

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dear Mayor Bylsma, and Council,

After this meeting, I invite Council and our community to watch a beautiful 47 second video on Facebook from our Mayor addressing our community, posted on April 9th 2020 at 4:06pm. The message is titled: **What is most important to me this [Easter] Weekend**. You'll note that 100% of the feedback was positive. It was shared multiple times, and viewed over 1,200 times. His personal message was welcomed by our community. No special meeting required. He raised a flag that day, metaphorically speaking, to share a part of himself with the community. To share something that has meaning to him. Something he values. Part of his identity, so to speak. It was received and welcomed by the community. No special meeting required. No policies, no procedures, no Clerks or Council discussions. No special meeting required....

Did our Mayor truly raise a flag that day? No not really, however his 47 second message was heard over 1,200 times. He didn't *need* a flag to get the attention of his community, because they were already listening. Without judgement, without protest. Pride Niagara reached out to West Lincoln for support via email on April 23rd 2020, and again on May 18th 2020. Our Mayor recalls seeing those emails in his discussion with Matt Holmes, however as he expresses in the interview, and through his correspondence with our concerned Councillors, he was overloaded by the burden of spam messages, and dealing with an ongoing pandemic. He saw them, but they had slipped through the cracks. Perhaps had our Mayor *flagged* those emails for attention, it would have served as a reminder that there were items needing his review. Not only did those items *need* his review, but in order for them to *have* his review and that of Council, there were *special protocols* in place. In his words to his fellow councillors "Pride Niagara can make the request to West Lincoln and there is a protocol for the process outlined by the CAO". Pride Niagara would need to make their request, again. They would need to "make the request to West Lincoln" this time. If that statement leaves you confused, you are not alone.

The date was missed. Flags were flown all across Niagara, and videos of support were shared and celebrated. Meanwhile, the voices of West Lincoln were silent. We had put our trust that our Mayor and Council would be our voice in times like these, however our voices had slipped through the cracks. A special meeting was requested so that we may be heard, but it was not supported by our Mayor. After all, why should a flag get a special meeting? *Why* was a special meeting required? Council pushed forward on our behalf. Our voices would be heard in a special meeting on June 16th! On June 11th 2020 our Mayor accepted an interview with Matt Holmes from iHeart Radio. An interview where he shared his views and his politics, while representing West Lincoln. Some of our voices were heard and shared, but only those that supported *his* view. Some of our voices, or "chatter" as our Mayor had described it, had also been present in the dialogue that week, but they would not be shared that day. Our voices would have to wait until June 16th at 11am. The interview our Mayor gave where he shared his views and his politics had lasted **29 minutes and 43 seconds**. No special meeting required.

Pride Niagara had made a request on May 18th 2020. A request for a 30 to 60 second video of support and a symbolic raising of the flag. No request had been made to hold up the flag for any given length of time, merely a **30 second video** would suffice. We are now here today at this special meeting, wondering just how *special* our voices really are. For we needed this *special* meeting, or more accurately this *emergency* meeting to flag down our Mayor's, and our Council's attention. That is after all, what flags are for.

So, in the Mayor's words "What are they still fighting for"? We are fighting for a day when acceptance, and equal opportunity to be heard is met with "*no special meeting required...*"

Until then, please continue to leave this item flagged for your attention....

With Kind Regards,

Jennifer Fox

Dear Esteemed Councillors and Mayor,

First of all, I would like to thank you all for your hard work each and every day to make West Lincoln a safe and peaceful community. This is not an easy or light task, especially in the past few months with our province and country in a state of emergency due to Covid-19.

In recent days there has been a heavy push from the community for our municipal halls in West Lincoln to fly a pride flag for the LGBT2QIA+ community. I would like to present several arguments opposed to this.

A flag is the defining symbol of what makes you different from everyone else. Having a national flag is important because this means you are not ruled by any other country. It makes you unique. It means everyone in that country unites under that nation's authority and law.

Canada is a free, equal, and diverse society. This is what makes us unique. We have freedoms and equalities that many countries around the world do not have. We have a diversity that most countries only dream of obtaining. We, as Canadians, should be truly proud to be part of Canada!

I am not gay, but that does not mean I am any less Canadian, and any less accepted and protected under Canadian law and rule. A person from the LGBT2QIA+ community can say the same – they are not less Canadian and are not less accepted and protected under Canadian law and rule. They and I are on equal footing in our government's eyes. They are not above the law of Canada, but rather we are united under that law. This is why we submit to being under the Canadian flag.

To lower the Canadian flag is a demeaning act to all Canadians and all Canada stands for. To claim that one community rises above the rest of Canada is to therefore lower the importance of all other Canadians who do not fall under that category. Every Canadian who is not a member of the gay community need not feel bigoted and hated by them and made to live under their flag. The LGBT2QIA+ community cannot think they usurp our government's rule over all Canadians by raising their flag above Canada's flag. The same is true for our province and municipality's flags.

The role of the municipal government is to adhere to the laws and rules given by our federal and provincial governments. The federal government fights for all minority groups in Canada to be equal and free through law. The municipal government is to be non-partisan when it comes to political issues. I advocate that it remains so – the municipal council serves the community best when it focuses solely on the tasks that the provincial government requires of it (ie. Financial allocations; by-law enforcement; maintenance of roads, parks, community buildings, etc.)

We are all united with our pride for Canada above all else. We accept we have differences and yet we stand together strong – strong in freedom; strong in equality; strong in diversity. We are not all part of the LGBT2QIA+ community, but we are all part of West Lincoln community in Canada. Please, let's remain strong and live peaceably under that one flag – the red and white, Canadian, maple leaf Flag!

Warmest Regards,

Esther DeBoer - [REDACTED]

change.org

Recipient:

Councillors and Mayor of West Lincoln

Letter:

Greetings,

Let the Canadian Flag remain to Fly Proudly

Name	Location	Date	Name	Location	Date
Ruth VanAndel	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-14	Amber VanPykeren	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Alice Steele	Marystown, Canada	2020-06-14	Rozanne Ravensbergen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Gillian Bigrigg	Brantford, Canada	2020-06-14	Nicole Ravensbergen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Rich Nelson	Welland, Canada	2020-06-14	Meghan Campbell	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Kristen Nieuwold	Wainfleet, Canada	2020-06-14	Alisha Ravensbergen	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13
Simone Vis	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-14	Joelene Ravensbergen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Evelyn Van Dyke	Saint Catharines, Canada	2020-06-14	benita Boerema	smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Margaret Petersen	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-14	Wolyer Vis	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Kayley Hoeksema	Welland, Canada	2020-06-14	Andrew Lenting	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Tarissa DeRuiter	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-14	Tammy Blokhuis	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Andy Draaistra	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-14	Karen Vanderhoeven	Wellandport, Canada	2020-06-13
Duane Pennings	Ottawa, Canada	2020-06-14	Alisha Szumilas	Hamilton, Canada	2020-06-13
Daryl Haanstra	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-14	Ryan Mans	Stoney Creek, Canada	2020-06-13
Renee Pennings	St. Thomas, Canada	2020-06-14	Nikki VanBrederode	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Nick Terpstra	Vineland, Canada	2020-06-14	Susan Kiers	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Ally Cosgrove	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-14	Aimee Ludwig	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13
Tyler Faubert	Sudbury, Canada	2020-06-14	Melanie Mans	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Tim Jonker	West Lincoln, Canada	2020-06-14	Denise Ravensbergen	Niagara Falls, Canada	2020-06-13
Henk Werkman	Toronto, Canada	2020-06-14	Daniëlle Ravensbergen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Adam Deakin	Alabama, US	2020-06-14	Kara North	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Eric Smith	Kitchener, Canada	2020-06-14	Jessica VanSydenborgh	Caistor Centre, Canada	2020-06-13
Elizabeth Van Dyk	St. Catharines, Canada	2020-06-14	Monica Bos	Saint Anns, Canada	2020-06-13

