

S. M. Wilkins



June 18, 2018

Bernie Corbett
Councillor, Haldimand County
Chair, Police Services Board
Bcorbett@haldimandcounty.on.ca

Dear Bernie Corbett,

As you are aware, I am one of the organizers for the PRIDE Day hosted by PRIDE Haldimand Norfolk held on Saturday, May 26, 2018, in Central Park in Dunnville. The PRIDE Day working group was happy that you were able to attend and extend greetings from the county in the beginning moments of the event. It appeared that it was going to be another extraordinary event for our community.

As you are aware, at approximately 1:30 pm, a group of people proceeded to enter the park from the alleyway in the northwest corner. These people carried 12-foot banners with homophobic messages and were screaming obscenities, using an industrial megaphone. I will refer to this group of people as 'agitators' in the rest of this letter. Within moments the OPP were called because of concern for the safety of both our family and friends and the agitators. One officer arrived quickly followed by several more cars and police officers for a total of what I have been told is 15 police officers. I personally believed that the situation would be resolved and we could get on with our celebration. As you are also aware, this did not happen. After 3 weeks and 2 days when there has been no communication from anyone from Haldimand County and/or the OPP, except what we read in the newspaper. As a result of the lack of communication, I have been left with some personal questions and concerns that I need to address with you in your capacity as Chair of the Police Services Board for Haldimand County and as the councillor for Ward 6, where I reside.

Some background: I had helped pen the letter of April 24, 2018, to Phil Carter, OPP Detachment Commander in Cayuga. Our communications with him in early May was cordial and supportive. The decision not to have uniformed police officers at the event was arrived at after much discussion amongst the members of the working group. The letter to Phil Carter read, in part, "PRIDE HN has made the decision not to have uniformed officers for crowd control in the park. We will have a small group who will undertake this task. Last year, the people who were there protesting were contained in a non-confrontational way. We also knew that should things escalate, officers were in the vicinity." The letter ended by welcoming off-duty (non-uniformed) officers to the event with their families.

My questions:

1. Given that the Detachment Commander received notification from our group and the county, as we had been advised, what notification and/or direction did officers on duty that day receive regarding the Pride event on May 26, 2018? An officer told an organizer that they had not received notification of the event. When advised that the letter to Phil Carter could be shown to them right there and then, the story changed to, "Well, you didn't want us here?"
2. It is my understanding that the OPP officers have received Safer Spaces or Positive Spaces training. Is this correct? If so, how did the training inform the behaviour and conduct of the officers onsite on May 26, 2018?
3. Why would the OPP officers not intervene when it was apparent that the agitators were interfering with our enjoyment of the park? Why were children exposed for 2 hours to the hate mongering and inappropriate language without consequence?
4. Frances Porter and Ken Hancock (PRIDE HN working group members) signed an agreement and obtained a Special Event Permit #06-2018 from the county. The Approved activities included live entertainment, amplified sound, and

provision of food and/or beverages. Why were the agitators allowed to continue with their amplified sound without a permit? Why were the agitators permitted to interrupt the sale of food and beverages by the only 2 vendors that were in the park for that purpose?

5. The group of agitators had an aggressive nature and made repeated attempts to antagonize and provoke the Pride attendees into a physical altercation. Considering this, and given that the County obtained insurance coverage for Commercial General Liability for this event, was the County prepared to handle any bodily injury or property damage that may have occurred?
6. Why did the OPP officers not ask for any identification from the agitators or the attendees at the event when there were obvious abusive altercations, albeit verbal altercations?
7. Why were different officers negotiating with the agitators and various members of the PRIDE Day working group? Why did it take over 1.5 hours for the Staff Sergeant, Belinda Rose, to come to the park when she obviously had the negotiating skills that may have resulted in a better outcome?
8. If it was known to the onsite OPP officers, for example from checking ID, that several of the agitators were citizens of the USA with no Canadian visitor visa or other immigration documents, would it have made any difference as to how the OPP dealt with them?
9. The OPP officers onsite at the park decided not to take any action. Considering this, why did 15 OPP officers remain with their vehicles in the park, socializing, laughing, and smoking cigarettes?
10. At least one of the co-chairs of the PRIDE HN working group is well known to the County staff. When the agitators showed up at the County offices in Caledonia on Monday, May 28, 2018, and behaved in such a way that it was necessary to call the police, why did neither the OPP nor the County advise the PRIDE HN co-chair? If it was threatening to County staff, would it not be threatening to PRIDE Day volunteers?
11. After PRIDE HN volunteer Ken Hancock was attacked in his own home, why did the OPP not advise any of the other organizers? Did they ask Ken if other people might be at risk? Why did the OPP decide within 24 hours that no further action would be taken?
12. How do the OPP respond to community members being emotionally or psychologically injured? Should this type of abuse be reported to the police? Does this change if the police have the perpetrators' names and location?
13. If someone is scared and feeling traumatized from an event, such as that transpired on May 26, is it reasonable to ask the police to come to the person's home so that they can make a complaint about the conduct of the agitators and the nature of the injury suffered?
14. What is the current policy or procedure for an OPP officer taking a complaint?
15. Is it part of OPP procedure for an officer to say to the person making a complaint, "I don't know what I'm doing here. We've got other things to do."
16. What is a reasonable length of time to wait for the County and/or OPP to meet a community group that has been assaulted and injured on County property? Is there any procedure or policy that addresses this? Is it different for a physical assault and injury vs. an emotional one?

I know that other people are asking you some of these questions and I know you may not have all the answers, but I would ask that you respond to me before Friday, June 22, 2018

I want to thank you in advance for your time, energy, and thoughtfulness in addressing my questions and concerns.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Wilkins

CC Phil Carter, OPP detachment Commander, Haldimand
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