it. Just as there are no need for food banks

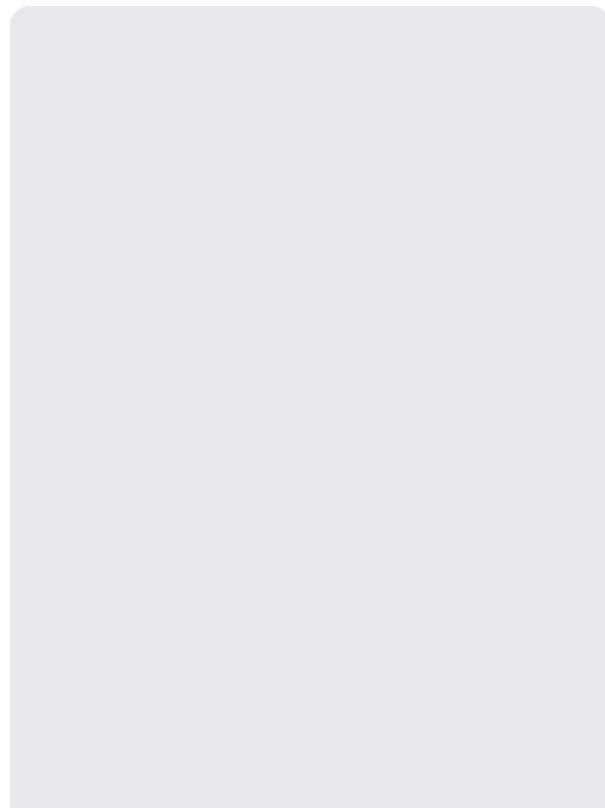
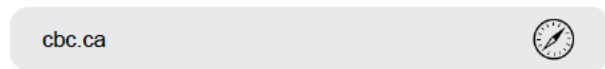
or shelters for rich people.

If we were to revoke the crosswalk colours or remove the banners now - what are we saying as a township? Be quiet ? Don't be yourself? Bigotry and hate is acceptable ?

As the delegation continues to demand a bylaw be put into place I would invite specifically the delegates, Dan, Jim and Stefon, to consider the message this displays across southwestern Ontario, and how we are moving forward? Does the delegation truly understand discrimination and hate? Maybe we need to define that as well.

We stand with supporting all walks of life. Minto is where your Pride BELONGS. This is Canada.

For your consideration I have attached a few links of other townships discussing this further amongst their communities and how that resulted.







Ontario township overturns ban on Pride flag,  
allows it on community flagpole | TVO Today  
[amp.tvo.org](http://amp.tvo.org)

<https://www.nwnewswatch.com/local-news/emo-dug-in-on-pride-position-rejected-compromise-8978602>

Thank you so much if you have read this far,

Haley & Brandon Heise

Dear Annilene,

I am writing to express my appreciation and support for the pride symbols that are displayed throughout our town. As a resident of Harriston, I am proud to live in a community that values inclusivity, diversity, and acceptance.

The pride symbols, such as the rainbow flag and the transgender flag, serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of promoting equality and respect for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. These symbols are a beacon of hope and a symbol of the progress that we have made towards creating a more just and equitable society.

Moreover, the presence of these symbols sends a strong message to the LGBTQ+ community that they are welcome, accepted, and valued members of our community. It is essential to create a sense of belonging and inclusivity for all individuals, regardless of their background or identity. The pride symbols have also become an important part of our town's economic and social development. They attract tourists and businesses that value diversity and inclusivity, which can have a positive impact on our local economy.

I have two daughters and I am so proud that they will grow up in such a welcoming and accepting community. I do not know who they will grow into, but I do know with having the pride symbols in town, they will not just feel accepted and safe at home, but in their community as well.


In conclusion, I believe that the pride symbols are an essential part of our town's identity and cultural heritage. They promote inclusivity, diversity, and acceptance, and they serve as a reminder of the importance of promoting these values in our daily lives. I urge you to continue to support and display these symbols in our town, and to work towards creating a more inclusive and accepting community for all.

Thank you.

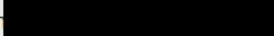
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "H Wickenheiser".

Heather Wickenheiser

**From:**  Campbell  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 9:12:35 AM

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I originally wrote this on Minto Pride's Facebook page thinking it was way later in the month. Some nice people pointed out that it was indeed not passed June 12th. So here are my thoughts.

I personally see nothing wrong with the flags and walkways. They are beautiful and bring a sense of pride when I see them in my community when so many other communities are against (I don't even know what they are against- especially when the message is love.)

If we didn't need to fly a flag, or make a walkway that would be perfect and harmonious It's not about what kind of lifestyle you believe in and it's not about taking something away from someone else. It's about love.

It's about how some people don't feel that love or acceptance or welcome because of who they are. They live in fear. This is something that affects all races and all sexes. The LGBTQ have been around since the history of humanity. They are human but for the majority are feeling less than. It's more important to be kind, caring and to love and they are capable of all of this and yet still in many places don't feel welcomed, even in their own homes. I am proud to live in a community that demonstrates love through welcoming everyone. Especially to those who most need it.

I hope that there is never a time when I have to find a town that flies a flag or hangs a quilt for me in order to feel good about where I am living. No harm has been done, unless showing compassion and love towards each other is wrong. We all want to live in peace. Opinions on lifestyles is one thing but I think that we can agree on love for humanity. That is what I feel this is about.

It's actually sad that a community HAS to fly a flag or paint a crosswalk to make people feel safer, more welcome, accepted as a human, accepted as a person, accepted as an individual.

I am glad to live in a community that demonstrates true Canadian values - that all are accepted & welcomed with the same love. Our only ask is for the same in return.

Thanks for taking the time to read this  
Jan Campbell

PS

Why aren't we using our time and energy to focus on real problems that affect our communities in a negative way? Like poverty, alcohol abuse, drug use, homelessness, thievery, depression...

Cheers Jan Campbell

**From:** [Darlene Fisk](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride flags  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 9:11:52 AM

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Jeff and Darlene Fisk are in total favour of supporting Pride, hanging flags and Pride in the Park.

We want to thank you for all the work you're doing to support inclusion in our community. My 94 year old mother, Marjorie Shantz, who was born and raised in Palmerston, asked me to respond for her as well.

The community is very important to her, she gets her magnifier out and reads all the news weekly.

“ This protest and petition is dividing the town and making bad feelings which isn't right,

It's not nice.

It's weird, I feel really bad for the town right now, it's a shame.

They're lucky I'm not out there talking.

I feel that everyone needs to be treated equally and I agree to hang the flags in support of pride.”

Marjorie Shantz

Thank you

Darlene and Jeff Fisk

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Jovanna Belair](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#); [David Turton](#); [Ed Podniewicz](#); [gunson@town.minto.on.ca](mailto:gunson@town.minto.on.ca); [Jean Anderson](#); [Judy Dirksen](#); [Paul Zimmerman](#); [Ron Elliott](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Regarding Drag Story Time  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 12:31:17 PM

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----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Jovanna Belair** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Mon, Jun 10, 2024 at 11:48 AM  
**Subject:** Regarding Drag Story Time  
**To:** [REDACTED]

Mayor Turton and Council,

I take no issue with the Pride in the Park event, however regarding the addition of Drag Story Time this year, it was/is, in my opinion, unwise.

Children rely on the adults in their lives to keep them safe and to help them understand aspects of life that are appropriate for each level of childhood development. I would hope that parents would have given careful consideration regarding the motivation of Drag people for wanting to read to young children in the first place, and to the content of the books that are being read. It is the job of parents to protect their children, including their innocence. I don't doubt that because Council has supported this initiative, it is likely that many parents will consider Drag Story Time to be a fun and safe activity for their children, without giving it much thought. In the interest of protecting the innocence of children, and their vulnerability during their formative years, I would opt for discontinuing Drag Story Time in the future. It takes a village. It is not hateful to want to protect children.

Thank you for considering my opinion,

Jovanna Belair

**From:** [Jovanna Belair](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#); [David Turton](#); [Ed Podniewicz](#); [ggunson@town.minto.ca](mailto:ggunson@town.minto.ca); [Jean Anderson](#); [Judy Dirksen](#); [pzimmerman@town.minto.ca](mailto:pzimmerman@town.minto.ca); [Ron Elliott](#)  
**Subject:** Re Lions Club displays/Pride displays  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 7:45:25 PM

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Mayor Turton and Council,

In the article that appeared in the Community News following the May 21 Council meeting, Minto Pride Committee officials noted, in part, that the delegation presenters were unable to answer the question regarding whether organizations such as the Lions Club should also not be allowed displays in public spaces. I believe the answer is complex as there are some differences to consider.

When we consider the service groups, horticultural society, sports organizations, the various religious denominations, etc., available in our Town of Minto, it is understood that the banners representing each group/organization are intended to inform residents of the various opportunities available to them to support and participate in, if so desired. The messaging is informative and inviting in nature. It can also be considered neutral in that there is no suggestion of any one group or organization as being more significant or worthy than any other.

When we consider the banners etc. representing the Pride Community, the messaging is very personal in nature. Clearly and understandably, the underlying message is: we are here and we deserve to be recognized, supported and valued. This basic message is equally as applicable for special needs individuals, First Nations peoples, immigrant families, and any other newcomers to the area, etc., for various reasons of a personal nature.

While the Pride Community is concerned with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, the truth is that we all have our differences in one way or another, and we all have our challenges in this life. No one's life is perfect or easy, for any number of reasons. Putting the focus on any particular group gives the impression of elevating the importance or the worthiness of that group over others, whether or not that is the intention. This impression is reinforced by the length of time afforded to the Pride displays in our downtown spaces. It can begin to feel like an imposition rather than a call for DEI. Respect can't be imposed.

The fact is, we are all people living together in our Town of Minto. We are all diverse in various ways. The only logical solution is for each individual to make a personal commitment to treat others with the respect with which they themselves would wish to be treated, regardless of our differences. This used to be called The Golden Rule. Live and let live, barring violence.

No doubt there are a few who do express hate and discrimination in words and/or actions. Those who react in this way are less likely to be swayed by displays, and are more likely to react negatively. Violent situations call for police involvement, on a case by case basis.

Expressing a differing opinion or perspective on an issue does not imply hate or discrimination. Accusing others of being hateful does not achieve anything positive.

Thank you for considering this perspective,

Jovanna Belair

**From:** [Kenzie Norman](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** In Support of Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 1:32:18 PM

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Hi Annilene,

I'm writing in support of Minto Pride and their initiative to keep decorative/celebratory flags and banners displayed in the Town of Minto.

I encourage the Town of Minto to keep being an inclusive and progressive township.

Take care,

Mackenzie Norman



**From:** [i.sitt](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#); [David Turton](#); [Jean Anderson](#); [Judy Dirksen](#); [Ron Elliott](#); [Geoff Gunson](#); [Ed Podniewicz](#); [Paul Zimmerman](#)  
**Subject:** Re: concerned resident in regard to pride flags and pride walk in park  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 11:03:00 PM

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Dear Town of Minto Council,

I am writing to express concern and disagreement with regards to flying the pride flag at our town office, the pride flags on each main street and pride in the park walks and specifically transgender storytime. I understand your intention behind showing support and inclusivity towards the LGBTQ+ community, however I believe it is also important to consider broader implications and potential consequences of such actions.

My first concern for you to recognize that you represent and serve a diverse population with a wide range of beliefs, opinions, and values. Displaying the pride flag exclusively alienates or marginalize certain individuals who hold different religious, cultural, or ideological perspectives. As representatives of the Town of Minto I feel you should strive to be neutral and treat all citizens with respect. Please consider that not all residents of our town agree with or support this aspect of that movement. Since the beginning of June in regards to social media in the Minto area, there has been great division and bashing to different people and this really saddens me to see our close community divided. I feel the pride flag represents a specific social and political movement and this decision to fly the pride flag at our municipal building may lead to a situation where various organizations demand the same recognition, potentially creating divisions and competing interests within our community. I believe it is important for our town council to maintain neutral while serving all residents equally and refrain from flying the pride flag and remain with the Town of Minto flag.