Name	Location	Date	Name	Location	Date
Kim VanPykeren	St. Anns, Canada	2020-06-14	Andrew Ravensbergen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Sarah Suk	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-14	Jason Tenhage	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Sherri Van Ryn	West Lincoln, Canada	2020-06-14	Peter Ravensbergen	Niagara Falls, Canada	2020-06-13
Gelinda Vanwoudenberg	St Anns, Canada	2020-06-14	Tonja Bos	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Tarin Stulp	Hamilton, Canada	2020-06-14	Alyce Stel	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Marlene Langendoen	Vineland, Canada	2020-06-14	JOHN WERKMAN	St. Anns, Canada	2020-06-13
Netty Vanleeuwen	Fergus, Canada	2020-06-14	John blokker	Smithville Ontario, Canada	2020-06-13
Frieda Snijder	Surrey, Canada	2020-06-14	Yolanda Hoeksema	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Brandi Vanderee	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-14	Lucy Heemskerck	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13
Joanna VanLuik	Guelph, Canada	2020-06-14	Megan Bos	Welland, Canada	2020-06-13
Linda Boven	Cambridge, Canada	2020-06-14	Jaclyn Foster	St. Catharines, Canada	2020-06-13
Dave Tamminga	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-14	Kathy Jones	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Annette Visser	Hamilton, Canada	2020-06-14	Kim Ryckman	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Grace Vander Veen	Wainfleet, Canada	2020-06-14	Lena Ludwig	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Alayna Jonker	St. Anns, Canada	2020-06-14	Paul Veldman	Wellandport, Canada	2020-06-13
Jan Groen	St. Anns, Canada	2020-06-14	Kyle Nordeman	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Kathleen Veldhuizen	St.catharines, Canada	2020-06-14	Trevor Linde	Ottawa, Canada	2020-06-13
Femmy dethan	Guelph, Chad	2020-06-14	Owen Blokker	Toronto, Canada	2020-06-13
Nick Dehaan	Welland, Canada	2020-06-14	Ed Ludwig	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Ashley Veenstra	Sherkston, Canada	2020-06-14	Diane Feenstra	Canada	2020-06-13
Caroline Kralt	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-14	Garett Van Iperen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Dale Cole	St. Catharines, Canada	2020-06-14	Jackie Werkman	St Ann's, Ontario, Canada	2020-06-13

Name	Location	Date	Name	Location	Date
Eddy Dunning	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Benjamin VanAndel	Kitchener, Canada	2020-06-13
Joseph Bos	Saint Anns, Canada	2020-06-13	Theodore Witten	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Peter-John Sikkema	West Lincoln, Canada	2020-06-13	Brenna Tenhage	Wellandport, Canada	2020-06-13
Kent Gabel	Vineland, Canada	2020-06-13	Stacey VanAndel	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Steven Killins	Wellandport, Canada	2020-06-13	Derek Bartels	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13
Shannon Pennings	Brantford, Canada	2020-06-13	Corey Buitenwerf	Pelham, Canada	2020-06-13
John Goeree	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Michelle Feenstra	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
billy Zdicavsky	Vineland, Canada	2020-06-13	Jenny Groen	St.Ann's, Canada	2020-06-13
Kristina Braun	Welland, Canada	2020-06-13	Annette Sikkema	Elora, Canada	2020-06-13
Elma Regnerus	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13	Carmen Witten	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Stan Tenhage	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13	Jon Groen	St Anns, Canada	2020-06-13
Brendon Lodder	Caledonia, Canada	2020-06-14	Gerald Schuller	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Liam Heerema	Mount Hope, Canada	2020-06-14	Gerard Nordeman	Burlington, Canada	2020-06-13
Joel Van Sydenborgh	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-14	Shannon Brouwer	Jordan, Canada	2020-06-13
Kailee Heerema	Mount Hope, Canada	2020-06-14	John Bos	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Annamarie W	Hamilton, Canada	2020-06-14	Christina A	Stoney Creek, Canada	2020-06-13
Renee Vandermeijden	Toronto, Canada	2020-06-14	Jackie Joosse	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13
Owen Heemskerk	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-14	Alyssa Ruddock	St. catharines, Canada	2020-06-13
Mary Bosman	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-14	Alisha Bos	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13
Bert Blokker	Hamilton, Canada	2020-06-14	Mykiah Davies	Edmonton, Canada	2020-06-13
John Meerveld	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-14	Alyssa Vis	Wellandport, Canada	2020-06-13
Alice Kelly	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-14	Tiffany Keep	London, Canada	2020-06-13

Name	Location	Date	Name	Location	Date
Michael Kalte	Port Colborne, Canada	2020-06-13	Alice Jongsma	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13
Tobi Bos	Mount Hope, Canada	2020-06-13	Richard and Margaret Bos	Niagara Falls, Canada	2020-06-13
Marinus Heemskerk	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13	Stephanie Ouwersloot	St. Ann's, Canada	2020-06-13
Tara Degelder	Welland, Canada	2020-06-13	Fred Post	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13
Raelynj Jones	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Elinita Post	St. Catharines, Canada	2020-06-13
Jackie Sinke	Fonthill, Canada	2020-06-13	Henry Wiersma	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Jeanette Otten	West Lincoln, Canada	2020-06-13	Timothy Oosterhoff	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Theresa Post	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13	Dianne Wiersma	Welland, Canada	2020-06-13
Anna Piper	Hamilton, Canada	2020-06-13	John DeBoer	Wellandport, Canada	2020-06-13
Angelina Jans	Canfield, Canada	2020-06-13	John Ravensbergen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Danielle Van Maanen	Lincoln, Canada	2020-06-13	Rebecca DeBoer	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Ans Hollemans	Ottawa, Canada	2020-06-13	Kristen Boverhof	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Janny Dunnink	Lincoln, Canada	2020-06-13	Simone Deboer	St. Anns, Canada	2020-06-13
Wilma Sterk	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Cheryl Feenstra	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Ella Jans	Canfield, Ontario, Canada	2020-06-13	John Gelms	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Teresa Knegt	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	J North	Thornhill, Canada	2020-06-13
Anky Stulp	Lincoln, Canada	2020-06-13	Blane Dallen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
richard zwaagstra	Saint Anns, Canada	2020-06-13	Johanna Nordeman	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Irma DeVries	Mississauga, Canada	2020-06-13	Anna DeHaan	St Ann's, Canada	2020-06-13
Peggy Haveman	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Sandra Linde	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Victoria VanRaalte	Orangeville, Canada	2020-06-13	Justin Moore	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Emily Bosscher	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13	Jamie Jagt	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13

Name	Location	Date	Name	Location	Date
Ruth Otten	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Harry De Vries	Lincoln, Canada	2020-06-13
Ingrid Jansema	Quinte West, Canada	2020-06-13	Elisabeth Ludwig	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Stephanie Ravensbergen	Canada	2020-06-13	Tim Breukelman	Penetanguishene, Canada	2020-06-13
Hollie Wanders	North York, Canada	2020-06-13	Jake Ravensbergen	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13
Tamara Nobel	Burlington, Canada	2020-06-13	Nicole Heemskerk	Hamilton, Canada	2020-06-13
Nellie deHaan	Port Dover, Canada	2020-06-13	Rachel Vis	Wellandport, Canada	2020-06-13
Aaron Bazinet	Binbrook, Canada	2020-06-13	Emily Breukelman	Vineland on, Canada	2020-06-13
Calvin Komdeur	Toronto, Canada	2020-06-13	Peter Heemskerk	Hamilton, Canada	2020-06-13
Dave K	Caistor Center, Canada	2020-06-13	Edwin de Schiffart	Thornhill, Canada	2020-06-13
Geraldine Brouwer	St anns, Canada	2020-06-13	Mike Degelder	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Rebekah DeVisser	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13	Rick Lof	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Joyce Menger	Fenwick, Canada	2020-06-13	Richard Fitzgerald	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Denver Komdeur	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Steve Mans	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Jeff Wiersma	Binbrook, Canada	2020-06-13	Jennifer Heemskerk	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Ryanne Wiersma	Selkirk, Canada	2020-06-13	Jane Vis	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13
Hendrik Kelly	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13	Jeanie Vandervelde	Toronto, Canada	2020-06-13
Sherri Mans	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Yolanda Deboer	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Carrie DeVries	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13	Ashley Lof	St. Ann's, Canada	2020-06-13
Elizabeth Lof	Wellandport, on, Canada	2020-06-13	Eleanor Schulenberg	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Gisele Mechelse	Vineland, Canada	2020-06-13	Lisa Farr	Niagara Falls, Canada	2020-06-13
Viktoria VanZanten	Fenwick, Canada	2020-06-13	Henry Weidenhammer	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13
Doreen Crawford	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Daniella DeVries	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13

