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For Immediate Release

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## **A CALL TO ACTION!**

### **Ask the Pride Toronto Board to Dismantle the Dispute Resolution Process**

**Toronto, ON** – In the advent of the complaints that were filed with Pride Toronto’s Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) against Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) – two of which have been removed and new ones lodged – we are reiterating our call for the dissolution of the DRP and invite other LGBTQ groups and organizations to oppose its use and do the same.

The DRP was established in 2011 following a recommendation by the problematic Community Advisory Panel, providing individuals both within and without Toronto’s LGBTQ community with a venue to challenge the participation of any registered group or organization within a Pride parade or march. The idea of the panel was that it would “resolve”, “correct”, and “remedy” “behaviours that are contrary to [unspecified] Policy, to ensure fair application of the rules for Parade and march participation, and to ensure compliance with those rules and [unspecified] applicable legislation” (Pg. 1 of Pride Toronto’s “Dispute Resolution Process” overview).

### **WE OPPOSE THE DRP ON MANY FRONTS:**

**ONE.** Because the DRP is open to individuals who are not participating in a Pride parade or march, including “non-queer-identified individuals and/or groups” and members of the general public (p.1). This places participating groups and organization at risk of attack by individuals who are spiteful and/or should otherwise have no say in what goes on during the Pride festival.

**TWO.** Because, despite the fact that Pride Toronto promises us that the Panel will not consider complaints that are “malicious, perpetuate slander, or personally attack individuals, parade participants, marchers, or Pride Toronto” (p.2), there is no way of guaranteeing that the Panel responsible for overseeing the process will be able to properly or unanimously identify complaints as such.

**THREE.** Because the Panel overseeing the process is comprised of 13 lawyers and four human rights specialists, who have been non-transparently appointed to provide the DRP with a supposedly “legal” and “authoritative” air. It should be noted that DRP and its rulings cannot be enforced if one of the parties invited to engage in the Process refuses to do so (p.4).

**FOUR.** Because it is unrealistic to expect members of the Dispute Resolution Panel – or anyone, for that matter – to be entirely “objective and impartial” (p. 4), especially if there are individuals on the Panel who have gone on record to oppose QuAIA’s participation in the Parade. This puts into question the Panel’s ability to provide “an objective, transparent appeal mechanism to review and resolve complaints about participation in the Pride parade and march,” as promised by Pride Toronto (p. 1).



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**FIVE.** Because the elected Pride Toronto Board – and *not* questionably-appointed lawyers – should determine the criteria that is required of a group or organization for participation in a Pride march or parade. This should include a demonstrated commitment to the wellbeing of LGBTQ people and their communities; and an alignment with Pride Toronto’s mission, vision, and anti-discrimination policies.

**SIX.** Because, as an organization that claims to represent and ‘celebrate’ the diversity of Toronto’s LGBTQ community, the Pride Toronto Board should be fully aware of the community groups and organizations that make up Toronto’s LGBTQ community and have a right to take part in the festival as a result.

**SEVEN.** Because if the right for one of these groups or organizations to participate is put into question – by *anybody* – it should be the duty of the Pride Toronto Board to step forward and protect that group from attack. Legitimizing these complaints and then subjecting community groups and organizations to a quasi-legal review process shows a tremendous lack of understanding, courage, and pride in the communities it claims to represent and celebrate.

**EIGHT.** Because Pride Toronto should uphold the festival’s political legacy, including the participation of not-directly-queer-related state- and government-critical organizations, like that of the Simon Nkoli Anti-Apartheid Committee in the 1980s.

## **THEREFORE, WE CALL FOR:**

**ONE.** The abolishment of the Dispute Resolution Process; and

**TWO.** An official statement from Pride Toronto

- (a) recognizing QuAIA as a community organization aligned with Pride Toronto’s mission, vision, and anti-discrimination policies, and
- (b) affirming its right to participate in Toronto Pride on that basis alone – which should be done for *any* recognized community group or organization that is ever questioned for its politics or manner of expression.

We also call on fellow community groups and organizations to write to the Pride Toronto Board asking for the same. You can direct your messages to [office@pridetoronto.com](mailto:office@pridetoronto.com)

In the name of freedom of association, freedom of speech, and unwavering support from the individuals who were elected to represent Toronto’s LGBTQ community on the Pride Toronto Board,

**The Queer Ontario Steering Committee**

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