My second point Town of Minto is a family community that seeks to protect children from ideologies that purposely confuse them when they are too young to understand the consequences. When I was young, all of society worked together to protect the innocence of children in all aspects. Unfortunately I feel this no longer is the case, all of these things lined up to do just the opposite and undermine parents in ways never before seen. The attack on families have been relentless. The results have been devastating, with children suffering anxiety, fear, confusion, drug use, promiscuity, and self-harm. Obviously, not all of this falls at the feet of the "pride" movement, but the ideology that it is promoting is puts inappropriate sexual discussions in front of children and makes it all but impossible for the innocence of children to be protected until they are old enough to comprehend the issues and consequences of life-altering choices. This is no longer about everyone letting everyone else live as they like without discrimination. I feel this recent ideology puts children at serious risk. Please reconsider what you promote and allow in public announced events.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective. I trust that you will give due consideration to my concerns. Should you wish to discuss this matter please reach out and I would be happy to discuss.

Sincerely,  
Marcy Sitt

Sent from my Galaxy

**From:** [Mike Wilson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Cc:** [Ron Elliott](#); [David Turton](#); [Ed Podniewicz](#); [Geoff Gunson](#); [Jean Anderson](#); [Judy Dirksen](#); [Paul Zimmerman](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of support for Pride, diversity in Minto  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 11:05:07 PM

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Dear Mayor Turton and Members of Council,

The recent push for a neutrality by-law by some community members is concerning to us. While we respect the fact that many signed this petition, we have reservations.

This neutrality by-law seems aimed at silencing the LGBTQIA2S+ community, which has been historically mistreated and misunderstood not only here in Minto, but across the globe. These individuals are integral members of our community, contributing in many ways. The only difference is in how they identify or whom they love.

Enforcing a neutrality by-law would have broader negative implications. It would mean no Christmas decorations in parks, no Santa Claus parades, and no plaques recognizing local service clubs or special interest groups on public property. In short, neutrality would take away from our vibrant downtowns and culture that the Town of Minto has worked so hard to establish in the past decade. Such a by-law would essentially revert Minto to the sleepy town it once was.

To quote author Catherine Pulsifer, "We are all different, which is great because we are all unique. Without diversity, life would be very boring." And that is something we should celebrate, not silence.

As the parents of three children, we want nothing more for them than to be happy and fulfilled. Who they choose to love does not matter to us – we simply want them to be happy. They are still young, and one day they will all leave Minto for schooling, jobs, etc. We want to live in a place where they feel they can come home and visit family and feel comfortable and welcome, regardless of how they or their partner look, or their beliefs.

We respect everyone's right to their opinions and are grateful for the opportunity to express ours. All we ask is that the Town of Minto Council upholds the same rights for everyone, regardless of race, sexuality, or religious beliefs.

Respectfully,

Mike and Grace Wilson

Palmerston

**From:** [Olivia Douglas](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 6:21:25 AM

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Hey Council!

As a proud community member of the Town of Minto and a passionate Ally, I would like to express how pleased I am to see the pride flags, symbols, and initiatives around our towns every year in June and throughout the year. I feel that this presence demonstrates inclusivity and acceptance to everyone, including existing community members, newcomers to the area, and our local youths. I think that the Pride symbols are a perfect embodiment of our town's very motto: "Where your family belongs."

Rural Southwestern Ontario may not traditionally be as progressive as urban centres but it is so incredibly important for members of the LGBTQIA+ community (and all community members, for that matter) to feel comfortable in our small towns. The idea of taking these symbols down is homophobic, insensitive, and would deteriorate all of the progress that has been made to create a safe and inclusive community. In my opinion, the benefit of supporting an individual who may be questioning their identify far outweighs the discomfort that someone may feel towards the LGBTQIA+ community.

It saddens me that this topic is up for discussion at council based on individuals' negative views of this. I feel very passionately about the Town of Minto maintaining the visibility of Pride throughout our communities. I hope that other community members will advocate for this as well.

Thank you,

Olivia Douglas (I give permission for my name to be shared with this statement)

**From:** [Patrick Lumapat](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride Symbols in Minto  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 9:39:42 AM

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I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Patrick Lumapat and I am a resident of Minto County. I am writing to express my wholehearted support for maintaining the rainbow flag and signs that symbolize the LGBTQIA+ community within our town.

As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I have personally experienced the profound impact of these symbols. The rainbow flag is not just a piece of fabric; it represents acceptance, love, and the unwavering support for diversity and inclusion. It serves as a beacon of hope for many, reminding us that our community embraces everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In a small town like Minto County, visibility and representation are crucial. The presence of the rainbow flag and LGBTQIA+ signs sends a powerful message to both residents and visitors: our town is a safe and welcoming place for everyone. These symbols foster a sense of belonging and community spirit, making it clear that Minto County embraces diversity and inclusion.

Moreover, keeping these symbols prominently displayed helps to educate and inform the broader community about the importance of inclusivity and acceptance. It sparks conversations, promotes understanding, and combats ignorance and prejudice. In a world where discrimination and bigotry still exist, such reminders of love and solidarity are more important than ever.

I have witnessed firsthand the positive effects of our town's commitment to inclusivity. The support and visibility provided by the Pride signs have made a significant difference in the lives of many, including myself. It has made me proud to call Minto County my home, knowing that we stand together in celebrating diversity.

I urge the town council to continue supporting the LGBTQIA+ community by maintaining these symbols of pride. Doing so will demonstrate our town's dedication to upholding values of equality, respect, and unity. It will show that Minto County is a place where everyone is valued and accepted for who they are.

Thank you for considering my request. I trust that you will make a decision that reflects the best interests of our entire community.



**Patrick Lumapat** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [Paula \[REDACTED\] Murray](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Minto's Pride in our Town  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 9:33:25 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I am saddened to hear about the demand to remove the Pride decorations.  
As residents of Minto, our family enjoys seeing them.

Recently, one of my young daughters noticed the version that was drawn by a local young artist and it is her favourite.

They open a good opportunity to talk about what diversity, equity, and inclusion means. As a mother with young children, Minto (Palmerston in particular) is home for us in every aspect of the word;  
It's the place we feel comfortable, loved, and protected.

When there is serious consideration to remove the physical displays of pride, it threatens to also remove the essential conversations surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion. What is a community (a home) if we cannot attempt to encompass these 3 very moral standards?

As I understand it, the decorations are only up for a limited time.  
Instead of removing them and the important conversations they are connected with, let's have these conversations!  
Removal of the decorations would signal to me and my family, as community members and residents, that we will be discriminated against.  
That is not a home where we will stay.

Diversity is what makes communities (and homes) unique and there is room for everyone in Minto.

Paula Murray

**From:** [Randy Ruetz](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** I am writing this letter in support of Minto's visible support of Pride month  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 6:09:53 PM

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Thursday, June 6, 2024

Dear Minto councillors,

I am writing this letter **in support** of Minto's visible support of Pride month.

According to the most recent national statistics, over 10% of the LGBTQ+ community lives in rural areas. ([Socioeconomic characteristics of the 2SLGBTQ+ population, 2019 to 2021 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)) They are homeowners, business owners, employees, neighbours, and volunteers in our community. They are valued, they are loved, and I refuse to silently stand by while they are being persecuted and discriminated against for pursuing their well established, 21-year-old LEGAL rights. Same sex marriage was legalized in Ontario in 2003, and nationally in 2005.

Minto Pride is about celebrating all types of love and providing a safe space for people to be themselves, with their loved ones. The negative comments towards the visibility of pride in our downtowns is hate fueled. Minto provides several safe spaces for people to worship weekly, that are allowed to advertise, have year-round signage, festive displays. Nobody is starting a petition to remove religious signage. I've never heard of a petition about a nativity scene or Christmas parade.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the obvious benefit of visibly supporting pride- it can and does save lives. Here are some sobering statistics to consider from [thetrevorproject.org](#):

- LGBTQ+ young people are **more than four times as likely** to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020).
- When LGBTQ+ young people report feeling accepted by an adult, their odds of attempting suicide are significantly lower. In many instances, by more than 40 percent.
- Research suggests that among LGBTQ+ young people, only one-third experience parental acceptance, with an additional one-third experiencing parental rejection, and the final one-third not disclosing their LGBTQ+ identity until they are adults (Katz-Wise et al., 2015).
- Many LGBTQ+ young people lack access to affirming spaces, with only 38% of LGBTQ+ youth reporting that their home is LGBTQ+-affirming and just over half saying that their school is LGBTQ+-affirming. Just over 1 in 3 transgender and nonbinary youth found their home to be gender-affirming, and 52% found their school to be affirming. The Trevor Project's research consistently finds that LGBTQ+ young people report lower rates of attempting suicide when they have access to LGBTQ+-affirming spaces.

I urge Minto council to choose love and acceptance. I urge them to celebrate the people who are creating positive change and building communities. Please do not listen to the voices negative voices of grown adults that are trying to bully our youth.

A very vocal ally of Minto Pride,

Randy Ruetz



Clifford, ON N0G-1M0





**From:** [sarah](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 7:57:58 AM

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Dear Town of Minto,

I am a resident and mother of 4 young children in Palmerston. We are doing our best to raise our family to be loving and accepting of all. I am proud to raise my family in a town that displays symbols of this. We take the time to talk about the pride banners as well as all the other banners including Remembrance Day. The banners open the door to discussion, to learn.

As a parent raising children I have often asked my children “was it kind? Was it helpful? Was it considerate? I ask that you ask this of yourselves when considering the removal of the pride banners and crosswalks. Would allowing them to be banned be kind? Be considerate? Be helpful? It certainly would not.

Please Minto continue to allow symbols of love and acceptance. Please allow me to continue to be proud of our town and community. A town that accepts all.

Thank you  
Sarah Brooks  
Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Sharon Thackeray](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride banners and crosswalk support  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 9:53:53 AM

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June 10, 2024

To: Town of Minto

We **support** The Town of Minto Pride banners and crosswalk.  
We feel it will have a positive impact on LGBTQ youth, residents, families, and visitors.

Sharon & Gary Thackeray  
Harriston ON

**From:** [Trish Ruetz](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** I am writing this letter in support of Minto's visible support of Pride month.  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 6:13:40 PM

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Dear Minto councillors,

I am writing this letter **in support** of Minto's visible support of Pride month.

According to the most recent national statistics, over 10% of the LGBTQ+ community lives in rural areas. ([Socioeconomic characteristics of the 2SLGBTQ+ population, 2019 to 2021 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)) They are homeowners, business owners, employees, neighbours, and volunteers in our community. They are valued, they are loved, and I refuse to silently stand by while they are being persecuted and discriminated against for pursuing their well established, 21-year-old LEGAL rights. Same sex marriage was legalized in Ontario in 2003, and nationally in 2005.

Minto Pride is about celebrating all types of love and providing a safe space for people to be themselves, with their loved ones. The negative comments towards the visibility of pride in our downtowns is hate fueled. Minto provides several safe spaces for people to worship weekly, that are allowed to advertise, have year-round signage, festive displays. Nobody is starting a petition to remove religious signage. I've never heard of a petition about a nativity scene or Christmas parade.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the obvious benefit of visibly supporting pride- it can and does save lives. Here are some sobering statistics to consider from [thetrevorproject.org](#):

- LGBTQ+ young people are **more than four times as likely** to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020).
- When LGBTQ+ young people report feeling accepted by an adult, their odds of attempting suicide are significantly lower. In many instances, by more than 40 percent.
- Research suggests that among LGBTQ+ young people, only one-third experience parental acceptance, with an additional one-third experiencing parental rejection, and the final one-third not disclosing their LGBTQ+ identity until they are adults (Katz-Wise et al., 2015).
- Many LGBTQ+ young people lack access to affirming spaces, with only 38% of LGBTQ+ youth reporting that their home is LGBTQ+-affirming and just over half saying that their school is LGBTQ+-affirming. Just over 1 in 3 transgender and nonbinary youth found their home to be gender-affirming, and 52% found their school to be affirming. The Trevor Project's research consistently finds that LGBTQ+ young people report lower rates of attempting suicide when they have access to LGBTQ+-affirming spaces.

I urge Minto council to choose love and acceptance. I urge them to celebrate the people who are creating positive change and building communities. Please do not listen to the voices negative voices of grown adults that are trying to bully our youth.