Name	Location	Date	Name	Location	Date
Reuben Jonker	St Ann's, Canada	2020-06-13	Nathan Nordeman	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13
Ashley Stegenga	Brantford, Canada	2020-06-13	Margaret Hoebeke	Grand Valley, Canada	2020-06-13
Neil Bouman	Rutherglen, Canada	2020-06-13	Katrina Wanders	Beeton, Canada	2020-06-13
Logan Jonker	Saint Anns, Canada	2020-06-13	John Oostdyk	Toronto, Canada	2020-06-13
Kristen Buist	Dundas, Canada	2020-06-13	Nienke Ravensbergen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
HAROLD JONKER	St Anns, Canada	2020-06-13	Ashley Dale	Crystal beach, Canada	2020-06-13
jenny haveman	Toronto, Canada	2020-06-13	Mike DeBoer	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Anna Brasz	Welland, Canada	2020-06-13	Deanna Grist	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13
Brenda Kelly	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13	Petra Terpstra	Brantford, Canada	2020-06-13
Jess overbeeke	Wainfleet, Canada	2020-06-13	Matthew Boverhof	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
JoAnne DeBoer	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Melanie Glasbergen	Pelham, Canada	2020-06-13
Carrie Sloots	Lincoln, Canada	2020-06-13	Wayne Nicholson	Hamilton, Canada	2020-06-13
Cameron Martin	Oakville, Canada	2020-06-13	Travis Spoelstra	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Liz Vander Velde	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13	Edie Groen	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13
Ingrid Gracey	Canada	2020-06-13	Frank Schuller	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Rachel Kingma	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13	Nicole Martin	Dresden, Canada	2020-06-13
Jane Schulenberg	Saint Anns, Canada	2020-06-13	Ger bos	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
James Kingma	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13	Jennifer Snippe	Fenwick, Canada	2020-06-13
Rachel Suk	Fenwick, Canada	2020-06-13	Coby VanderZwaag	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13
Angela Lubberts	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13	Denise Zylstra	Lindsay, Canada	2020-06-13
Korine Vandeburgt	Canada	2020-06-13	Rebecca Wolsley	Caledonia Ont, Canada	2020-06-13
Maria Verdonk	Saint Anns, Canada	2020-06-13	Lauren Stel	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13

Name	Location	Date	Name	Location	Date
Melissa Snippe	Fenwick ontario, Canada	2020-06-13	Melissa Smouter	Welland, Canada	2020-06-13
James Charters	Stratford, Canada	2020-06-13	angle otten	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Elsa DeVries	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13	Steph Jager	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13
Amanda Nobel	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13	Yolanda Hymering	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13
Diana Marrese	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13	Melissa Hoeksema	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13
Marian Visser	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13	Jonathan van Leeuwen	Welland, Canada	2020-06-13
Peter J Ravensbergen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Amanda Koopman	Fenwick, Canada	2020-06-13
Sherry Benoit	Quinte West, Canada	2020-06-13	Clarence Bouwman	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Felicia DeBoer	Carman, Canada	2020-06-13	Stephanie Jansen	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Eileen Van Es	Campden, Canada	2020-06-13	Vincent Hoebeke	Grand Valley, Canada	2020-06-13
Brad Panek	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Alyssa Jongsma	West lincoln, Canada	2020-06-13
Christa Heeg	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13	Davis Spoelstra	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Yvonne Slaney	Caledonia, Canada	2020-06-13	Sharon Van Sydenborgh	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13
Carolyn Kamphuis	Grand Valley Ontario, Canada	2020-06-13	Arlene Bouwman	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13
Nicole Noort	Dunnville, Canada	2020-06-13	Jill Jelsma	Burlington, ON, Canada	2020-06-13
Lieke VanderBruggen	Hamilton, Canada	2020-06-13	Dennis Flokstra	Chilliwack, Canada	2020-06-13
Tina Vanbrederode	Niagara, Canada	2020-06-13	Linda VanAmeronge	Quinte West, Canada	2020-06-13
Michelle VanIperen	Simcoe, Canada	2020-06-13	Janine Janssens	Watford, Canada	2020-06-13
Sheryl DeKlerk	Grimsby, Canada	2020-06-13	Amanda Post	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13
Heather Broersma	Fergus, Canada	2020-06-13	Sonya Honcoop	Brantford, Canada	2020-06-13
Grace Van Der Velde	Lincoln, Canada	2020-06-13	laura post post	Beamsville, Canada	2020-06-13
Michael magnini	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13	Cindy Bos	Smithville, Canada	2020-06-13

Joanne Scime

From: Jacquie Thrower
Sent: June 15, 2020 11:36 AM
To: Joanne Scime; Beverly Hendry; DL-Council Members
Subject: FW: Let the Canadian Flag remain to Fly Proudly
Attachments: uploadsLetter to City Council2c1539aa5-fd5d-44c4-95d2-99d1f0e30828.docx; uploadspetition_signatures_jobs_22799847_20200615000140 (1)ef8c58fa-c932-4254-8edc-8de593ef8c87.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council, CAO and Clerk,

As directed please see the attached email.

Thanks

Jacquie

Jacquie Thrower
Confidential Secretary
Tel: 905-957-3346 ext.6726
Email: <mailto:jthrower@westlincoln.ca>

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-----Original Message-----

From: noreply@westlincoln.ca [<mailto:noreply@westlincoln.ca>] On Behalf Of Esther DeBoer
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 11:32 AM
To: Jacquie Thrower
Subject: Let the Canadian Flag remain to Fly Proudly

To Esteemed Councillors and Mayor,

I had started a petition a couple days ago to "Let the Canadian Flag remain to Fly Proudly" at town hall. The link for it is here: <http://chnng.it/tXq7GWWV>
Attached is a pdf copy of the letter and a pdf copy of those that have signed. At the time of sending this letter (11:20 am on June 15, 2020) the total number of supporters is at 825 of mainly all local signatures. (Some signatures report that they are from outside of West Lincoln, when I know they are not and I think this

is due to either to their web-service provider or the fact that they haven't updated their social media accounts to reflect their new living local.) If you go to the petition page, you can see the reasons of some of why they chose to sign this petition. Please read this email along with the attached letter at the scheduled meeting tomorrow (June 16, 2020 at 11am). I would like this to be a matter of public record. May God give you all wisdom as you deliberate and make a decision regarding this issue.

Warmest Regards,
Esther DeBoer - [REDACTED] Rock Street, Smithville

Origin: <https://www.westlincoln.ca/Modules/contact/search.aspx?s=45IA5HIUmMnpHl4o34wtlBI8zgeQuAleQuAl>

This email was sent to you by Esther DeBoer [REDACTED] through <https://www.westlincoln.ca/>.

Good Day Council Members and Residents of West Lincoln

I am a resident of West Lincoln and a citizen of Canada by birth. I would like to address you today on the topic of what flag should be flying at our municipal office. Canada is a country made of many different individuals who have many different ways of identifying themselves. As well, no single individual identifies them self in only one way. Individuals identify themselves by gender, by occupation, by age, by ability, by country of origin or country of family heritage, by religious beliefs, by sexual origination, by personal preferences and the list could go on. Each individual who lives in this country experiences life in a different way and some citizens of Canada suffer in ways that others do not. Is an individual who suffers an injustice more valuable than one who does not? Is an individual who suffers the loss of a loved one more valuable than one who suffers the loss of a job? Is an individual who has financial success more valuable than one who is poor? Is a black individual more valuable than a white individual? Is a homosexual more valuable than a heterosexual? Is a Moslem more valuable than a Christian? No matter how one identifies oneself, we can all agree that no one person is more valuable than another. If no one person is more valuable than no one group of people are more valuable than another. No matter how one identifies oneself, we all deserve to be treated with respect. We all deserve to have access to food, shelter, clothes, free speech, own property, experience education, hold a job. We deserve to direct our own lives, choose whom we will love, and who will be our friends. When we get sick we deserve to receive treatment. If we are beaten or murdered, sexual assaulted or physical assaulted, we deserve to have the people responsible held accountable for their actions. If any of these are withheld, than injustice occurs and justice must correct the injustice, no matter how the individuals involved identify themselves. These are a persons rights and no other person or group of people have the right to deny another person or group of people theses things. These are the rights Martin Luther fought so hard for black people to achieve, these are the rights women fought so hard to receive and these are the rights the LGB community has fought to obtain. This is what the world fought for during World War 1 & 2. No matter how many ways an individual identifies them self, we all have one thing in common, we are citizens of Canada. We should be standing united as Canadians under the Canadian Flag. A municipal office, a government office should be uniting all the individuals who make up our country under this one flag. If it does not, and shows special treatment of one group of individuals over another than it does not promote unity, but rather highlights our differences. You are saying that this group is more valuable than any other and this becomes the very injustice you attempted to remove in the first place. As a resident of West Lincoln, as a citizen of Canada, I want to promote unity and thus want only the Canadian Flag to fly on the pole of our municipal government office. No other flag belongs upon this particular pole. I say shame on any other government office for flying any other flag than a Canadian Flag!

Thank you for your time.

