

**FROM: The No Pride in Policing Coalition**

**TO: Pride Toronto members**

**Re: Pride Toronto Special General Meeting and Vote – Tues. Jan 22.**

## **WHY VOTE NO**

We are writing to urge you to vote NO to institutional police presence in Pride. Pride Toronto was born in community protest against police for conducting the bathhouse raids and arrests in 1981.

In 2016 Black LM–Toronto reminded us that the institution of policing continues to harass and oppress black, indigenous, people of colour and other members of queer communities in Toronto. The astonishing depth of this oppression was reported by the Ontario Human Rights Commission last month, finding that black people are 20 times as likely as white people to be shot by police in Toronto, even when the white people involved were more likely to have weapons and resist arrest.

In 2017 police paid little attention to the disappearance and death of trans community member Alloura Wells or to years of community concern that a serial killer was targeting the community until Bruce MacArthur was arrested early in 2018. Instead police were targeting gay men in a sting operation at Marie Curtis Park.

In support of all of our community, and in particularly the most marginalized and targeted members for whom Pride originated, at the 2016 and 2017 AGMs, both held in 2017, Pride Toronto membership voted overwhelmingly against police institutional participation or presence in Pride festivities.

## **PRIDE TORONTO - LACK OF ACCOUNTBILITY**

However last October, ignoring our history, will, and clear direction, and without consulting us, Pride Toronto invited the police back into the Pride Parade saying they saw ‘signs of a new understanding and active commitment’ by the police and had consulted widely in the community. When asked for details on the signs of improved policing or community consultations at the recent AGM, Pride Toronto could not produce any. But at the same time last October, clearly contradicting this reasoning, Pride Toronto Board minutes of Oct 15 indicate they decided to invite police back into the parade strictly in order to secure more funding. Pride Toronto now says they prioritized funding over the safety and well-being of marginalized, queer, and trans people.

## **MONEY OVER MEMBERSHIP**

In fact, Pride Toronto’s revenues in 2018 (\$4.3M), after a dip in 2017, were almost back to where they were in 2016 (\$4.4M) so in whose interest are increasing revenue further and growing an even bigger event?

Given the lack of transparency and accountability in how and why decisions are being made, it is concerning that Pride Toronto has started banning media and non-members of the community from our meetings. Further, e-voting has been introduced on the resolution question around police participation in pride thus limiting the ability for members to suggest amendments to the resolution question at the SGM and not allowing all voters to participate in a discussion on the resolution.

While black queers are being shot and killed, while the lives of indigenous, trans and homeless queers are not valued, while the disappearance of gay men of colour are not investigated until it is too late, while any part of our community is being harassed by the police, we cannot invite the institution of policing to march with us as allies in the Toronto Pride Parade.

## **TURN OUT AND VOTE NO**

We hope to see you Tuesday at the Special Members Meeting where we can again vote NO to Police in Pride.

## **VOTING INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRIDE TORONTO**

**Special General Meeting (SGM)** will be held on **Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019** at **Ryerson University, 31 Gerrard Street East, POD 250**. This is an accessible entrance and signs will be posted directing you to the meeting room. **Doors open at 5:30pm and we will begin at 6:30pm.**

You are being asked to vote on the following question,

**Should the Toronto Police Service be permitted to participate in Pride Toronto's Festival Weekend, Parade, and Streetfair, to include their uniforms and vehicles?**

### **THIS IS A YES OR NO QUESTION**

If you vote **YES**: You are voting **FOR** police participation in Pride Toronto's parade, marches, and streetfair.

If you vote **NO**: You are voting **AGAINST** organized institutional police participation in all Pride Toronto events.

**At 6:00pm on January 22nd**, all Members will receive an email with a unique code and a link to the voting platform. Once voting begins at 6:30pm, members can use the code to access the link and vote. This code is unique and only one is assigned per member. You can only vote once.

Voting can take place anytime between **6.30pm and 8.30pm. By 8:35pm, the results of the vote will be displayed on the screen and emailed to all members.**