A very vocal ally of Minto Pride,

Trish Ruetz

[REDACTED]  
Clifford, ON N0G - 1M0

**From:** [Wesley Bates](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Support for importance of symbols of Pride in our town.  
**Date:** June 10, 2024 3:11:02 PM

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To the Mayor and Council of Minto

I want to express my support for, and recognition of our LGBTQ neighbours and friends. I am proud to be a citizen of Minto when I see the symbols of inclusion that grace our streets and buildings. The flags and ribbons that I see from my store window tell me that our community is enlightened and caring to all regardless of their religion, race, sex or identity. I encourage the Town Council to continue to stand up for the rights of the citizens of Minto and not let the intolerance and bigotry of a few cast a shadow on the bright future of our community.

Sincerely,

Wesley W. Bates  
Clifford

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

It creates a safe space for all different people. Everyone deserves to feel safe and accepted. I bring my family every year from Burlington to attend minto pride. Small communities deserve the love and acceptance just as much as the larger ones.

THANK YOU,

NAME: Alana Smollett TOWN: Burlington, ON

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

I felt alone for a long time, even when coming out to my family. These events help me see how expansive these communities are, how they accept me as I am. It makes me feel less alone when I'm here.

THANK YOU,

NAME: Alexis S TOWN: Drayton

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

Dear Minto councillors,

I am writing this letter **in support** of Minto's visible support of Pride month.

According to the most recent national statistics, over 10% of the LGBTQ+ community lives in rural areas. ([Socioeconomic characteristics of the 2SLGBTQ+ population, 2019 to 2021 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-601-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm))

They are homeowners, business owners, employees, neighbours, and volunteers in our community. They are valued, they are loved, and I refuse to silently stand by while they are being persecuted and discriminated against for pursuing their well established, 21-year-old LEGAL rights. Same sex marriage was legalized in Ontario in 2003, and nationally in 2005.

Minto Pride is about celebrating all types of love and providing a safe space for people to be themselves, with their loved ones. The negative comments towards the visibility of pride in our downtowns is hate fueled. Minto provides several safe spaces for people to worship weekly, that are allowed to advertise, have year-round signage, festive displays. Nobody is starting a petition to remove religious signage. I've never heard of a petition about a nativity scene or Christmas parade.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the obvious benefit of visibly supporting pride- it can and does save lives. Here are some sobering statistics to consider from [thetrevorproject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/):

- LGBTQ+ young people are **more than four times as likely** to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020).
- When LGBTQ+ young people report feeling accepted by an adult, their odds of attempting suicide are significantly lower. In many instances, by more than 40 percent.
- Research suggests that among LGBTQ+ young people, only one-third experience parental acceptance, with an additional one-third experiencing parental rejection, and the final one-third not disclosing their LGBTQ+ identity until they are adults (Katz-Wise et al., 2015).
- Many LGBTQ+ young people lack access to affirming spaces, with only 38% of LGBTQ+ youth reporting that their home is LGBTQ+-affirming and just over half saying that their school is LGBTQ+-affirming. Just over 1 in 3 transgender and nonbinary youth found their home to be gender-affirming, and 52% found their school to be affirming. The Trevor Project's research consistently finds that LGBTQ+ young people report lower rates of attempting suicide when they have access to LGBTQ+-affirming spaces.

I urge Minto council to choose love and acceptance. I urge them to celebrate the people who are creating positive change and building communities. Please do not listen to the negative voices of grown adults that are trying to bully our youth.

A very vocal ally of Minto Pride,

Alicia Becker

  
Clifford, ON N0G 1M0

**From:** [Alyse Fleming](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Symbols of Pride in Minto  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 9:35:27 PM

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Hello,

My name is Alyse Fleming a former Minto resident and proud Palmerstonian. I wanted to share my support of the symbols of Pride throughout Minto. I no longer live in Minto but I work at a business in Palmerston and as an ally of the LGBTQ community it is so wonderful to see the symbols of Pride, it would be a huge disappointment to see them go.

Sincerely Alyse Fleming  
Sent from my iPhone



DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

I have recently come out to my family and to have a committee's that openly ~~is~~ celebrate me, makes it a lot easier for me and my family.

THANK YOU,

NAME: B. Merchant TOWN: Clifford

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

I grew up waiting to turn 18 to end myself @ the first opp I could living on my own. Growing up in a world where I feel I didn't belong.

Initiatives like Minto Pride are ~~an~~ a <sup>big</sup> dine part of my family's livelihood. I want ~~THANK YOU,~~ my kids growing up HAPPY, thriving & most importantly ALIVE & Happy

NAME: Bee

TOWN: Bluevale

LONG

LIVE PRIDE



We travel from Bluevale to partake regularly!

**From:** [Bill Dobson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** banners  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 11:34:05 AM

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Good morning, I am writing in support of the Pride banners and the rest of the banners that are put up through-out the year. The banners help celebrate and promote the diversity of our town.

Any hate-speech against any residents of Minto should be ignored if not reported to the authorities; it is against the entire moto of Minto, **“Where Your Family Belongs”**

Cheers,

Bill Dobson

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

Being proud means showing it. There are  
~~so~~ many LGBTQIAT people in this town  
that we should be proud of, keep the  
displays and there will be more.

Key Peoples.

THANK YOU,

NAME: Caden Cherrey TOWN: Palmerston

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

I am queer and live in this community. Seeing public displays of Pride helps me know that I am welcome and safe in my community. I have encountered a lot of hate and discrimination in this community just for existing, and being able to see tangible, physical symbols of support and allyship help to counteract that.

THANK YOU,

NAME: Caela Butt TOWN: Mount Forest

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

Neutrality does not equal equality!

THANK YOU,

NAME: Christine TOWN: Palmerston  
Roberts

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

I writing because as a pansexual person myself I believe pride ~~should~~ <sup>needs to</sup> be ~~more~~ more shown in the community as there is not enough. Everyone deserves love. And to be safe to be who you are.

THANK YOU,

NAME: Clair TOWN: Palmerston

**From:** [cfoerte](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** In support of Pride  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 12:57:10 PM

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Living in the Town of Minto all my life I am so proud of our community's support of Pride displaying the banners and flags. I think these banners show us as a safe, inclusive and progressive community to all who travel through here. Unfortunately the "delegation" has taken away that feeling of safe and belonging for all of us. I hope council does not bend to the demands of this small minded group and we can all continue to enjoy the banners. Gone are the days where our friends and family should feel they need to go to city to get lost amongst the people.

Town of Minto where ALL our friends and family belong.

Respectfully  
Crystal Foerter

Sent from my Galaxy



**From:** [Dirk Jan Kramer](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Concern  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 8:35:10 AM

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For the Members of the Minto Town Council.

Friends, as a resident of Harriston, I wish to register my concern over decisions to be made possibly limiting or prohibiting altogether the public display of flags and banners in support of the LGBTQ+ community in so-called “neutral places.”

I would encourage Council to reject this proposal and focus instead on developing a policy which emphasizes equity and fairness. This, I realize, would require the more difficult and involved work of determining when, where, and for what length of time the display of flag, banners, and expressions of support by various reputable community groups could be shown in public places.

I would caution Council as well that views expressed by the representatives of various churches and faith groups concerning this matter, though treated seriously, should be treated with balance. As you may or may not be aware, congregations and denominations have not found a way to speak with one voice about matters affecting the LGBTQ+ members of our communities. No one faith community or church representative speaks for all; differences exist in how religious ethics should or should not be applied in the public arena.

I appreciate the work Council is doing in its continued efforts to make the Minto hospitable and desirable community that it is.

Respectfully,

D. J. Kramer

[REDACTED]  
Harriston, Ontario

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Eden Janakovic](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 9:11:18 PM

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Hi Annilene, I am writing in response to the petition to remove rainbow flags in Minto and attain 'neutrality'. I strongly support rainbow flags in Minto. As I explained to my kids the rainbow includes EVERYONE. Neutrality does not. The idea of neutrality appears to offer equality and it does to some degree. Everyone gets the same. However equality does not support everyone in the ways they need. It is black and white. Equity supports everyone in the ways they need. The rainbow flag includes those who have a neutral stance. Adversely in neutrality no one is represented or supported. Which can be dangerous to a community. Those that do not fit the mold of binary identity do not see themselves represented in many schools, churches and communities and especially not in 'neutrality.' which denies them the basic human right of belonging to their community. Research has shown that this leads to an increase in suicide rates. Inclusivity is more than a rainbow flag, it saves lives and it shows to newcomers and the current population that Minto is a safe, inclusive space for EVERYONE. All religions, beliefs and identities. Neutrality leaves out a large part of the population. The essence of the rainbow is ALL the colors. Not just black and white. Black and white erases our differences and therefore hurts the community. Studies have shown that inclusive communities that give everyone a voice and show people of different creeds and identities in their art, supports a healthy, thriving community. Which is why the Government of Ontario supports equity and inclusive strategies. As written in the 'Equity and Inclusive Strategy' by the Government of Ontario 'Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.' <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-equity-inclusive-education-strategy-2009-en-2022-01-13.pdf> Neutrality is the current state. It is in everyone's best interests to create a new, safer space for everyone and the flags are a visual representation of this that everyone can enjoy and look up to for inspiration and courage to be their authentic selves. Those that are secure in themselves have the capacity for peace and prosperity. Which is what Minto both aims to sustain and achieve more of.

Thank you for your time, Eden.

Hi Annilene,

I am writing in response to the petition to remove rainbow flags in Minto and attain 'neutrality'.

I strongly support rainbow flags in Minto. As I explained to my kids the rainbow includes EVERYONE. Neutrality does not.

The idea of neutrality appears to offer equality and it does to some degree. Everyone gets the same.

However equality does not support everyone in the ways they need. It is black and white.

Equity supports everyone in the ways they need. The rainbow flag includes those who have a neutral stance.

Adversely in neutrality no one is represented or supported. Which can be dangerous to a community.

Those that do not fit the mold of binary identity do not see themselves represented in many schools, churches and communities and especially not in 'neutrality.' which denies them the basic human right of belonging to their community.

Research has shown that this leads to an increase in suicide rates.

Inclusivity is more than a rainbow flag, it saves lives and it shows to newcomers and the current population that Minto is a safe, inclusive space for EVERYONE. All religions, beliefs and identities.

Neutrality leaves out a large part of the population. The essence of the rainbow is ALL the colors. Not just black and white.

Black and white erases our differences and therefore hurts the community.

Studies have shown that inclusive communities that give everyone a voice and show people of different creeds and identities in their art, supports a healthy, thriving community.

Which is why the Government of Ontario supports equity and inclusive strategies.

As written in the 'Equity and Inclusive Strategy' by the Government of Ontario

'Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.'

<https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ffiles.ontario.ca%2Fedu-equity-inclusive-education-strategy-2009-en-2022-01-13.pdf&data=05%7C02%7Cannilene%40town.minto.on.ca%7C825a8ff60f974d937c9908>

[dc8a7cacd9%7Ca63fda7a29ae4b3eb07d4e5ff4c3a891%7C0%7C0%7C638537515331211727%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWlloiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ikk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C%7C%7C%7C&sdata=itwkj3a2mb6NVogDMDorRarJxcr3Gwu7%2B1Pldjo7hrw%3D&reserved=0](https://www.linkedin.com/company/unknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWlloiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ikk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C%7C%7C%7C&sdata=itwkj3a2mb6NVogDMDorRarJxcr3Gwu7%2B1Pldjo7hrw%3D&reserved=0)

Neutrality is the current state. It is in everyone's best interests to create a new, safer space for everyone and the flags are a visual representation of this that everyone can enjoy and look up to for inspiration and courage to be their authentic selves.

Those that are secure in themselves have the capacity for peace and prosperity. Which is what Minto both aims to sustain and achieve more of.

Thank you for your time, Eden.

**From:** [Elaine Schiestel](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 3:19:25 PM

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I am just voicing my opinion about this. I am all for public neutrality. I do not care if anyone is gay. I could care less. I have relatives that are gay. Guess what---no one talks about them being gay because none of us care. It is their business.

I am however sickened by how this is dividing our community. After reading the comments that one local woman keeps putting on Minto On Residents just causing arguing after arguing. No one is allowed an opinion. She just goes back and forth, hers is the only opinion that counts. It never ends. I am all for hanging the flag. One day only and the same for their decorations. They hang the flag at the schools that is where it belongs -not in any municipal building. The only flag that should be hung there is the municipal one, provincial flag and finally the Canadian flag. NO ONE ELSE.

What i find ridiculous is that any business owner thinks they are going to not allow Christmas decorations is absolutely absurd. It sounds like they have an agenda themselves.