Lisa Janssen

Margriet Vis

Smithville ON LOR 2A0

Township of West Lincoln
318 Canborough Street
Smithville ON LOR 2A0

Smithville, 12 June 2020

Re.: Raising of flags,

Esteemed Members of Council,

There appears to be a discussion about whether or not to raise the LGBTQ flag on/by the official West Lincoln Town Hall building every year in June.

I appreciate the fact that West Lincoln Council, instead of just making the decision 'yes or no', gives members of the community the opportunity to give input on the matter.

Thank you for this.

Canada prides itself in being Multi-Cultural, Anti-Racist and promoting Gender Equality.

Whether you are of Indigenous, Polish, Filipino, Dutch, or any other background, whether you have a black, brown, white or any other colour skin, whether you are Atheist, Christian, Moslim, or of any other (non-)faith, whether you are male or female, hetro- or homosexual, transgender or any other gender, there is no un-equality under the Canadian Law.

The issue at hand:

Once a year, in June, on/by many government buildings we see the Rainbow Flag, the flag from the LGBTQ Community.

Not so in West Lincoln, and people are complaining about that.

Is West Lincoln bias against the LGBTQ Community?

Should West Lincoln follow suit and raise this flag every year to show her support? At least, I think that is the reason.

I would like to give you some food for thought, when meet to discuss the issue.

Going back to the 'Canada prides itself in...' paragraph, if you would do this, where is the end?

There is no un-equality in Canada between any, and that is a long list of people, of which the LGBTQ Community is an equal part, no more or less important.

What happens if the Churches call for a Worldwide Day of Prayer for the Unborn Child?

Is there going to be a sign against abortion in the front lawn of the Township Building, because the Christian Community is a large part of West Lincoln, and this issue is very important to them?

Do you, right now, display signs in support of the Black Community, in support of their struggles?

The Christian Community, the Black Community, all equal with the LGBTQ Community.

I suppose you would agree that all these things are for people to do personally, not for Township to pick and choose. That is asking for trouble, right?

Should not Townhall show what we all are? Citizens/Residents of Canada, Ontario, West Lincoln.
In that we are one and equal. And we may be proud to show that!

Suggestion:

Would it be possible to designate for instance a piece of land, of a section in town, where people can display signs, hang flags etcetera? Since certain rules would have to apply, it would probably have to go through Township. This to avoid for instance extremist flags/signs or too many flags/signs for one cause.

I wish you a lot of strength in your respective offices, with all the difficult decisions which have to be made.

God Bless

Respectfully,

Margriet Vis

Dear Members of Council:

I am writing in support of the Township of West Lincoln raising the Pride flag as requested by Pride Niagara. The Pride flag is flown by companies, institutions, municipalities and organizations across Canada as a symbol of diversity and inclusion. By flying a Pride flag, the municipality would be signalling a commitment to creating a safe, equitable and welcoming township for everyone. The colours of the Pride Flag each have a meaning. Red is life, orange is healing, yellow is sunlight, green is nature, blue is serenity and violet is spirit. Life, healing, sunlight, nature, serenity and spirit. Diversity and inclusion. Safe, equitable and welcoming. What beautiful words, concepts and actions to have associated with our Township. The Township has previously flown flags from community groups, some I can recall are an Autism Awareness flag, a Crime Stoppers flag and on June 1st Mayor Bylsma himself raised an Age Friendly flag. I am not sure the process by which those flags came to be flown, if they also came before Council or were subject to special meetings, but to raise those flags and then not raise the Pride flag would be a direct statement of intolerance and exclusion. I understand that the request from Pride Niagara is to raise the flag next year on June 1st 2021 in addition to the Township sending some virtual support on social media. However, given that the flag wasn't flown this year due to an error and lack of action on the part of the West Lincoln Council member that Pride Niagara had reached out to, I think Council should approve the Pride flag being flown for the remainder of this June in addition to flying the flag in June 2021. Again, to do anything less would be a direct statement of intolerance and exclusion and reflect poorly on the Township of West Lincoln. I have resided in the township for almost seven years and my husband and I consider moving here to be one of the best decisions we have ever made. We all know that West Lincoln is a fantastic place to live, full of welcoming, friendly and inclusive people. Let's raise that Pride flag and make sure everyone else knows it too.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Skotidas

Jason and Jennifer Heemskerk

[REDACTED]

St. Anns, ON, L0R1Y0

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

June 15, 2020

Councilors and Mayor of West Lincoln

Municipality of West Lincoln

318 Canborough St., Box 400

Smithville, ON, L0R2A0

Re. Flying only the Canadian Flag and the municipality flag.

Dear Councilors and Mayor of West Lincoln:

We are writing this letter as a matter of public record, and hope that it will be read at the meeting of council to be held on June 16, 2020.

We would like to thank the Mayor and the councilors for a fair and democratic approach to the decision of which flags should be flown over our municipal buildings. We are thankful that the matter was up for debate and that council voted in favour of only flying the Canadian and municipal flags. We agree that these flags are, by their very nature, inclusive of all members of our community.

We appreciate that there is a lot of pressure to fly a flag that is meant to support a particular segment of our population and highlight the struggles that they feel they are facing. Flying flags to show support for a cause is a wonderful way for individual citizens to express themselves to their neighbours. The township, however, represents not just one resident citizen, it represents them all. It should work to make all citizens feel safe, supported, and welcome.

What we like about the decision to keep only the Canadian and Municipal flag flying, is the simplicity of the message. It sends the simple message that all Canadians, regardless of creed, race, gender, or sexual orientation are safe and welcome here. It sends the message that there is no one group held to a different standard than another. The decision to only fly the Canadian and Municipal flag is a decision in support of hope and freedom for all.

Sincerely,



Jason and Jennifer Heemskerk



June 15, 2020

To the Mayor and Council of the Township of West Lincoln

As a proud member of the West Lincoln community for the past 40 years, Smithville Christian High School would like to express our support for our civic leaders in signaling that West Lincoln is a safe and inclusive community where everyone belongs.

As a diverse and inclusive Christian school, one of our core values is belonging and we support that for our community as well. We recognize that symbolism is not enough – we all have work to do. However, you have our support for sending a message of inclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Harris".

Ted Harris, Administrator

Smithville Christian High School

6488 Smithville Road, PO Box 40, Smithville, Ontario L0R 2A0

Phone 905.957-3255 • Fax 905.957.3431 • office@smithvillechristian.ca • www.smithvillechristian.ca

Belong. Believe. Succeed.

From: Sarah
Sent: June 15, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Council Meeting - June 16th - Please Read

I am requesting that my email be read out loud, however, please do not put any priority on my email above someone who is a part of a marginalized group. I am a white, straight woman - and I am privileged in so many ways. But my opinion shouldn't be louder than someone else.

Privilege is an interesting thing. Something I never thought of until I decided to educate myself - and I encourage our Mayor, and other residents of West Lincoln to do the same - to understand how our privilege has impacted our views on life and how our privilege can be used for good.

Some residents of West Lincoln believe that the uproar is being driven by the flag, when in fact, the flag is just a symbol of more concerning issues within this town. It is creating unrest among our residents on both sides - but I think the conversation is EXACTLY what this community needs. I think the opportunity to EDUCATE and challenge both sides is EXCITING. But passions are high, and conversation can lead to anger and shouting and NOT LISTENING which means people are NOT LEARNING.

We need to lead by example - and this starts with our Mayor. West Lincoln is a growing community - you can see new neighbourhoods popping up - and with that brings the opportunity of new residents to the area. If I was a person outside of a traditional white family, after reading that interview, I would think twice about moving to West Lincoln. So, the comments by our Mayor, whether you agree or disagree with them, could deter people from choosing to live here. It might be fine to you and some other West Lincoln residents who are not comfortable with change and differing thoughts and opinions, but it's not fine with me. I want to see more diversity in West Lincoln - I want my children to be open minded to different cultures and different representations of Canadians. I want this town to be more INCLUSIVE of all.

What is clear to me, is that until we can agree to respect and educate ourselves on our privilege, the Canadian flag cannot truly be representative of all Canadians.

Best,
Sarah Ripley
13 Year Smithville Resident

On Behalf Of Jessica Thibault
Sent: June 15, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Pride flag

As a resident of West Lincoln residing in Grassie I fully support Mayor Bylsma in refusing to fly the pride flag. The pride flag does not stand for our great country in replacement of our maple leaf flag. My rights are being infringed on as a Christian to see that flag flown and I am proud of our mayor to take a stand and act in a way he believes the majority of his constituents would support. I would like this letter to be read and filed as a matter of public record.

From: Allie Carson
Sent: June 15, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Hold the Mayor Accountable

Good morning,
I have been given your email to pass along a letter that should be read for the record tomorrow.

I wanted to take this time to address the mayor's uneducated remarks about LGBTQ+, Indigenous and Black communities.

During this time I feel that it is our responsibility to take action and ensure we are allies for these oppressed communities. I believe that action starts with listening. It is important that we take the time to educate ourselves and start listening about the changes that need to be made to the system that has only benefited a select few.

If you believe that the system is not broken, then this system serves you.

It is my hope that you take this time to reflect on the mayor's comments and start listening. We are lucky to live in a world with access to many platforms where LGBTQ+, Indigenous, and Black communities are able to speak their truth. I urge you to listen.

One way in which West Lincoln can show their support is by starting to fly the Pride flag. This flag represents social movements for social equality and individuality. These groups are not violent. Pride represents love for all, and the progress made so far. I do believe that the mayor's affiliation with the Christian Heritage Party is biased and in fact harmful for individuals who identify as LGBTQ+.

When the mayor used the phrase "all lives matter", you are in fact denying that systemic racism exists. The fact is white lives have always mattered in the eyes of the government and police force. No one is saying your life doesn't matter, however you cannot say that all lives matter in the eyes of our society. In fact, until Black lives matter, there is no truth to "All lives matter".

The mayor's argument about violence in Indigenous communities is ignorant. Indigenous communities have been oppressed and faced racism since colonials arrived from Europe. This is a painful truth that must come to light in order for reconciliation to begin. Indigenous communities have not been given equal opportunities and in fact have been abused by our government and people in power. It is time to acknowledge this part of our history and start taking action towards a society that is accepting and inclusive. We have a lot of work to do.

I do hope that this letter will encourage you to start listening. We can only change once we are forced with the uncomfortable truths.

Kind regards,
Allie Carson
Thank you for your time.

From: Nicole & Joel
Sent: June 15, 2020
To: Beverly Hendry

Cc: Joanne Scime; Jason Trombetta
Subject: West Lincoln Controversies

Good afternoon Ms. Hendry,

I am reaching out to you regarding the recent controversies regarding the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalized groups Mayor Bylsma spoke about during his radio interview.

While I can appreciate the work Mr. Bylsma has done for our community, I feel it is my obligation to advise you of how displeased and disheartened I was with his actions and interview.

I feel it would be prudent and beneficial for the town to invest in some targeted training and educational courses for the mayor and council regarding marginalized groups, at risk youth and harassment.

Unfortunately, I do not believe an apology from the Mayor will be enough - as many people are now aware of his extremist views but perhaps in knowing some educating is taking place, it may give residents some hope.

Thank you,
Nicole Scime

From: On Behalf Of Wilma Veldman
Sent: June 15, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: flags at township office

As a citizen of West Lincoln I'm opposed to the Gay Pride flag being flown because that suggests all citizens are in fact proud to support and agree with that lifestyle choice. I do not stand behind the pride flag and what it stands for, as many other West Lincoln residents. So I do not think it is appropriate to fly this at the township office. The Canadian flag is appropriate because as Canadians we all stand behind that flag and what it stands for. I value each person as created in God's image and we are all equal and we're all one race. I believe and support the traditional definition of family as declared in the bible. That's my right. I believe it is the right for all citizens to believe as they would like regarding faith and family as is backed by the Canadian Charter. The mayor also has the right to believe as he chooses and ought not to be forced to resign for his beliefs. If the mayor was in favour of the meaning of the pride flag would he be asked to resign because he may express his views? We still do have freedom of religion and conscience in Canada so no citizen whether he be mayor or whatever position he may have ought not to be ostracized for his beliefs. I would like my email to be expressed and on file for the township meeting if possible.

From: gwen walmsley
Sent: June 15, 2020 7:58 AM
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Comment - Please Read MEETING NO. NINE Tuesday, June 16, 2020,
Dear Council Members,

I read with dismay, that the Mayor has neglected to lead West Lincoln Township in recognizing Pride Month 2020. I have read the Mayor's email response appended to this meeting announcement, and understand that he receives many emails (we all do!) and that it is the clerk who receives such requests normally, but the Mayor should realize that this is **not a good enough excuse** for not reading and passing on the message received from Pride Niagara. This is a serious oversight with the potential to ruin the reputation of West Lincoln Township, resulting in negative economic consequences for all residents of both West Lincoln and surrounding communities.

I was born in the region, own a home in Grimsby and plan to relocate there this year. In my long career I have lived abroad and across Canada. Canadians are well known for their welcoming hearts and the respect that they show to all minority groups. The failure of West Lincoln to recognize pride month by raising the pride flag on June 1st is not in keeping with this spirit of respect for all. It's shameful.

To mitigate the impact of this "oversight" I encourage the township of West Lincoln to "Raise the Pride Niagara flag on Tuesday, June 1, 2021; and immediately move to use virtual/social media communication to join in the June 2020 celebration of equality with Niagara's LGBTQ+ community.

It would be a great inconvenience for me to have to drive out of my way to give the Township of West Lincoln a wide berth, should I need to demonstrate further protest of Township actions in this instance. Please show by your decisions today and future actions, that I, and other concerned residents of neighbouring townships, do not have to do so and, rather, can continue to frequent the local businesses of West Lincoln Township.

Sincerely,
Gwen Walmsley

From: Chris Koperniak
Sent: June 14, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Pride Niagara Backlash

Dear Mr. Mayor,
I happened to tune in to AM610 (aka. FakeNews of Niagara) when you spoke with Matt Holmes and I just wanted to let you know that I, along with many others in the gay community, FOUND NOTHING WRONG IN WHAT YOU SAID! The backlash that you have received is totally unwarranted and originates from the mainstream media and a minority of individuals who are incapable of thinking for themselves on social-political matters and recognizing their own self-righteousness which exists as a plague in our modern world. I now live in St. Catharines but am originally from Hamilton where a cultic groupthink is especially prevalent. Those representing Niagara Pride (or Hamilton Pride) would have you think that THEY speak for ALL GAY PEOPLE, EVERYWHERE... well, they DO NOT! THANK YOU FOR BEING HONEST and speaking the truth as you see it. In a world full of liars and fake politicians who constantly pander to the mob, it means a great deal to have someone in office who demonstrates moral character. Please do not ever apologize for saying something that you did not say or imply.

Sincerely yours,
Chris Koperniak
St. Catharines

From: Emily Boss
Sent: June 15, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Comments for Special Meeting June 16

Good Afternoon,

Could you please circulate my comments to members of council for their information.

I am a firm believer in equality for all people, and I think it's important for everyone to be treated with civility and respect at all times.

That having been said, I do not think flying a pride flag is necessary to show the town's commitment to equality. There is a huge difference between supporting people who are members of the LGBTQ2+ community, and, as a town, supporting the movement as a whole. The town has the responsibility towards the former, but in no way should it be compelled into promoting the latter.

Attendance to any large-scale Pride parade will see all manner of promiscuity being promoted, simulated sex acts, and graphic nudity. Pride is a celebration of sexuality without any constraints. While as an adult I know that people are free to make these choices, as a mother I have the responsibility to point my children to best practises. People have the freedom to choose their lifestyle, but they can never be free from the resultants of their choices. There is more tied up in the rainbow flag than just "acknowledgement and acceptance of people", and to suggest that a town can fly the flag without actively endorsing all it stands for is more than a little naive. I have seen prominent members of the LGBTQ2+ community, under the banner of that flag, call for an end to monogamous relationships, the dismantling of the nuclear family, the abolishment of the titles 'mother' and 'father'. Are these views indicative of all members of the community? Certainly not. But when you fly the flag you don't get to specify what parts of the ideology you are accepting and endorsing to citizens. I think it is far outside of the town's purview to be endorsing sexuality without constraints to our youth.

I also find it interesting, that the mayor, being derided as intolerant, and a bigot, is the only person who actually talked about an honest debate. From the 'tolerant and inclusive' people, I have seen calls for a "quick fix", calls for the mayor's resignation, and an apology-- No discussion necessary. This is not acceptable. We cannot silence viewpoints just because we disagree with them. If you believe inclusivity and equality is important, you don't get to decide that certain ideas are less equal, or not worthy of inclusion. I don't think any of us want to be part of a society where one feels compelled to keep their thoughts to themselves.

Now. It is rather an awkward position, to be the only municipality not flying the flag. It would have been nice if the others had thought more about what they were endorsing before making decisions. If the town wants to show their support for members of the LGBTQ2+ community, who says it has to be done with the rainbow flag? There are social equality flags that could be used. You could make it a yearly contest for people to design a flag showing equality. You could go the extreme safe route and make a flag that says "We respect and value LGBTQ2+ people". Any of these options should satisfy the LGBTQ2+ community, without the town indiscriminately endorsing all things Pride.