Stop dividing people and put an end to this.

I am also annoyed that municipal staff are putting this on their own personal fb. My opinion only. I guess they are allowed theirs as well.

Thank you

Elaine Schiestel

**From:** [Emily Sinclair](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride decorations and proposed by-law  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 11:47:40 PM

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Jun 11, 2024

Town of Minto  
5941 Highway 89  
Harriston, ON  
N0G 1Z0

Minto Council,

Re: Minto Pride decorations and proposed by-law

I am writing in support of the work of the Minto Pride Committee and out of concern regarding the recently proposed "neutrality" by-law.

I admire the work being done by the Pride Committee to make the Town of Minto a welcoming and accepting place. Seeing the rainbow banners adorn the streets has inspired me with hope for the future.

That is obviously not an opinion shared by everyone in the community, nor does it have to be. We do not have to all agree with each other in order to respect each other's right to exist and receive equal treatment from our local government.

Some people are apparently so uncomfortable seeing rainbow banners in public spaces that they're attempting to change the law that would effectively ban all holiday, special occasion, and community group decorations. That is unfortunate. The easy and inexpensive solution to their discomfort would simply be to look away. Rainbow ribbons are not causing any actual harm and they are not "excluding" people any more than Valentine's Day decorations would be excluding single people or Remembrance Day banners are excluding non-veterans.

Other people enjoying something you disapprove of is not oppression. Part of being a functioning adult living in a society is learning to peacefully coexist with people whose values you do not share. It's a fundamental part of being a good neighbour. The importance of being

a good neighbour is something I learned growing up in Minto Township.

There are also more pragmatic concerns to keep in mind. The proposed “neutrality” by-law would be both expensive and ineffectual. Expensive because it would inevitably attract a human rights complaint and ineffectual for the same reason. As I’m sure many people are aware, the Township of Norwich in Oxford County enacted a similar “neutral” flag by-law last year. It was immediately challenged as a violation of the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and the council reversed their position in January. As a taxpayer, this kind of exercise does not seem like a good use of Town resources.

I would urge Council to continue supporting the good work of the Minto Pride Committee.

Sincerely,

Emily Sinclair

I am submitting this letter to Council as a private citizen and nothing contained within it should be considered legal advice.

Dear Mayor Turton and Councillors

My name is Gayle Blackwell and I am a resident of the Town of Minto and past business owner here. I am writing in response to the petition that recently circulated in our community. I feel a very strong personal connection to this issue as my son who was born and mostly raised in Palmerston. Grew up understanding that this was not a Safe or Inclusive community to be himself in. As a result, only came out as gay once he moved to the city about 12 years ago.

I question the ethics behind the petition and the false information given to obtain signatures. The petition was developed by individuals who are openly against the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community foremost Drag Queens and Drag Storytime. They are using children and pedophiles as their main platform to turn others against our 2SLGBTQIA+ community. What need is there for this bylaw if not to suppress one very specific community because of their constitutionally protected sexual orientations and gender identities.

A recent post on social media using the Pride in the Park Poster by a local Pastor states *"I say no one should be attending this event as it's based on sexual preference. The Town of Minto wants your input so email them which I am going to do. Better still boycott businesses who support this type of thing for the whole month of June it's your right to do so"*. It is especially urgent to protect members of our 2SLGBTQIA+ Community when people in a community leadership position are using both their religious and social platforms to spread false information and hate. This is a form of hatred, and the total opposite of what Pride stands for which is Inclusion, Safety and Acceptance.

When speaking of the petition at a local coffee shop a close family member of one of the delegates that signed the petition. Was heard stating, *"they should take all those people to the back 40 and shoot them"*. I would question if the petition is about neutrality and inclusivity in public spaces or an attempt to take our 2SLGBTQIA+ Community to the back 40? One delegate stated that *"the petition has nothing to do with hate and that they had people that wanted to sign it, but we wouldn't let them."* I would question that.

I have watched the 3 council meetings many times regarding the petition and the requested bylaw. Words and phrases that stick out to me and have been used repeatedly by the delegates and supporters are as follows: *"those people, specific group, alternative lifestyle, sexual messages, not worthy of recognition. Controversial, neutrality, contentious issue, different beliefs and values, democracy. The people participating in this lifestyle, this acronym of people, the group that we are speaking about, group seeking attention"*. How can anybody say that this petition is about neutrality and inclusivity in public spaces within our community?

The phrases used in the petition clearly articulate intolerance towards Minto citizens that have as much right to exist and put on a celebration event as any other group or resident in the community. A small collection of anti-2SLGBTQIA+ Individuals voicing disapproval based on their own personal beliefs about how others conduct their private lives should not guide municipal laws.

Another statement that was made by a delegate at a meeting was. *"It's not done out of hate or discrimination in one sentence. Then in the next states this is to do with division between 2 sides. Those who choose to live an alternative lifestyle and desire signage, banners and flags and those rate payers who do not agree"*. Again, a direct attack towards our 2SLGBTQIA+ Community. Petition organizers are seeking to erase any visual reminder or inclusionary symbols of humans they choose in vilifying. Please don't allow Council to be the arm of that intolerance.



When Council questioned one delegate about Christmas decorations the response was “*Christmas is not a contentious issue. I don’t think anybody would deny somebody to celebrate Christmas. Even people of the alternative lifestyle celebrate Christmas.*” This is an assumption by the delegate due to their own beliefs. When it comes to the banners it’s all or nothing nobody should be able to pick and choose. The delegate also stated when asked about putting up Lion’s banners in recognition of prominent members of the club. “*Lions are achieving good quality and benefiting the whole community. So, I think they are worthy of acknowledgement. When talking about this acronym of people who choose to live an alternative lifestyle whether we agree or not is not worthy of recognition.*” Another direct attack on our 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Supporters of the petition even tried to stop the Pride Flag from being raised on May 31 at the Town of Minto office. Stating “*A flag being talked about is being raised May 31. I strongly suggest not to put it up with what’s been going on*”. Another direct attack on our 2SLGBTQIA+ Community.

I feel that if this petition is accepted by council and changes are made. We are headed backwards as a community and setting our 2SLGBTQIA+ youth up for greater risk. Pride month is dedicated to education, celebration and commemoration of LGBTQ+. It began after the Stonewall Riots in Manhattan which was a series of gay liberation protests that started late June 1969 (hence June being Pride Month). That was the tipping point for LGBTQ rights and the gay rights movement. Signage, banners, flags and crosswalks along with Pride Celebrations symbolizes to those in and passing through our community that you are Included, Accepted and most importantly Safe here.

I would ask Council to please choose Love over Hate!!! And to allow celebrations of Inclusion, Safety and Acceptance to continue within our community by vocally opposing this petition.

Thank you

Gayle Blackwell

**From:** [Hanna Janakovic](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Petition  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 8:11:41 PM

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Hi Annilene,

I am writing in response to the petition to remove rainbow flags in Minto and attain 'neutrality'. I strongly support rainbow flags in Minto. As I explained to my kids the rainbow includes EVERYONE. Neutrality does not. The idea of neutrality appears to offer equality and it does to some degree. Everyone gets the same. However equality does not support everyone in the ways they need. It is black and white. Equity supports everyone in the ways they need. The rainbow flag includes those who have a neutral stance. Adversely in neutrality no one is represented or supported. Which can be dangerous to a community. Those that do not fit the mold of binary identity do not see themselves represented in many schools, churches and communities and especially not in 'neutrality.' which denies them the basic human right of belonging to their community. Research has shown that this leads to an increase in suicide rates. Inclusivity is more than a rainbow flag, it saves lives and it shows to newcomers and the current population that Minto is a safe, inclusive space for EVERYONE. All religions, beliefs and identities. Neutrality leaves out a large part of the population. The essence of the rainbow is ALL the colors. Not just black and white. Black and white erases our differences and therefore hurts the community. Studies have shown that inclusive communities that give everyone a voice and show people of different creeds and identities in their art, supports a healthy, thriving community. Which is why the Government of Ontario supports equity and inclusive strategies. As written in the 'Equity and Inclusive Strategy' by the Government of Ontario 'Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.' <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-equity-inclusive-education-strategy-2009-en-2022-01-13.pdf> Neutrality is the current state. It is in everyone's best interests to create a new, safer space for everyone and the flags are a visual representation of this that everyone can enjoy and look up to for inspiration and courage to be their authentic selves. Those that are secure in themselves have the capacity for peace and prosperity. Which is what Minto both aims to sustain and achieve more of.

Thank you for your time,  
Hanna

**From:** Helga [REDACTED]  
**To:** Annilene McRobb  
**Subject:** The importance of pride  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 5:16:45 PM

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As a resident of the small town of Palmerston pride celebrations are extremely important to so many people. We cannot allow the bigotry and hatred to overrule the love this community has to offer. Equality, visibility and a supportive community can mean life or death for the youth growing up in this area!

As I support my son through his medical transition I worry about his mental health and physical safety. We are living in a scary time for the LGBTQ+ community. The hatred pouring from the mouths of adults that is being taught to their children is despicable. NO ONE is born a bigot. NO ONE is born with all this hatred. This is learned and taught. We need to continue to teach acceptance and to lead with love. We should be showing people that having pride is nothing to be ashamed of but to be celebrated! This should not even be in question.

The fact that some people in our community choose to spread hate, should not be up for consideration. Stopping pride celebrations and removing flags should not be up for consideration. What world do we live in that we as a community still have to fight for equality?!? This is NOT what I expect from this town. EVERY person deserves to feel safe and accepted. We need to pave that path. We need to lead with love.

Love always wins!

Helga [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

AS A TRANS WOMAN LIVING IN  
THE AREA IT IS IMPORTANT  
TO SEE REPRESENTATION AND SYMBOLS  
OF ACCEPTANCE ESPECIALLY WITH A RISING  
TIDE OF HOMOPHOBIA / TRANSPHOBIA

THANK YOU,

NAME: Iris Jenner TOWN: MT. FOREST

**From:** [Jake Bieman](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Pride Support  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 7:53:17 PM

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Dear Town of Minto,

It has been brought to my attention that there is recent controversy surrounding the Minto Pride banners illuminating our community. As a straight ally with many close LGBTQIA+ individuals surrounding myself in life, I find the idea of making these spaces 'neutral' absurd.

Not only do these banners breathe life into our small town, but it shows how much our community cares about making safe spaces for the queer community. This is extremely important to anyone who knows they do not fit in, and fear for their safety. In most small communities, there is no pride display, parades or events. If having banners makes at least one individual feel more at home, I personally do not see the harm.

To the various people wanting to take these banners down, who do not agree with the idea of Pride, I implore them to think outside the box. This community has become very diverse. If we truly want neutral spaces, this means no more beautiful Christmas decorations, and no more of the several signs that lead to various churches. Not everyone celebrates Christmas, and not everyone goes to church. This may seem ridiculous to remove church signs or holiday decorations, so why is it not ridiculous to remove JUST the pride banners? If you do not like pride, do what the people who do not go to church, and who do not celebrate Christmas do in Harriston... Just drive by and ignore it. In the end, it's just a banner. It is rather 'silly' of you to do all of this over a banner. You lose nothing but your own energy complaining about a banner that does not affect you.

One kid might see this banner driving by however, and feel seen and safe. That is why they are up, and that is why I am in 100% support that they stay for the month. I have many friends from the city who are constantly amazed on how progressive our tiny community is, and all we do for Pride. Pride is about Love. Harriston should be about Love, and not all this hate I keep seeing on very public misinformed facebook posts.

If the individuals opposing these neutral spaces purely think this is about 'saving the children' from 'sexual exploitation' They have no research done on what Pride truly is or means. This is about being seen and that 'love is love' It has nothing to do with sex.

Harriston already is years ahead with these banners, and I say they stay up. If town members don't like it, they can drive on by and worry themselves with something other than a banner flowing in the wind. These are for the people who need to be safe, seen and unafraid to be themselves.

Sincerely,

Jacob Bieman

**From:** [Janna Anger](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** The Importance of Minto Pride  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 10:15:10 PM

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Dear Council Members,

As our community continues to navigate through the complexities of our modern world, it becomes increasingly evident that our unity and support for one another are paramount. In light of this, I am writing to remind you of the significance of Minto Pride and to urge your unwavering support for the LGBTQ+ community.