Please don't conflate loving, respecting, and valuing LGBTQ2+ people with a full endorsement of the pride movement.

Thank you for your time.
Emily Boss

Dear members of West Lincoln Council,

We are writing with regard to Mayor Bylsma's radio interview with Matt Holmes of CKTB radio and the controversy around flying the Pride flag. It appears the mayor has made an ad hoc decision to not raise the Pride flag based on his personal beliefs.

We listened to the full interview with dismay. We found Mayor Bylsma's initial and rather rambling explanation of an email that went forgotten or not being received by those who should have seen it, etc. as disingenuous. Had that explanation been sincere, the flag could have been quickly raised with an apology; no harm no foul. We find the mayor's explanation, however, an example of "selective neglect".

Then followed the mayor's insistence that the Pride flag serves no real purpose now that gay rights are enshrined into law, totally missing the purpose of Pride month and the Pride flag. There are LGBTQ people in West Lincoln, adults and youths, who still need our affirmation, who still face both subtle and overt unacceptance, who would feel reassured by this symbol of their place in our community. How painful the mayor's words must be to them and their families.

Then followed many minutes of personal interpretations of what our mayor repeatedly called **Identity Politics**, seemingly using the term for political movements that make him feel uncomfortable and repeating that those groups which already have their rights enshrined in law need no special recognition, then saying that protests have been going on for the last 30 years (unclear why he picked 30) and nothing has worked and no progress made.

Indigenous Rights - the mayor referred to armed guards at the entrances to the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford as an example of no positive progress for indigenous rights over many years of protests. A quick search found an article of explanation in the Spectator from earlier this spring (see Spectator article, March 27 "Protect our elders"). These guards are members of the reserve's own police force who have been monitoring traffic in and out of the reserve after a large group of people entered, breaking covid-19 restrictions, putting the health of residents at greater risk. How embarrassing that our mayor would go on local radio with opinions and personal observations without checking the facts. No progress? Does Mayor Bylsma know that more than 80% of Canada's indigenous population now lives off reserves? And that compensation for the Residential School system is happening now? There's much, much more work to be done, but political action and civic engagement have brought changes.

Black Lives Matter - yes, **all** lives certainly do matter. We've heard no one in the Black Lives Matter movement deny that, although they object to All Lives Matter being used to dismiss their protests. Some lives are certainly more at risk during interactions with the police. That is the point they want recognized.

The mayor's lack of understanding of the purpose of civil rights movements, the work of those who seek social justice, the progress being made and the work still to be done is very

frustrating. One of us (Linda) was present when the Age Friendly flag was raised at the township hall recently. Mayor Bylsma was present too. There was no question that this was a worthy symbol of our township's acceptance of a group of its citizens and a commitment to make the town a good place to live for all ages. So why the difference in the mayor's attitude between the two flags? What he hasn't stated out loud seems obvious to us. The Age Friendly flag isn't controversial and he has no personal objections to it. The Pride flag, we suspect, runs counter to his personal beliefs about gay rights and perhaps his religious beliefs as well. He is most certainly entitled to his personal beliefs, we defend his right to his beliefs. But he is not entitled to impose them on West Lincoln. Mayor Bylsma was not being required to march in a Pride parade, just fly a symbol of unity and acceptance, a symbol displayed by all other municipalities in our region.

Our mayor seems to be a hard-working and sincere person who wants the best for West Lincoln and its residents. He has made a serious misstep and needs to correct the situation quickly, apologize and move on.

We appreciate the council's decision to meet.

Sincerely,
Richard and Linda Sivyler
Smithville Road

From Steve Whitelaw

June 15, 2020

To: West Lincoln Members of Council

Re: Pride Niagara's request to the municipality of West Lincoln to fly the Pride Flag with the Canadian flag

It is disappointing but necessary that I am writing this correspondence to be read into public record. I feel that this is required for a number of reasons:

1. The LGBTQ+ residents, children, business owners, employees and volunteers at any of our local businesses and service agencies need to know that they are respected, loved and supported in our community;
2. Those who belong to any marginalized or racialized communities need to know that they are respected, loved and supported in our community;
3. Mr. DeDivitiis, Chairperson 2020/2021 Pride Niagara Board of Directors and Mr. Vanderklis, member of the Curve Lake First Nation and all of those who belong to any marginalized or racialized communities need to know that the actions of the Mayor are not reflective of the views of the town's citizens.
4. Those looking to live or invest in the township need to know that West Lincoln acts in accordance with the statement on its website as being a "a blended community of different perspectives, beliefs and interests" and "a progressive municipality";
5. Ensure the Mayor hears these views that were included in the emails that I sent to himself, as well as Councillors Cheryl Gannan and William Reilly. I received prompt replies from both Councillors, but have not received a reply from the Mayor so I can only assume he has not read them.

If you have not already done so, I urge the Mayor and all Councillors to read the posts on social media by our young leaders of tomorrow. These thoughtful posts are the voices of those that you represent. Please read, listen and learn so that you can use your positions to affect the change that they are demanding.

At this time, I would like to thank Councillor William Reilly for bringing a sense of urgency to the call to raise the Pride flag using all of the tools at his means, culminating in this special Council meeting.

The Mayor is quoted as saying “the Pride flag might fly at town hall, but only after a ‘proper debate’” (St. Catharines Standard, June 12, 2020).

It would appear that the Code of Conduct (<https://www.westlincoln.ca/en/township-office/resources/Code-of-Conduct-for-Council-and-Boards---2019.pdf>) that governs their roles on the West Lincoln Council as outlined in section 2.2 and 4.1 and the objectives of Pride Niagara should be fully aligned. Therefore, supporting the request of Pride Niagara should not require debate. However, every day that passes without raising the Pride flag amplifies the position that the township of West Lincoln does not “respect the individual rights, values, beliefs and personality traits of any other person, recognizing that all persons are entitled to be treated equally with dignity and respect for their personal status regarding gender, sexual orientation, race, creed, religion, ability and spirituality” (Code of Conduct section 4.1, paragraph (e)).

A progressive Council would have diversity and inclusion as an imperative in its strategic and operational plans, and report publicly on the progress against their plans. Flying the Pride flag in support of Pride Niagara would be a straightforward approval under this plan.

The only debate required is: how can Council create the conditions to ensure equality and build a community that celebrates and respects diversity; a community that everyone is proud of and wants to live and invest? This debate would follow educational sessions for Council that would explore topics such as, how bad is it in West Lincoln for those in the LGBTQ+ community? What inequities are being experienced? Why are some residents leaving and what experiences are preventing others from settling in West Lincoln? What are the perceptions of West Lincoln held by the business community looking to invest in the Niagara region?

As part of this imperative, a progressive Council would reach out to the organizations representing racialized and marginalized communities to ask for their input and assistance and pose ‘how can we help?’, ‘what more can we do?’

None of the following are debatable as they are included in the Code of Conduct or as key facets of the Community’s Strategic Plan.

- Council should live up to its stated Mission of providing responsive customer service by accepting all requests by residents or community-based groups. If a resident or community group sends an inquiry or request to anyone on Council, the recipient should immediately refer the request to the appropriate committee or staff member and respond to the requestor with the actions taken. The requestor can be educated on the preferred so any future request is administered with less hand offs. A regressive Council hides behind missed emails and uses process to delay action.
- Council will “...respect Council’s decision-making process even if they disagree with Council’s ultimate determinations and rulings” (Code of Conduct section 4.1, paragraph (h)).

I urge Council to go beyond the compromise tabled by Pride Niagara to raise the Pride flag on June 1, 2021. Council should raise the Pride flag to fly with the Canadian flag immediately and for the remainder of Pride Month.

The day is young, why not raise it today? Every day that passes makes any subsequent apology a hollow one.

Let all residents in West Lincoln celebrate our differences and fight for equality for everyone, something that is urgently needed. Let us love one another. Love is love.

Thank you. Stay safe and be well.

-Steve Whitelaw, Smithville

From: Richard Oosterhoff
Sent: June 13, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: flags

Good day to you.

It came to our attention that there is a problem with which flag to raise.

We have a Canada flag and a West Lincoln flag.

That would seem to be sufficient for our town and our country.

To start to raise flags for all kinds of special interests and causes is over doing the flag flying., and does nothing to promote unity.

with respect, Yours truly,

Richard and Nellie Oosterhoff

From: Michael Myers
Sent: June 13, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Inclusive and Welcoming Community

Dear Township Clerk Scime:

I am in full support for the dignity and worth of LGBT citizens.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Best Wishes.

Michael Myers

Attention Town Council:

My wife and I were recently shocked and saddened by the comments made by our mayor.

The disrespect he has shown to members of the LBGTQ community are atrocious. Our mayor than continued on and doubled down and attacked the black community with his "all lives matter" rhetoric. This is a direct slap in the face of the black community that continue to struggle to find a voice and a system where they do not face daily discrimination. That may have been enough but no, not for this man, he then went on to attack native Canadians, who he feels should put down their guns, to what, once again face genocide like their ancestors. Let's not forget, we as white people, put the guns in their hands when we arrived and stole their land.

His reference to all Canadians under one flag is a cheap attempt to make this about be Canadian We celebrate under many flags that I see all around West Lincoln. Should we remove the Ontario Agricultural Flags, the Ontario flags? This anti-gay man is using the Canadian Flag as a shield and that is wrong.

Our mayor's comments were an embarrassment to this community.

He needs to hand in his resignation.

The fact he is the president of a party that distributes this awful material says all!

12:02



Tweet



No Conversion Canada
@NoConversionCA

Replying to @TWPWestLincoln

Reminder that in May, the anti-LGBTQ2 Christian Heritage Party - that Mayor Bylsma leads as President - spread misinformation to keep conversion therapy abuse legal in Calgary. Yes, we will keep fighting.



Calgary homeowners unhappy after receiving flyers advocating against
660citynews.com

Tweet your reply



Regards,
Roy and Lori Levy

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

From: Sydney Willis
Date: Thu, Jun 11, 2020
Subject: Fwd: "All Lives Matter"
Dear Dave Bylsma.

I am writing to you to let you know how horrified and disgusted I am at your recent comments in your interview with NewsTalk 610.

First of all, the LGBTQ2+ flag needs to be raised. This decision will not "divide" the community, as you said. This will be a symbol to all of the LGBTQ2+ people of West Lincoln that they are welcome and accepted here, something that many of them have never felt before. Your argument of "identity politics" does not apply in this situation. This is a matter of human rights, acceptance, and pride.

Your position in the Christian Heritage Party, a political party that singlehandedly attempts to take rights away from the LGBTQ2+ community, women, or whatever else goes against your

religions beliefs, only makes myself, and other members of our community realize that your position on this matter does not actually have anything to do with "identity politics", it is simply your personal religious belief to not fly the Pride flag. I understand a large majority of West Lincoln identifies as Christian. As someone who comes from a Dutch, Christian household, I experience the hatred that is somehow justified by religion every day. What I am asking you, Mayor, is to change this in order to make your community a better place to live for everyone, not just Christians.

Secondly, saying "All Lives Matter" is not only problematic, but extremely racist. No one is denying that white lives matter, or any other race for that matter. We say Black Lives Matter because that is who needs the worlds attention right now. Black people, along with the LGBTQ2+ community, have been facing injustices and oppression for hundreds of years. You wouldn't tell someone at a walk trying to raise awareness for breast cancer that "there are other types of cancer, all cancers matter", so why are you saying all lives matter? I am choosing to believe that this was a mistake on your part and not truly racially based, but I am urging you to please educate yourself before speaking out on this topic again.

You are the leader of West Lincoln, a town that is far behind the rest of Niagara in progressiveness and acceptance. As a woman who lives and works in Smithville, I have received and seen others receive racist, sexist, and homophobic comments on a daily basis. You, being the leader of this town, are not only halting the expansion of true equality and comfort for all citizens, you are singlehandedly turning West Lincoln into a regressive, unaccepting community.

It is far past time for West Lincoln to join our neighbours in becoming a welcoming community for people of all races, sexual orientations, genders, and religions, something I have never felt in my twenty years of living here.

Sincerely,
Sydney Willis,
Disappointed citizen of West Lincoln.
Sydney Willis

From: Kara Dalglish
Sent: June 13, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Pride Flag

Dear Mr. Bylsma,

With respect to the matter of the Pride Flag. I have listened to your appearance on 610 Newstalk. By chance, I was also able to hear our two councillor representatives live later. They were incredibly respectful and supportive of you, despite their differences of opinion.

In response to some of the things said this morning.

"I wasn't aware." It is your job to be aware.

"There will be a discussion." What is the discussion? If you raised an age-friendly flag, what is problem with raising a Pride Flag?

"What's wrong with just the one flag?"

Some Indigenous People find the Canadian flag offensive because they were here first. We don't get to tell others how to identify as being Canadian.

The Pride Flag is about saying we are an inclusive community despite our differences. You blame identity politics. I blame privileged experiences from being white, male and Christian. Your views are an example of systemic problems. I share your faith in Jesus. I do not share some of your other views. Please do the right thing and raise the flag to say West Lincoln is inclusive and we support the LGBTQIS+ community.

Sincerely,
Kara Dalgleish
West Lincoln Resident, Ward 3

From: Jay Schutten
Sent: Friday, June 12, 2020
To: jscime@westlincoln.ca
Subject: Pride flag comment

We should not wave the pride flag in West Lincoln. We are a predominantly Christian community. It's not that we don't love the LGBT community - we are called to love all people including LGBT community. But does loving them mean we tolerate what they do and allow them to celebrate their lifestyle? No. A true neighbour and true friend will also tell you what you don't want to hear sometimes. Just because someone wants to embrace a certain lifestyle, doesn't mean it's for their own good. This is why we Christians, including Mayor Bylsma, are taking a stance.

Respectfully submitted
Jay and Heather Schutten

From: Eric
Sent: June 13, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Support our Mayor - No pride flag

I am watching the developments in our local government this past week in regards to the demand made to fly the pride flag in West Lincoln. I am opposed to the idea for the following reasons:

1. Identity politics has no business in municipal government. It is your job to use our taxes wisely, and to build and develop our township. Identity politics has been battled, and freedoms to practice and express different sexual orientations has already been won politically in Canada..
2. Canada is a diverse country. We are all united under the Canadian flag. Singling our one group for promotion actually promotes disunity in our communities. The evidence of this is now happening in our community on social and local media.
3. If minority group flags are to be flown locally, we should fly all flags that are important to the community members. These could include various religious group promotions and promotion of political and personal convictions. To be truly inclusive all other flags would also have to be allowed to fly upon request.

I am also quite upset and disgusted to see how our Mayor is being publicly attacked by the media because he was bold and brave enough to share his opinion. Because his opinion was in opposition to certain popular opinion, he has been called a bigot and a racist and asked to apologize and resign his position. What happened to freedom of speech? What happened to democratic process? Nothing Mr Mayor said was racist or bigoted, his words

have been twisted and taken out of context. The media should be taken to task and called to account for this. Democracy only works if we allow freedom of speech, and labeling his words as hate speech is nothing more than a smoke screen for the actual agenda, which is to silence his freedom of speech. I am calling for a public apology to the Mayor for the defaming of his good character.

Please read this letter at your next meeting, and make it a matter of public record.

Eric Ravensbergen

From: James Schaming

Sent: 12 June 2020

To: Dave Bylsma

Cc: William Reilly

Subject: How to raise a flag.

Hi Dave,

STEP 1. TIE THE RAINBOW FLAG TO THE ROPE.

STEP 2. RAISE THE FLAG

That is all.

I am disappointed that you or anyone in West Lincoln would even hesitate to support marginalized members of our community. If you have not already done so go out front and raise the flag. If it is a budget issue I will pay for the flag, send me your receipt and I will e-transfer you the funds.

Go do this now.

Thank you Councilor Reilly for your support and open letter to Dave.

James Schaming

From: Roze

Sent: June 13, 2020

To: Joanne Scime

Subject: No Pride Flag In West Lincoln

I am writing this letter to support the stance of our mayor to not raise the pride flag in West Lincoln. Identity politics has no place in local government. If the arguments to fly the pride flag are related to inclusiveness, we already united under the Canadian maple leaf. We are a diverse culture, no one single group should be promoted in such a way politically as this promotes dissension rather than unity. If we are to fly the pride flag in our township, we should also fly a #fetal lives matter too flag, or #national day of prayer flag, or #heterosexual day flag etc, etc... as we each have our own personal and political convictions.

I am also appalled to see how our Mayor is being crucified in the media for stating his opinion on the matter, being labeled a bigot and a racist. There is no factual ground for these accusations based on any words the Mayor actually spoke. His words have been twisted and taken out of context and an apology should be made to the Mayor for labeling him in such a way, rather than demanding he apologize or resign his position. We are a democracy and for that reason freedom of speech may not be punished in any way. All voices need to be heard (even if we disagree) for democracy to work or the freedom we enjoy because of this democracy will slowly erode into communism.