Now, more than ever, our society is facing challenges that threaten to divide us. Hate and discrimination still rear their ugly heads, casting shadows of fear and insecurity among our friends, family, and neighbours. In such turbulent times, it is imperative that we stand together in solidarity, affirming our commitment to equality, acceptance, and love.

Minto Pride serves as a beacon of hope and inclusivity within our community. It provides a platform for LGBTQ+ individuals to celebrate their identities proudly, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. As elected representatives entrusted with the well-being of all our constituents, it is our duty to ensure that every member of our community feels valued, respected, and supported.

By actively endorsing Minto Pride and championing the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, we send a clear message that discrimination and prejudice have no place in our town. We demonstrate our dedication to building a more inclusive and compassionate society, where diversity is not only celebrated but embraced wholeheartedly.

Our community must strive for improvement, and our dedication to Minto Pride and the LGBTQ+ community serves as a crucial step towards positive transformation. In Minto, the prevailing sentiment should embody the notion that "EVERY family belongs."

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Janna Anger

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

It makes persecuted / possibly persecuted people on LGBTQ+ spectrum safe.

I feel proud Minto has displayed flags for so many years.

THANK YOU,

NAME: Jenni TOWN: Palmerton

Linthorst

Jessica and Micol Cottrell

[REDACTED]  
Harriston, Ontario N0G 1Z0

June 11, 2024

Town of Minto  
5941 Highway 89  
Harriston, Ontario N0G 1Z0

To the members of Council of the Town of Minto,

We are writing to vocalize our support for the local organization Minto Pride and the fabulous work they have been doing in our community. We respect the initiatives and events that they have started including Pride in the Park. The Pride banners, the rainbow walkway, and lovely rainbow fabric wrapped around the poles in our downtowns have provided a sign of welcome to the thousands who drive through Minto daily. We are thrilled that the Town of Minto chooses to fly the Pride flag in front of its offices as a sign of respect and support.

Minto Pride has worked hard over the years to help make our small community a welcoming space for all people including those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. As those who have friends, colleagues, loved ones, and family members who are part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, we hope that they will feel welcome in Minto thanks to the work that Minto Pride has done. It is our hope that the Council continues to support this important work and shows that Minto is a place where ALL families belong.

Sincerely,

Jessica and Micol Cottrell



**From:** [Jill McTaggart](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** neutrality delegation rebuttal  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 9:42:33 PM

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Hi my name is Jill McTaggart I am a resident of Minto, I've recently learned of the neutrality delegation and their desire to have all public property banners and non government flags removed. I would like to express my strong disagreement with their stance that these banners and flags cause division within the community. I think we all know what flags this delegation is referring to, I drive by two different municipal buildings on my way to work everyday. The only other flag I've seen raised besides the pride flag was an Olympic one the last time the games were on. This guise of neutrality is a false front to target a group of people in our community who have tried to create safer places and visibility for themselves. I would also like to point out how silly this proposal is on premise, because if this bylaw becomes put into action it could then also be used to eliminate the banners each town hangs on lamp poles honouring our veterans every November. It could lead to a rabbit hole of bylaw frustrations for multiple groups, groups who we single out and celebrate each and every year without exception. If we are going to ban decorations highlighting or singling out one group this could have many unfortunate ripple effects for the community. I would like to once again state my vehement disagreement with the neutrality delegation and its intentions.

Thank you for your time and consideration  
Jill McTaggart

**From:** [Julie Webster](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Pride  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 11:41:38 AM

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Dear Town council,

I am writing this email in disbelief that so many people are petitioning the pride banners in our downtown core. This symbolizes inclusion of all people regardless of there sexual orientation. It symbolizes our community is supportive of all people and acknowledge everyone is unique. It gives the town of Minto a positive reputation and makes our town beautiful and can fuel our economy. I am a proud supporter of Pride and will continue to advocate for diversity and inclusion.

Sincerely,

Julie Webster

Sent from my Galaxy

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

I am teaching my children to love and accept all humans. This is easier to do with public displays. I am also trying to live my most authentic life which is easier to do when I feel safe in my town. Please add more!

THANK YOU,

NAME: Laine Y Fernley TOWN: Mount Forest

June 11, 2024

Dear Mayor

Township of Minto Council Members,

I found the following quote from the Minto Pride Committee and honestly, I didn't have to look too hard



This message suggests that Minto Pride encourages inclusion, and increases visibility, of the LGBTQ2S+ community in the Town of Minto, while promoting education on the diversity of gender, sex and sexual identity.

But if I approach this from my perspective, it is me who now feels excluded. Why? Because the message being circulated within the Township (and now to similar groups throughout Ontario too) plus the recent event at the Park are disruptive to the social fabric and our way of life, and ironically, disconnecting the good people of this community.

Why don't we have a truly inclusive Committee wherein the disabled and persons with special needs feel included? Or seniors? Or maybe those religious people who attend church on Sundays?

You see – by excluding some, and privileging others, Minto Council has created division in a community that has never known division.

Let me be clear – I want to advocate for every citizen to be successful.

The other point that is missing here are the business owners who invest in their storefronts and signs so they can effectively attract customers and clientele. When the Township puts up their banners, I no longer see those businesses who continue to be the economic hub of our main streets.

The bottom line?

We are already diverse! So please start recognizing that we all want to live here .. in peace, enjoying the day to day, without some lower level of government messing things up. Thank you,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laura Park".

**From:** [Lindsay Cowan](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 7:11:37 PM

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To whom it may concern,

Please accept this letter showing my full support of the Minto Pride Committee and their presence in our community. I feel Minto is one of the most diverse, inclusive and forward-thinking municipalities in our area. Friends and colleagues have often shared their admiration for the way Minto supports everyone with no bias. I am so proud to call Minto my home and encourage anyone to move to our beautiful township. The most amazing part of our diverse community is that residents in our town can feel safe, supported, valued, and have a sense of belonging. I attended the Minto Pride in the Park event over the weekend to show my neighbors my Allyship. I like knowing that my friends and family are loved and supported by a large community of kind people. At this event I witnessed joy, happiness, inclusion, bravery, support & felt no sense of judgement to or from any of the attendees. I think these experiences are so important, they give us the opportunity to learn and listen.

I feel removing inclusive banners, signs & crosswalk would be a very large step backwards in our forward thinking community. I may never fully understand the true impact these displayed symbols have on members of our community but I can only imagine the devastating impact it would have if they were removed. I understand it is difficult for some Minto residents to challenge their own biases, it's an uncomfortable thing to do, but when you take the opportunity to listen and understand another person's life and perspective it creates an invitation for growth and learning. I would encourage anyone feeling uneasy or uncomfortable to simply put their guard down and listen. Wouldn't it be more satisfying to positively impact others lives, rather than create an environment where some people don't feel welcome or that they even belong? I believe it's important that everyone is heard, and all voices are valued, but only when the conversation is respectful and everyone has a chance to share.

I know there will be an influx of letters sent to you, but I couldn't sit back and 'hope' there were enough being shared in support of the Pride Committee and their efforts. I have friends and family who would be directly affected by the removal of these symbols within our community, it breaks my heart to think about the possible negative impact it would cause to the community as a whole.

Thank you for listening,

Lindsay Cowan

**From:** [Lisa Dobson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Town Banners  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 5:19:17 PM

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Good afternoon,

I am writing in support of the Pride Banners as well as other banners and decorations that would be put up throughout the year in Town to celebrate an inclusive holiday and awareness calendar in Minto. These occasions allow our town and its members to learn and grow together, it also promotes the diversity of our town which will hopefully continue to attract new people that are looking to move to Minto.

This past week there have been comments on Facebook that put forth unfounded judgmental and discriminatory comments/speech on marginalized members of our community. These individuals also suggested taking punitive action against businesses that support our inclusive town activities. Any hate-speech directed towards residents of Minto should be reported to the authorities.

We should continue making strides in being a town who celebrates all its individuals, which will allow Minto to continue to prosper and will show how we are living our town motto

**“Where Your Family Belongs.”**

Thank you,  
Lisa Dobson

DEAR TOWN OF MINTO COUNCILORS,

I'M WRITING TODAY IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PRIDE THAT THE MINTO PRIDE COMMITTEE HAS CREATED IN OUR 3 TOWN CENTRES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE...

everyone in our community deserves to feel welcomed & accepted. I have personally seen ~~the~~ how the Minto Pride committee has impacted the youth in our community & allowed them to be their true selves. I stand with Minto Pride & all the amazing, important work they do.

THANK YOU,

NAME: Mackenzie Pinham TOWN: Palmerston



Dear Minto Council Members,

Working in Minto it is such a joy to see the support for 2SLGBTQIA+ folks by way of Pride decorations and flags in the month of June. Added wonderment for the crosswalk in Harriston that stays prideful all year round and brings a smile to my face whenever I drive by.

Queer people live in small towns too, and visibility matters. Having tangible, visible, celebratory reminders that all families belong in Minto creates a sliver of safety in a world where so much homophobic and transphobic hate persists. Agreeing to remove Pride decorations allows for that hate to grow more comfortable here, and where hate festers violence becomes normalized.

Pride is about resistance, liberation, belonging, and celebration. Not acquiescing to hate and continuing to hang Pride flags and decorations is a wonderful act of peaceful resistance and is in keeping with both the spirit of Pride and the spirit of Minto communities.

I truly hope you will stay steadfast in your allyship and commitment to all families feeling that sense of belonging in Minto. I want to continue to be proud of this community and continue to feel the joy of acceptance when I see rainbows hanging in June.

Sincerely,  
Mary-Grace Falvo

June 11, 2024

Dear Mayor and Minto Council,

Re: Neutrality

Please add this correspondence to the list of messages and letters received on the subject of neutral spaces in Minto Township, particularly when other choices require the use of public funds.

At the last Council meeting, considerable time was spent on the meaning of neutral. Lots of discussion that neutral means black and white. Rather than rehash that same dialogue, here is an easy definition.

Consider the plain meaning of neutral. You can also use a dictionary.

While there are nuances with some words, neutrality is not one of these words.

Therefore, the gist of neutral is "without bias".

Certainly, easy to say but very hard to do, which makes my life easier and yours much more difficult.

Remember, whatever decisions are made, I will be watching 😊

Sincerely,

*Roger Hnatuk*

**From:** [Ron McTaggart](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** "neutrality delegation" response letter  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 8:39:02 PM

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Hello my name is Ron McTaggart I am a resident of Minto, my wife Heather and I were also the owners of Foodland in Palmerston for 10 years, we've recently retired but are still deeply invested in the growth and prosperity of the community. A recent delegation concerning public neutrality and removal of all public space banners, flags etc has been brought to my attention, I would like to express my concern with this proposal. While I can understand their intention to have neutral spaces I disagree with their statement that the banners across town poles cause division. Over 10 years I've seen that community grow and strengthen because of the new and different people who've been inspired to get involved, the creation of new events that bring people together and out of the house to meet their neighbours.

As well if we are to create a bylaw banning all public banners in favour of any one group where are we to draw the line? I support the hanging of the veteran banners in November, but am not a veteran. I support the hanging of the lights on trees in the park in December but am not a devout Christian, and while they aren't called Christmas lights I think we all know lights on trees have a strong connection to the religious holiday season. I equally enjoy the rainbow banners on the poles, they are simply a delightful decoration to see in the summer. I think each of these events and decorations serves an important purpose in the community, they remind us to be considerate of community groups and members we might not interact with on a daily basis.

All these different groups creating and organizing events for the community to enjoy brings people together, it does not divide them.

Thank you for your time  
Have a really great day  
Ron & Heather McTaggart

**From:** [Sadie-Lyn Bieman](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Positive Comments on Town of Minto Pride Decorations  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 12:10:01 PM

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As a lifelong resident of the Town of Minto who is a proud member of the 2SLGBTQ+ Community, I stand strongly in support of the Town of Minto being unafraid to show their support for the queer community and staying firm in their commitment to making Minto a safe space.

Every year I see the pride banners go up in town, I am filled with so much joy that is hard to explain. It is hard growing up queer in a small conservative town and feeling like you will only truly be accepted and embraced when you go off to college/university. Through the simple act of putting up pride banners clearly in the downtown areas and painting a rainbow crosswalk, I and so many queer residents feel like the town we grew up in cares about us and that we don't need to be afraid to be ourselves.

I've seen how this town has changed to be a more welcoming place and it's absolutely beautiful to see. Unfortunately, as queer people become more visible and support increases, the bigoted people in this community also become more visible as their disapproval gets louder. We're in a delicate time in our community and now is the time for the Town of Minto to triple down on its support of the queer community and continue to celebrate the people in this Town who have struggled with their identities and felt like no one in their small town would care and love them instead of letting the loud minority, who lose nothing by letting queer people exist, spread their homophobic rhetoric.

I love the Town of Minto and I love calling this community my home, but this Town can only truly be a safe space for queer residents if the Council stands firm in their support for the 2SLGBTQ+ Community and not be afraid to show that support.

Thanks for your consideration, and letting my voice be heard lest I become invisible in this town.

Sadie-Lyn Bieman

"The Delegation" has had their say. Let's show Minto what Diversity, Equity & Inclusion means to the rest of Minto. We are proud to be living in this great community of Minto!!

We have elected council members as our voices of the community to make hard decisions many times. The banner/flag policy has created a hot debate indeed. A small group of Minto residents are trying to set a policy based on their beliefs of 'neutrality'. 900 signatures have voiced an opinion however that they are a very small per centage of Minto residents. If say 2500 residents had signed the petition, then that would have provided more merit to their cause. However, that isn't the case in this instance.

The benefit of all this action, will provide Minto's policy makers having more thought provoking & distinctive language that will encompass respect for all groups & residents.

It would be interesting to know how many of the "delegation" joined the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee???

<https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.town.minto.on.ca%2Fnews%2F2024%2Fjoin-the-diversity-equity-and-inclusi&data=05%7C02%7Cannilene%40town.minto.on.ca%7C284b9a72248146983f3208dc8a212ab6%7Ca63fda7a29ae4b3eb07d4e5ff4c3a891%7C0%7C0%7C638537122269249668%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ij1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=50WqDbRE8c577W72B5x5UBw7t5ekaWzWoVpBheDnTmo%3D&reserved=0>

on-committee

I would hesitate to say that none of them. If they would consider joining, they just might realize the value of D.E.I. and the value of the banner/flag policy.

Last week's Wellington Advertiser Community News had photos/write-up of Arthur lamp posts sporting flags/banners of Pride & local history. A community literally a few km away from Minto!

Best regards,

Warren Grein  
Proud Minto resident

**From:** [Wayne Baker](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Keep it neutral  
**Date:** June 11, 2024 8:18:09 AM

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Madame,

I understand the Minto council is deliberating on June 12 with regards to the appropriateness of promoting symbols of deviant sexual behaviour (ie "rainbow flags, rainbow crosswalks) on publicly owned property.

I am writing to advise my opposition to such behaviour and resulting blatant disrespect of taxpayers resources.

If the municipality chooses to allow this disrespect to continue, it will establish a precedent, and will have virtually no recourse to prevent the display of every bit as distasteful symbols such as the Duke Flag, or the Blood Drop Cross, or the Sickle and Hammer, or even the Swastika.

The municipality needs to stay in its lane and not deviate from that lane. Look after roads and infrastructure, and maintain the standards of peace order and good government, which includes limiting the display of symbols to our National Flag, our Provincial Flag, and the Municipal Flag.

I would like to end by quoting Voltaire "Those who can make you believe absurdities will make you commit atrocities". I pray the absurdities are nipped in the butt, so the atrocities cannot take root.

Sincerely and Humbly submitted,  
Wayne Baker

Dear Mayor Turton, Deputy Mayor Anderson, and Councillors of the Town of Minto,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for your celebration and support of Pride Month in the Town of Minto. As someone who grew up in the area during the 1990s and 2000s, I experienced firsthand the challenges of being a queer individual in a time and place where it did not feel safe to come out and express my true self.

It fills me with immense pride and joy to see my hometown now fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Your public endorsement and celebration of Pride Month send a powerful message of acceptance and love, especially during a time in Canada when there is an alarming rise in hate and discrimination against our trans members.

Although I no longer reside in the area, my family does, and knowing that they are part of such a progressive and caring community gives me great comfort. Your efforts are not only commendable but also lifesaving. By standing up for the queer community, you are making a tangible difference in the lives of individuals who, like me, may have once felt isolated and afraid.

Thank you for your unwavering support and for creating a community where diversity is celebrated. Your actions are truly making a positive impact, and I hope you continue this important work. Please know that your commitment to inclusivity and acceptance is deeply appreciated by many, both near and far.

With sincere gratitude,

Ben Hartung

**From:** [Colleen](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Inclusion  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 4:10:39 PM

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I support human rights and inclusion.

Colleen Fleming



**From:** [David Proulx](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Response to Petition  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 9:01:08 AM

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Dear Minto Town Council,

I am writing in response to the recent petition and discussion on the matter of “neutral public spaces”.

First, I must take issue with the evasive & euphemistic language employed in the petition. The veil of “neutrality” seems intended to distract from the true intent (which is the removal of any visible civic support for the LGBTQ+ community) and make an otherwise hurtful and divisive topic seem more benign to a broader swath of the community. This is deceptive practice, and does not contribute to honest or constructive public discourse.

Secondly, I will share my support for those members of council and the broader community who have spoken out in favour of maintaining the rainbow banners, etc. in public spaces. Minto is made a stronger and more dynamic community by publicly showing acceptance of all residents and visitors, irrespective of their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

Thank you,  
David Proulx  
Minto Resident

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Neutral spaces  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 11:45:56 AM

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Hi Annilene,

Please find below a copy of the email I sent to Mayor Turton. I would appreciate it if you would include it with the letters you have received regarding the neutral spaces petition.

Thank you

Heather Day

Sent from my Galaxy

----- Original message -----

**From:** Heather Day [REDACTED]  
**Date:** 2024-06-11 7:14 a.m. (GMT-05:00)  
**To:** dturton@town.minto.on.ca [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Neutral spaces

Dear Mr. Mayor,

I am writing to you with regards to the Neutral Spaces petition recently submitted to council. I urge you Mr Mayor to treat this petition with the contempt it deserves.

When confronted with things that I am struggling to understand I often turn to the definitions from Oxford Languages. The first definition was "having no strongly marked or positive characteristics or features." Well that certainly doesn't sound like something we should support! The Town of Minto has so many positive characteristics it would be difficult to list them all. From our Service Clubs and fraternal organizations to our minor sports and churches the list of good things happening in Minto go on and on! So I kept reading.

The second definition I found was "not helping or supporting either side in a conflict, [disagreement](#), etc.; impartial." This perhaps is a little closer to what the petition was striving for but still a concept I just can't get behind. If we apply this definition of the term we accept that our community will not support us in our good works, or worse yet will turn a blind eye to our marginalized citizens in order to maintain neutrality. I struggle to see how we can take this stance and still call the Town of Minto a place where your family belongs. So I kept reading.

The third definition I found was "a [disengaged](#) position of gears in which the engine is [disconnected](#) from the driven parts" Surely this cannot be what our community needs? To coast along, disengaged and disconnected? Edmund Burke wrote "the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing" so I definitely can't support this definition of neutral as it applies in these circumstances.

So having failed to find a definition of Neutral that I could work with I concluded that perhaps the term also didn't mean what 900 members of our community thought it meant when they signed their petition. Maybe they didn't realise that what they were actually saying was there is no room in the Town of Minto for celebration. I urge you Mr Mayor to continue to celebrate our service clubs and all the good work they do, our Legion members for their service & sacrifice, and our small business and volunteers for their contributions to our communities! If flying a pride flag helps just one resident of the town of Minto feel included and safe in our community, and if a beautiful brightly coloured crosswalk saves just one child's life then I think the controversy will have all been worth while.

Benjamin Franklin, when discussing the wages of a Mason said "The wages of a Mason are in the dealings with one another; sympathy begets sympathy, kindness begets kindness, helpfulness begets helpfulness..." I'm not interested in neutral spaces in my community. I am invested in building a community where we approach every interaction with the intention of being sympathetic, kind & helpful.

Cordially,  
Heather Day

**From:** Jen Fenton [REDACTED]  
**To:** Annilene McRobb  
**Subject:** Pride Matters Here  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 7:54:00 AM

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Good afternoon -

I am writing to voice my support for any and all examples of Pride within the Town of Minto. I do not live in the community, but have spent my working life of 22 years here as a teacher at Norwell DSS.

I help lead our Social Equity student group here at Norwell, as well as teaching two different Equity classes in our Social Science department. I see first-hand how important ideas of tolerance and acceptance are. If we don't see these ideas echoed outside of the school and my classroom, in the wider world, they are not as impactful. If the lessons that I teach about the struggle for human rights are not exemplified outside of my room, I feel as though students don't understand those lessons as well. However, when I can use real-world applications and examples of social equity right on their doorstep, it makes the learning authentic, and they are able to understand concepts much more easily.

My Grade 12 Equity and Social Justice class recently helped design and implement a Pride Afternoon, where we welcomed our 2SLGTBQIA+ Grade 6, 7 and 8 future students to Norwell. What happens when those young students don't see themselves represented in high school? Or in their community? They become statistics, and we know that the 2SLGBTQIA+ community has higher rates of bullying, self-harm and suicide.

I have made it my life's work to make sure that kids feel like they belong here, and I can use all the help I can get.

Thank you for your time -

Jen Fenton (she/her/hers)

[REDACTED]

**From:** [Jennifer Frayne](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Letter to Council  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 12:12:07 PM

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**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of The Town of Minto. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and/or know the contents to be safe.

Dear Minto Council Members,

I am writing to thank you for your commitment to fostering inclusivity in Minto. Pride in the Park, the downtown pole decorations and banners, the rainbow crosswalk and the flying of the inclusive pride flag are all important demonstrations that the town of Minto strives to be an inclusive community where all families and individuals are welcome. Equal rights and respect for all is not an issue that should be debatable or a matter of opinion. In the face of growing sentiments of homophobia in the community, it is imperative that Minto continue their strong commitment to affirming and standing in solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community, which is a position supported by the Canadian Human Rights commission.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Frayne  
Palmerston

June 11/24

Dear Mayor Turton and Council Members of the Town Of Minto;

After having taken some time to carefully weigh and consider the issue addressed in this letter I feel compelled to share my thoughts with you all and I appreciate your time and patience while I do so. To begin, I feel as though the Town Council has allowed one of the most divisive symbols to be exhibited in the streets of Minto. It should be evident to you by now that neutrality is a far better position to take in the interest of creating unity and harmony among the residents of our beloved Town. The level of acrimony and division over this issue has spilled over on all sides, making it an 'us against them' issue. While this may not be intentional on your part, it is certainly attributed to your decisions regarding the pride flags and crosswalk symbols currently displayed. My appeal to you is to follow the instincts of those who would advocate for neutrality so that this ceases to be such a divisive issue in our community. There exists strong convictions on both sides of this issue and people have the right to hold those convictions, therefore in order that everyone can continue to live in this town without harbouring resentment for those who promote the pride movement and those who are deeply opposed while steadfastly promoting traditional views of morality I appeal to your good sense to create a neutral environment, where one groups interests are not so highly and visibly promoted in the Town Of Minto.

I would add that a number of towns ( Walkerton, Hanover, Mildmay, Listowel, Mount Forest) have the good sense not to promote something as divisive as this. Perhaps it's time that Minto joins their good judgment. It is worth noting that within one year of displaying these symbols for the month of June the Council has now agreed that they should be displayed all Summer. Where does the community get a say in all this? I suppose that some nine hundred or more have spoken, I trust not on deaf ears. Although I've not counted them a small percentage of residents who feel strongly about pride have lawn signs available to them and use them. Why not leave it at that level. Each household can decide for themselves what they want to promote.

Furthermore, one of the arguments put forth by a Council member (as published in the Wellington Advertiser) was that Christmas decorations would not be able to be displayed if neutrality is adopted. This is a straw man argument... In the 25

years that I have lived in Minto I cannot recall any decorations that the Town has displayed that reflect a 'Christian' theme. They have all been 'neutralized' and are simply seasonal decorations with no reference to the birth of Christ. So it seems you have a double standard right out of the gate and pardon me for pointing out the hypocrisy.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these thoughts.

Yours Very Truly;

John Finochio



Harriston, ON

N0G1Z0

Dear Annilene,

Would you please add us to your list of Pride supporters.