Please include this letter as a matter of public record and include it in your discussions at your next meeting.

Thank-you,

Roze Ravensbergen

From: Tom Priestly
Sent: June 13, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Fwd: Pride

Mayor Bylsma and Council,

I'm a long time resident of Smithville and an ally to Two Spirit, Indigenous, Black, and LGBTQIA+ communities.

I will not stay silent and I do not appreciate the lack of action in consideration of your marginalized constituents, especially in the current political and social climate.

As Mayor, you should support social inclusion, respect for all life, and recognize the importance of having a safe space. The Pride flag signals that to the community.

I want to be clear that a Mayor and Council should not tolerate any form of racism, discrimination, or intolerance.

Pride happens every year starting June 1st, please mark your calendars accordingly. Do you actually need a formal yearly request to raise a flag or can you take your own initiative?

The world is in need of empathy, moral leadership, and strength. Use your voice, raise the flag, and do your job.

Shame on you.

Sincerely,

Tom Priestly

From: AnNa
Sent: June 12, 2020 7:33 PM
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: Mayor Bylsma & flag decision support

Good Evening,

Regarding Mayor Bylsma's decision not to put up the pride flag - I wanted to make our family sentiments known-. We heartily agree with his decision, and we know it wasn't a decision made rashly or taken lightly but had a lot of thought put into this. We have no issue with the LGBTQ community, however we all have the same rights, and are all equals. Their relationships should be treated like the rest of the populations.

We stand with the mayors decision. 🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸 The Brasz family , of Smithville ON

From: John/Angela Verdonk
Sent: June 15, 2020
To: Joanne Scime
Subject: pride flag issue

I would like this read for public record.

I support Dave on his view on not flying the pride flag. I believe it is dangerous to allow any particular social group to fly its flag on town property. If the pride flag is allowed to fly then any social or religious group must also be given the opportunity to fly a flag of their own on the town property or set up a display promoting their belief or agenda. I don't believe this is

desired and it certainly would bring controversy and division to our township. As Dave has eluded to, we are united under one flag, the Canadian flag. That and that alone is what should be flying on town property. Canada is clearly a country with many different ethnic, social and religious groups and therefore this unity is all the more important. Please don't give preference to one specific group. I also thought Daves comments on this issue were careful and thoughtful and in no way deserving of the hateful comments that have been directed to him.

thank you

John

From: Amy Sokolich

Sent: June 15, 2020

To: Joanne Scime

Subject: Pride flag and Mayor's comments

I am emailing in regards to the special council meeting scheduled for tomorrow.

I live in Cambridge, and spend a fair amount of time in Smithville visiting my girlfriend and her son. As a queer woman, knowing that the town that I frequently visit does not support the LGBTQ community, deeply saddens me. That the Mayor feels it is appropriate to speak out against the Black Lives Matter movement, and other protests being done for change digusts me.

By refusing to acknowledge the struggles that minority, marginalized groups, and queer people have gone through, your mayor has shown that he wants to maintain a "small town" backwoods status quo which makes queer folk feel unsafe to come out. I want to live in, and visit a town that promotes equality. Not one where I am afraid to hold my girlfriend's hand walking down the street.

I ask that your town put up the pride flag in solidarity with the rest of the region, and apologize for not doing it sooner. I also ask that your Mayor educate himself on the Black Lives Matter movement, LGBTQ rights, as well as Indigenous rights so that the next time he has an interview, he doesn't embarrass the region he serves.

Thank you,
Amy Sokolich

Sent: June 12, 2020

To: Joanne Scime

Subject: Regarding The Pride Flag.

Hello, my name is Zachary Dekker.

I live in Smithville and have for most of my life, the reason i am writing to you today is to voice my opinion on the pride flag vote.

I would like to state that I am against flying the pride flag as it only represents one group of poeple very specifically, we are a township of all genders, beliefs and racial backgrounds. For us to fly the Prode Flag would grossly miss represent the rest of us taxpayers who live here, including myself. I feel that flying any Flag other than our Canadian Flag is not only misrepresenting us; but will only cause a larger divide between us all, through identity politics. The township is not just about LGBTQ+2 it also represents all the heterosexual people the religious people muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists. We all identify differently in our personal lives. However Under the Canadian Flag we all unite as one group of poeples with a

collective respect and responsibility to care for one another. To Fly an LGBTQ+2 flag or Black lives matter flag or any other flag would show and imply that we are not united the way we truly are, we are blessed to live in a Community where no matter who you are you or where your from or what you believe or what your Gender is you are welcome and belong that you belong here. we show this every day in the small things we do each day the way we interact with eachother. So let us Come together as Canadians not divide as Groups or religions but as one "True North Strong and Free" poeple.

In Closing.

I Urge you and the other Counselors to see that the LGBTQ+2 flag is not an appropriate Representation for all of us in the West Lincoln community but only those who belong to the LGBTQ+2 Community, and will cause other members of our Community including myself to feel unimportant and unwelcome within our homes. (for which I have lived for 22 years.)

Thank you for your Time and I hope you have a wonderful day.

Zachary Dekker

From: Jen Buitenwerf

Sent: June 12, 2020

To: Joanne Scime

Subject: Unnecessary pride flag

Good afternoon!

We would like to state our stance on the pride flag debate going on in our town. We would like to keep the Canadian Flag the only flag that is flown to represent all that are living here. It includes all Canadians so we don't feel a need for a pride flag. We also want to say that we support David Bylsma and we appreciate all the hard work he is doing.

Thank you,

PETER and JEN BUITENWERF

From: Catherine Petropoulos

Date: June 15, 2020

To: jtrombetta@westlincoln.ca

Subject: Mayor Bylsma

Dear Councillor Trombetta,

Our family has been living in Grassie for 18 years. My husband, John, had lived in Smithville all his life before we set roots in Grassie. We have not always agreed with council through the years but we have always believed that decisions were made for the benefit of most, if not all residents.

However, after listening to the interview that our mayor gave on Thursday, June 11, we were appalled. The obvious bias that our mayor has against many marginalized groups within our community is evident. I'm sure he doesn't have any difficulty collecting tax money from all citizens however he apparently has difficulty being respectful of all the members in our community.

In most cases, when someone misspeaks an apology can normally fix the error. What Mayor Bylsma said was not an example of someone misspeaking. He showed us that he would rather stick to the beliefs and agenda of the CHP that he is president of, than fulfill his duty to respect and fairly represent all the citizens of West Lincoln.

As you know a petition has been circulating online, which I am very proud to say was our daughter's idea. There are approximately 3400 signatures at this point. The majority of the community that I have spoken with have had enough of bias and prejudice. We cannot allow ourselves to be represented by a mayor who cannot separate his personal and religious beliefs from his elected position.

We are asking for Mayor Bylsma's resignation. There is nothing he can do to convince us that he can fulfil his obligations in a fair, policy based and non biased manner.

I would like to know, as our councillor how you will be addressing this issue.

Regards,
Catherine Petropoulos

From: andrea clemencio
Sent: June-15-20
Subject: Special meeting of Council

Hello Ms. Scime,
I am wondering how the members of the public may watch Council meetings while the town hall chambers remain closed? Is there a live stream that can be watched? I could not find any information on your website, only how to submit comments.
Thank you in advance,
Andrea

From: Jack Vanderveen
Sent: June-16-20
Subject: council meeting Tuesday June 16, 2020

Please add this letter to the public record.

To the Council of West Lincoln,
Esteemed council members,

Regarding the debate on whether to fly certain flags from the municipal building:

Please stay within your mandate and focus on municipal business . You are not called upon to promote certain lifestyles, regardless of how much pressure is applied to you to be politically correct.

In the past West Lincoln made a decision to stay away from making proclamation, in order to avoid confusion and avoid unnecessary controversies.

Rather than be divisive in promoting the lifestyle of a small group with a controversial agenda and fly their flag, make an effort to show unity among Canadians and proudly fly the Canadian flag only.

Wishing you God's blessing in your work,

Respectfully,
Jack and Jenny Vanderveen
St. Anns

Smithville
June 15, 2020

To West Lincoln Council

We, Leo & Liz Vis totally disagree with the raising of the "LGBTQ" flag in West Lincoln. We pray & trust that Council will not agree to the request of raising that flag. We would like this letter read at the June 16th council meeting and filed as a matter of public record. We believe that the "LGBTQ" group are trying to bully council and take away the freedoms we have in West Lincoln. If any flags are raised in West Lincoln it should be for the victims of Covid-19 virus.

Yours Truly
Leo Vis
Elizabeth Vis