A few years back when the, "Minto: Where Your Pride Belongs", lawn signs were created, I was delighted. Wow...an open-minded community that accepts all different kinds of people! I was proud to be part of a community blatantly broadcasting that everyone belongs.

Naturally I was disappointed the other year when the pride banners were torn down, however I chalked that up to a few ignorant teens just playing a prank. Imagine my shock this year when I learned about a petition written by an adult that was circulating, requesting the removal of all pride (and other) symbols on town property.

It baffles me in this day and age that this is still an issue.

You can be a heterosexual and still support Pride. You are supporting the acceptance of people who are different from you. People who often feel ashamed or deviant because of the narrow-mindedness of others. It might shock the community to learn how many people secretly identify as something other than heterosexual. I have had numerous friends/acquaintances come out to me in the past, because I attempt to create a safe space and share my views openly. I feel privileged to have learned of their stories first-hand and become aware of the daily struggle to exist outside of what society calls "normal." I heard of some friends developing eating disorders or other self-harming behaviours, people being shunned/ridiculed/looked down upon and being made to feel "less" than others because of who they inherently are.

Yes, you might feel uncomfortable at big city Pride parades or watching people dress in drag. That's okay... you do not have to attend these events to still support the message that everyone is accepted.

Please don't remove the Pride symbols from public properties. They shine as a beacon for those who feel marginalized in society, and remind them that in Minto, you truly belong!

Sincerely,

Joy (& Paul) Murray

PS. I usually tend to go with the flow and don't have the extra time to write in and comment/complain (running a business, working a job, raising a family and being involved in two major theatre productions this spring doesn't leave much left over), however I feel that this issue is vitally important to our community and so made a conscious effort to share my thoughts.

**Joy Murray**



**From:** [Kimberley Koeslag](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Importance of Pride  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 8:49:26 AM  
**Attachments:** [IMG\\_2381.PNG](#)

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Annilene,

As both a member of the community of Minto, and a Christian, I believe it is important to have symbols of Pride demonstrated throughout our town. I have had friends state the importance of Pride, particularly in small communities, as it helped to combat their previous thoughts of worthlessness and suicide. Unfortunately I think many of us have friends in such situations. I'm sure you will receive many such letters.

What I want to bring to light today is that many in our community that are opposed to Pride symbols are not representative of those they pretend to be, and are misunderstanding the ideals they push forward. Unfortunately some of the people in opposition to Pride are from my church (and I'm sure other churches in the area), but our church does not agree with them, and has not allowed them to associate their values with that of the church. This is obviously a topic with strong feelings on both sides and everywhere in between, and I have been passionately involved in my church in this regard. Again, unfortunately the people opposed were not present at a church meeting regarding sexuality, which reviewed in great detail why we are to love and embrace ALL people and those of different sexualities and identities are of just as much value as anyone. Our pastor was extremely articulate, and unfortunately not everyone in the church exposed themselves to what should be this understanding.

It is much more complicated than that, but I ultimately wish to share that those in opposition to Pride in the community of Minto are not representative of the groups they claim to be. Not only are they destroying our community, but the church community, and depriving many of a relationship with God by portraying an inaccurate view, and they should not be supported.

Everyone deserves to be loved, welcomed, safe and as a town we need to represent that fully.

Thank you for your time,

Kim Koeslag



# SCRIPTURE

**Romans 8:1**

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

**Romans 13:10**

Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.



June 12, 2024

The Honourable Mayor Dave Turon & Town Council Members  
Town of Minto  
5941 Highway 89  
Harriston, ON N0G 1Z0

To the Honourable Mayor and Members of Council,

I am writing to Town of Minto council members on the petition proposing the removal of pride flags from municipal properties in favour of 'neutrality'. My partner Jake Rice and I want to offer our full support to the Minto Pride Committee in their efforts to preserve the presence of the Pride flag.

We are annual visitors to the area for the Mount Forest Fireworks festival. It's one of our favourite festivals to attend each year and something for the whole region to take pride in as a top 100 festival in Ontario!

You may recognize us from the festival if you imagine us at 10 feet tall, delighting crowds and dancing on our stilts. We believe that visiting the area each year and being part of the festival has in some way contributed to it becoming both a large tourism draw and a beloved community event for Mount Forest and the surrounding communities.

If you'll allow me, I'd like to share a brief story about the importance of visibility.

Early in my career, as I was growing my business, I had the opportunity to hire more performers, including female identifying Stilt performers. While performing alongside a female performer, I heard a young girl say to her mother "I didn't know girls could walk on stilts too!" This young attendee's first time seeing a female performer on stilts opened her eyes to the possibility that she too could "walk tall".

I was born and raised in a rural Ontario community much like Minto. It was a small farm community. Growing up, I always knew who I was. However, I didn't see anyone around me who was Gay or imagined it could be a possibility. That caused me to carry a great deal of shame and fear.

Jake and I are not just performing partners, we are partners in real life too. I was the first OUT 2SLGBTQIA+ performer on North America's busker festival circuit. And, each year, we look forward to being part of community celebrations like the Fireworks festival.

When we travel to a new town and see a Pride flag, it's more than a symbol acknowledging Pride month. For us, it's a safety beacon letting us know we do not need to hide who we are to protect our safety. We know we're welcome and don't have to fear.

When we see the Pride flag in our home community, we see it as an acknowledgement of the history of harm done to 2SLGBTQIA+ persons. Whether it was the criminalization of both our identities and relationships until the 1960's, or the history of violence as people were dragged into the streets and beaten by police only steps from where we live now in Toronto as recently as the 1980's; a time many of us were alive for. It has only been since 2005 that we would have the ability to get married in Canada. Acknowledging Pride month and raising the progress Pride flag is a public commitment to repairing that harm and a commitment to pursue to equity and safety these people deserve in their daily lives.

Make no mistake, we know our community members are still under attack. We know that an attempt to remove these symbols is not an attempt for "neutrality"; it is an attempt at erasure. It seeks to remove visibility from the community and suppress our community members back into hiding. It is simply an act of violence.

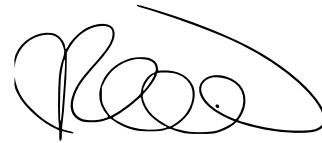
Symbols have power. I strongly caution Council that while the presence of a symbol speaks loudly, its removal speaks much louder. A faith leader knows that any campaign to remove another place of worship from their community for having different beliefs is an attack on their own religious freedoms and ability to gather. The removal of any symbol which represents an equity-deserving group in your community undermines everyone's freedoms.

My partner and I are grateful to be visit and be part of celebrating your beautiful region and the warm, welcoming community every year! We strongly believe that the considered, collective voice of Minto will affirm standing with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

In the spirit of community,



**Kyle Sipkens**



**Jake Rice**

Toronto, ON M4X 1L2

**From:** [lindarowe](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Minto Pride Displays  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 5:37:12 PM

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Dear Town of Minto Councillors:

I'm writing today in support of the public displays of Pride that the Minto Pride Committee has created in our 3 town centres. It's important to me because, over the past 50+ years I have lived in Palmerston. I know first hand how hurtful the intolerance of some people in this community can be.

However, my heart has ached more for the young people here (and in many places in our country, and around the world) who have endured countless incidences of harassment, bullying, and violence from their peers, bosses, and sometimes family members, just for being who they are.

Although I'd like to think things have improved, and in some ways they have, there is still a long way to go. For instance, I just read that some of the rainbow-wrapped poles in Palmerston were vandalized recently. I applaud the Pride Committee for the work they are doing to make life better for members of the LGBTQ2S+ community living in Minto. The public displays in our towns, and the Pride in the Park event, send a very positive message of love and acceptance to people who, for too long, have been getting nothing but negative messages. Besides, seeing all the multi-coloured flags, banners, etc. should be uplifting. After all, who doesn't love rainbows?

I understand there was a petition put forth, apparently wanting to get rid of the rainbow crosswalk in Harriston (although I've heard that some of the people who signed it were misled into doing so). Apparently, the person who constructed the petition suggests we should stay neutral rather than celebrate one special group. Does being neutral mean that we should stand idly by when any group in our community is being marginalized, harassed, or bullied? Over the past decade or so, Minto has become a far more diverse community than when I moved here. Perhaps instead of remaining neutral, we should consider events which celebrate other groups who make up our diverse culture. Just a thought.

Sincerely,  
Linda Rowe (Palmerston)

**From:** [Marilyn VanderPloeg](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Neutral Spaces  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 4:50:52 PM

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I have been reading the media reports on this ongoing discussion.

I was not aware of the original petition, however, I did want to indicate my support for this suggestion.

I feel that the best way to be inclusive of everyone is not to promote any one group.

Sincerely,

Marilyn VanderPloeg

**From:** [Matt Webster](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Flag and Banner guidelines discussion.  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 11:39:37 AM

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To: Town of Minto Council.

Re: Upcoming Banner and Flag Guidelines discussion.

I have been watching the past three council meeting delegation presentations and question periods with concern over requested changes to the towns existing guidelines and stance from some residents.

My family and I have attended Pride in the Park since it began here and always find it to be a joyful and welcoming celebration of accepting everyone for who they are. The Character, Conduct, and Contribution of the Pride Committee and those they advocate for to our overall community has been exemplary. I have also been pleased to see the attendance of our federal, provincial and town elected officials.

I hope that we can continue to support all segments of our community and the symbols they choose to share, our differences make us stronger as a whole.

Sincerely,

Matt Webster D.C., Palmerston ON

June 12, 2024

Town of Minto Council  
5941 Highway 89  
Harriston, ON  
N0G 1Z0

Attention: Anneline McRobb, Clerk [annilene@town.minto.on.ca](mailto:annilene@town.minto.on.ca)

Dear Council

I would like to express my appreciation and enthusiastic support for everything the Town of Minto, the council and staff have been doing to create a more welcoming and inclusive community in our town, particularly as regards the Pride banners and decorations in the downtown areas, as well as the work of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee and Minto Pride.

It is great to see that steps are being taken to fulfill the promise of the town motto and make Minto a place where all families can find a sense of belonging. Minto has become a leader in the region for this type of work, and it makes me proud to be a life-long resident of the community. It can be disappointing to see loud voices opposing efforts to make sure that members of minority groups feel at home in our shared community, and I would like to be part of the effort to reassure council that those voices are not representative of the community at large.

I, for one, am very glad to see the Minto Council standing up for the ideals of inclusivity and am continually impressed by the efforts of the town staff to make sure we are living up to those ideals everyday. Banners may seem like a small matter to some, but visible signs of inclusivity are a vital part of making sure all members of our community know that intolerance and hatred will not be tolerated and are certainly not welcome in our community. I am proud to live in a community that cares about making sure everyone is safe, welcome and included.

Including all voices and experiences in the fabric of our town will only make it stronger, more vibrant and make Minto a better and more interesting place to belong. Hanging pride banners and flags is an excellent way to foster the type of kindness, acceptance and grace that makes a good place to live and a hometown to be proud of.

Thank you,

Megan Raftis



**From:** [REDACTED] [Murray Fleming](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Inclusion  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 4:10:40 PM

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I support human rights and inclusion!!!

Murray Fleming

**From:** [Natasha Grypstra](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Positive Voices of Pride!  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 3:17:37 AM

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To whom it may concern, the Pride celebration and representation in small communities like our own can truly mean life or death for some individuals. Having grown up within the Palmerston and Harriston area and being a resident, I have experienced this firsthand. I urge the community to continue to nourish that safe, accepting, and inclusive environment that is desperately required for all LGBTQ+ members of the community.

I was raised in the church at [REDACTED] Church from the age of 11 to 18. It deeply anguishes my heart to see that homophobic behaviour is still taking place there. Which appears to be occurring more outwardly now than ever. [REDACTED] consistently appears to be a problem within the community with their judgment, homophobia, and cult-like behaviour. As a youth who attended [REDACTED], I feel that I was groomed, manipulated, controlled and shamed from the minute I walked into the door. Numerous inappropriate sexual advances happened towards me from boys and men in the church. I feel as though both of the senior pastors along with many church members failed to protect me as they preferred to blame the victim in every circumstance rather than hold the predators accountable. A place that was supposed to feel safe and accepting only ever made me feel like I was a problem that needed to be "fixed" through shame and prayer.

Unfortunately, I am not the only one this has happened to. I am among countless others who have not yet shared their story. I left [REDACTED] during my time in the internship program because I was not allowed to voice my own opinion, and was not as safe nor as accepted as I once thought I was. At 19 I became pregnant with my son and was "silently shunned" from the church. Years after separating from the church I finally felt safe enough to come out to all of my family and friends. I remember living my life every day in fear at church and wearing a mask pretending to be someone who I wasn't. The Pride Celebrations, various decorations, flags, etc. make individuals like myself feel safe, represented, and accepted within the community. This is a safety resource for many individuals that needs to be kept.

I feel it is unjust for [REDACTED] Church or ANY of its members to have jurisdiction over the lives of others when they are an outwardly misogynistic, homophobic, and unsafe church. Protesting an event that loves individuals for who they are is hypocritical. I urge every individual from protesting to delve a little deeper into Scripture as their ignorance appears to stem from a lack of knowledge of God's word and His teachings. The Lord who I believe in loves all unconditionally and teaches us to not judge. Therefore to be accepting of EVERYONE, without restraints, conditions, or plans of "converting or healing", including those within the LGBTQ+ community. We are to love and accept all people not just those who

fit the cookie-cutter Christian mould and submit their tithes and offerings every Sunday morning at church. (1 John 4:7, Hebrews 12:14, Mathew 7:1-3)

To those in the church who are protesting and feel uncomfortable with the Pride events, flags, and symbols of Pride I highly suggest they look inward at the trauma they have caused so many and how uncomfortable we feel continually working through it on a day-to-day basis. I fear for any LGBTQ+ youth or individuals that step foot into [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], for they will be manipulated and shamed just as myself and many others were. A church that continually puts its youth in danger by not holding members accountable, is not someone who should have any say over events that happen within the community.

Conversion therapy should not be practiced, be it within the church or as a protest against Pride or the symbolism of Pride through various decorations, flags, etc. As a community, we need to stand by those who need our support. We need to show the individuals of the LGBTQ+ community that they are loved, accepted, and welcome NO MATTER WHAT! No person should have to live in shame, or fear, or be made to feel uncomfortable for being who they are.

A big thank you to the town of Minto for always being a great ally and DEI supporter along with all of the hard work involved! It surely does not go unnoticed!

Let those rainbow flags fly!!

Sincerely,

Natasha Grypstra.

**From:** [Noah VanderPloeg](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Neutral Spaces Petition  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 5:47:24 PM

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This is regarding the petition brought forward on neutral spaces.

I was not aware of the petition until after it was brought forward, but would like to support this petition now.

I believe it is in the best interest of respecting everyone in this community.

Thank you.

Noah

June 12/2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am in support of Minto Pride and DEI work, including public decorations.

We must stand up for what is right. Hate has no place in our community.

Sarah Machan

**From:** [Shannon Robinson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Response to the Petition - pls confirm receipt of this email  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 9:07:01 AM

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Dear Minto Council,

This letter is in regards to the petition for “neutral spaces” in our community.

I’m discouraged that it’s come to this, and feel like an education session on what the rainbow flag represents is fitting, particularly after reading that Tom McDonald asked why a municipality would “display sexual messages to the general public”.

In addition to being a longstanding symbol of the fight for human rights and freedoms of the LGBTQ community+, the rainbow flag is a symbol of hope, diversity and inclusion – for everyone. The history of the flag, and the associations of its particular colours, are worth revisiting at this time, as set out in this [New York Times article](#).

- Red = life
- Orange = healing
- Yellow = sunlight
- Green = nature
- Indigo/blue = serenity
- Violet/purple = spirit
- Black/brown = people of colour

This message, and the message of being a welcoming community, for everyone, regardless of who they are, is something we should all be proud of.

Thank you,  
Shannon Robinson  
Minto Resident

June 12, 2024

Mayor Dave Turton, Deputy Mayor Jean Anderson  
Councillor Judy Dirksen, Councillor Ron Elliott  
Councillor Geoff Gunson, Councillor Ed Podniewicz  
Councillor Paul Zimmerman, County Councillor David Anderson  
Town of Minto Council  
Town of Minto  
5941 Highway 89,  
Harriston, ON

Dear Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors,

We are writing you this letter of support today for those within our community that identify as within the 2SLGBTQI+ community. With the recent happenings, negative comments, and vandalism occurring regarding the events, décor, and celebrations associated with Pride month, it only felt right as allies of the 2SLGBTQI+ community to address these happenings. It is disheartening to know that individuals within our community feel the need to segregate, judge, penalize, and harm those within a minority group. Growing up in small communities such as Palmerston, Harriston, Clifford, and/or surrounding areas, they do come with their positives but, negatives as well. As adolescents begin to fall into their pre-teen and teenage years, it is known that what individuals say or do will get around quickly. This was sometimes a lesson that was learnt through harsh manner but, came with the smalltown environment where everyone knows everything and everyone. Although this creates the amazing small-town charm many are drawn to, for others, it creates anxiety, and fear. Knowing you do not fit into the niche or societal norms, especially within an intimate environment such as our small towns, can cause many to feel displaced, scared, and alone. The last thing most people want in our towns is to be centered out or the talk of the town for all to know their business and personal life. It is for this reason along with the possibilities of stigma, shame, unacceptance, and fear of the unknown that those that identify as 2SLGBTQI+ tend to remain silent. With this silence comes a more than four times increased risk of attempting suicide, higher rates of depression, suicidal ideation, and suicidality, and a higher rate of bullying being experienced. These individuals are also at higher likelihood of experiencing violent crime victimization, hate crimes, and inappropriate behaviours while in public settings. With the type of statistical information mentioned above, along with many other worrisome statistics available, it is a wonder as to why individuals within our towns feel the need to further add to these statistics through ignorance, misunderstanding, and overreaction.

As allies of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, it is one of our responsibilities to demonstrate our support and to utilize advocacy. As a family and individuals, we have always been involved in team-based sports where, although individuality mattered, the sense of team and unity always prevailed. This mattered because although at the end of the day, we are individuals within our communities, however, we continue to work towards providing an overall environment and county where all are accepted and welcomed. As a family, we were taught and have always practiced the idea of treating those around you the way you want to be treated and that if something was not directly hurting you or affecting your life, then continue to live your own life. This is an instance where the individuals who feel “attacked” or that “neutral ground” is required, need to learn and practice the above-mentioned characteristics. Where they need to realize, those choosing to celebrate their successes, strive for equality, and desired fairness regarding sexual preference deserve those items. The words being utilized have deeper meaning and to

understand those meanings is ensuring they are being utilized in their correct and intended manner. The word “attacked” is defined as a verb that includes explanations outlining the words forceful, assail, bitter worded, act on injuriously, etc. All the terms related to the word “attacked” are not associated with the events, décor, and celebrations that are occurring around town. Nothing is being forced upon these unsupportive and close-minded individuals, unfriendly words have not been utilized, and nothing has been acted out through injurious means. When it comes to the term “neutral ground”, this was originally a term developed and utilized in situations of war involving land. Considering events, décor, and celebrations are not items relevant or involving acts of war, using words such as “neutral grounds or areas”, would really be considered over the top and extreme. There is much dire problems and situations to be concerned about happening locally, provincially, federally, and internationally. To utilize such language towards a celebration of advancement towards further equality is really a slap in the face to those currently experiencing true acts of war such as third-world countries and those in territorial wars now.

In the simplest of terms, if one does not want to participate within these events, these individuals should feel free to skip them and not attend. The event runs regardless of whether an individual chooses to independently support it or not, therefore, they should find something else to participate within if so desired. If one does not enjoy a rainbow painted sideways due to what it could potentially represent in their own individual perspective, then do not utilize the crosswalk. Live in this small town long enough and you will realize that crosswalks do not always tend to be utilized for their purposes. If a park bench is painted in the 2SLGBTQI+ colours as a means of support, then do not sit on said bench if you are uncomfortable. Rather, bring your own chair to sit in, or utilize one of the other 15+ benches located around our beautiful community. The items being mentioned are those that have been given power and societal meaning by the individuals viewing them and taking them into perspective as negative connotations. If someone is offended by a rainbow-coloured bench as they realize it is regarding 2SLGBTQ+ support, they could, instead, choose to educate their child on that it is simply a fun-coloured bench that represents the rainbow. Individuals are giving the meaning behind these items the power as they are choosing to put their efforts and energy into having issue with the intended meaning and thought of these items. If one were to not tell their child what the colours stand for, the child or children would not be aware of the meaning as they are required to gain this knowledge. If the mayor, deputy mayor, and councillors gave into such demands, they would be seen as furthering the element of power towards those who are attempting to influence or impact the lives of others within society. One’s sexual orientation, gender expression, and/or gender identity and the way in which individual desire to express those, have nothing to do with others. This is simply another quest for those who believe they have more power in society to continue to exercise that power over others who can be seen as vulnerable or weak, specifically those within this minority groups. It is through and because of this type and instance of power demonstration that minorities continue to face prejudices, stigmatization, and remain trapped through marginalization. By providing the opportunity for the 2SLGBTQI+ community to be celebrated and supported, you are continuing to demonstrate that all are welcome and celebrated within our local community. This continues to assist in acceptance, confidence, support, and overall happiness as feeling welcome and support is all anyone truly ever desires and wants.

We ask that you continue to allow the 2SLGBTQI+ community to celebrate their community, continue to demonstrate support through décor and events, and just, at the end of the day, to demonstrate empathy and compassion towards those within their minority community. As individuals who have personal connections to friends, family members, colleagues, players, etc. that identify with this community, acceptance and destigmatization are needed. Being able to truly embody who one is meant to



be and desires to become is all anyone can ever ask for at the end of the day. The 2SLGBTQI+ community has gone through numerous hardships in the last few decades after experiencing Stonewall, conversion therapy camps, inability to be seen as equal as it relates to benefits, marriages, unions, life insurance, etc. stigmatization through misunderstanding and lack of knowledge, lack of acceptance, and even the most recently development of seven countries including Canada JUST banning conversion therapy in December of 2023. We ask that individuals continue to be accepted and celebrated within our community and feel the support they need as small communities are already, as previously stated, both a blessing and a curse depending on individualized experience.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

The Campbells & Farrells

*“Stand up for what is right, even if you are standing alone.”*

**From:** [Trina McEachern](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Response to petition for Neutral space in the Town of Minto  
**Date:** June 12, 2024 4:40:14 PM

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Hello

I have been a resident of Minto for 13 years. It has been a great place to raise my children

I think it is a good thing to continue to allow different groups to decorate and celebrate the events with in our town.

A few years ago as I noticed the decorating for pride and other events I thought it was a wonderful thing to know I lived in a small community that welcomed and showed it support for diversity and people from all walks of life.

Thank you  
Trina McEachern

**From:** [Rachelle Wilson](#)  
**To:** [Annilene McRobb](#)  
**Subject:** Pride  
**Date:** June 13, 2024 11:53:05 AM

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Hi there.

I'd like to apologize for missing the deadline but this has been weighing heavily on me so I'm hoping I can sneak it in.

I grew up in Palmerston, so did several of my friends. I recall several of them leaving town young and heading to the big city.

Almost immediately after their departure, they came out as gay and have gone on to live very successful lives. The unfortunate part of their story was that they had to leave your community in order to feel safe to do so.

I'd like to ask the council members if this is the Minto they want for their children and grandchildren? I can only imagine it is not.

I saw on youtube the very embarrassing moments where residents spoke out against pride flags, suggesting they pushed their political beliefs on everyone. I'm wondering, when we decorate for Christmas every year if we're taking into consideration that we may also be pushing our beliefs on to everyone. Christmas is a religious belief that not everyone in your community adheres to and under the same logic they use to discredit pride, maybe we should remove ALL political/religious signs in general..out of fairness.

Dan Sinclair's speech was disgusting. As someone who has made his living off the backs of your community, I would expect better from him.

Growing up in Palmerston had its' perks, but was also boring at times. A lot of people at my school resorted to drugs and mischief from a lack of things to do. The children in your community will greatly benefit from being able to attend the Pride Events, I'm certain.

Imagine: a whole month of fun things to see and do for kids, in a town that otherwise has very little to offer!

The members against pride said they felt excluded. My last point is that everyone is welcome to celebrate Pride. Pride does not discriminate, unlike some of your community members.

Please continue these festivities, your ongoing support is appreciated by more than not.