



MODEL  
CITY  
HALL



# **DISMANTLING DISCRIMINATION WITHIN HAMILTON**

COMMITTEE CHAIR:  
GLADYS KOZYRA

#MCH2021

Dear Delegates,

Hello, my name is Kate Folsetter! I am honoured to be one of your Academic Directors for Model City Hall 2021. I am a senior at Westdale Secondary School in Hamilton. Next year, I will be attending the University of Ottawa to study Conflict Studies and Human Rights in French Immersion. I am very excited to have been chosen to work at the House of Commons to work as a parliamentary page. I am passionate about psychology, helping others, social issues, human rights and politics. I love to learn languages. I am fluent in French and I am learning Spanish. In my spare time I enjoy being outside, walking my dog Mazie, swimming, doing art, writing spoken word poetry and spending time with my friends.

I am part of Westdale's Model UN delegation, poetry club, and Student Council. I am so excited to be a part of Model City Hall 2021. I first attended Model City Hall in 2018 when I was in Grade 9. I loved getting the opportunity to debate municipal political issues. I am passionate about dismantling the systems of oppression that impact women, LGBTQ2S+ community, People of colour, Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities. I am passionate about making a difference and making municipal government accessible to youth.

As an Academic Director I worked to help train Committee Chairs, help write background guides and host the delegate training. I am so lucky to be a part of such a wonderful event and I hope you have an enjoyable time at Model City Hall 2021. I encourage you to try your best and take every opportunity given to you! I look forward to meeting you virtually! If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact me at [academic@modelcityhall.org](mailto:academic@modelcityhall.org).

Kind regards,

Kate Folsetter

Dear Delegates,

My name is Rand Amer and I am pleased to be one of your Academic Directors at Model City Hall 2021. I am a senior at Westdale Secondary School in Hamilton. Over the past several years, I have been a member of the Model UN club at my school, and I participated in Model City Hall Hamilton as a delegate during the February 2020 conference. In addition, I am an editor for my school's newspaper and a member of the HOSA club. In my spare time, I enjoy going on long hikes, kickboxing, knitting, and spending time with my cats. I am thrilled to be working with you as you take part in the second virtual conference of Model City Hall!

When I first participated in Model City Hall Hamilton as a delegate, I saw that the conference amplifies the voices of today's youth—tomorrow's leaders—by creating a safe space in which they can come together and hold meaningful discussions with one another. It was also riveting to collaborate with like-minded youth about issues that impacted our families, friends, neighbours, and communities, and subsequently find purposeful resolutions without the biases and pressures of political affiliations.

I am especially eager for the upcoming conference in May. Despite the unprecedented challenges we have faced in the past year, we have seen a major interest and a willingness in students to change the status quo and positively impact the world, even if it is on a small scale. After all, big changes always start small!

I hope that your participation in this conference will empower you to transform your communities for the better. If you have any questions regarding the conference, please email Model City Hall at [academic@modelcityhall.org](mailto:academic@modelcityhall.org) and we will be happy to assist you.

Regards,

Rand Amer

## CONTENT WARNING

Due to the unpredictable nature of the debates in Model City Hall, it is difficult to control what exactly will be discussed by guest speakers and during committee and networking sessions. We strive to make the conference a safe and inclusive environment for all participants, staff, and guest speakers. We also value mental health and believe in the importance of self-care. **With that in mind, this year's committees will include topics such as mental illness, substance abuse, violence, sexual assault, discrimination, and oppression.**

For your mental health and emotional wellbeing, please ensure that you are aware of the potentially triggering topics that your committee may discuss. If you must leave the committee session at any point in time, please try to inform your Committee Chairs in advance. In addition, you can direct a message to a MCH staff member for support or fill out the [Delegate Report Form](#) during the conference. A member of the executive team will connect with you to resolve the issue. We also suggest reaching out to a trusted friend or family member for support.

We have included a list of mental health resources for youth in Ontario that you can access:

**Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868 or visit [kidshelpline.ca](http://kidshelpline.ca)

**Crisis Service Canada:** 1-833-456-4566

**First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line:** 1-855-242-3310

**Trans Lifeline:** 877-330-6366

**LGBT Youth Line:** 1-800-268-9688 or text 647-694-4275

**Canada Drug Rehab Addiction Services Directory:** 1-877-746-1963

**National Eating Disorder Information Centre:** 1-866-633-4220

**Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 686868

### **Committee Chair Welcome**

Dear Delegates,

I am very excited to be your co-chairs for the *Dismantling Discrimination Within Hamilton* Committee for Model City Hall 2021!

My name is Gladys Kozyra and I am a Grade 9 student at Westdale Secondary School. I joined my school's Model UN delegation at the beginning of this (extremely eventful) school year and have since fallen in love with debating and finding solutions to problems facing the world today. I wish the best of luck especially to those participating in their first conference at Model City Hall or any form of model government. It's a completely nerve-wracking, but extremely rewarding experience! In my free time, I enjoy math, practicing the violin and viola, and slowly but surely, learning Polish.

This committee will focus mainly on Discrimination in Politics (A) and Discrimination in Education (B). In 2019, it was reported by Statistics Canada that Hamilton had the highest rate of hate crimes per-capita in all of Canada. This Committee will discuss the ways in which elected officials impact anti-discrimination legislation and attitudes as well as how citizens create the change they wish to see through activism and other initiatives. Through this committee, we hope to facilitate important discussions on the nature of discrimination in Hamilton as well as potential solutions to this epidemic of hate.

We look forward to meeting you all.

All the Best,

Gladys Kozyra

## **TOPIC A: Discrimination in Politics**

### **Overview**

A large part of fighting discrimination in Hamilton is recognizing the barriers that exist for people in marginalized communities who are involved in and affected by municipal politics. Marginalized groups have been historically underrepresented in politics. According to UN Women, women constitute only 36% of elected members in local levels of government. Over the past several municipal elections, Hamilton has seen greater diversity in its elected officials that more closely reflects the demographics of its population. There are currently 15 city councillors. In particular, there has been an increase in the number of women city councillors from 4 (2014) to 7 (2018). Also, the past two elections have seen more people of colour elected to Hamilton's City Council. There are currently two racialized Hamilton City Councillors (Nrinder Nann, Ward 3 and Tom Jackson, Ward 6), comprising 13% of the Council. According to the 2016 Census, 17.7% of Hamiltonians identified as a visible minority. When elected in 2014, Aidan Johnson, representing Ward 1, became the first openly LGBTQ+ Hamilton city councillor.

### **Groups for Civic Engagement in Hamilton**

There exist several groups in the Greater Hamilton Area (GHA) that advocate for the empowerment and inclusion of underrepresented voices in municipal affairs. For example, the Hamilton Centre For Civic Inclusion (HCCI) operates a program called the Hamilton Civic Leadership Program that educates participants on the civic process and community organizing. HCCI also runs their Black Youth Mentorship Program, which aims “to help improve the emotional well-being of Black youth in Hamilton source.”<sup>1</sup> It does this through Critical Mentoring, consisting of group sessions and one-on-one meetings with a professional working in a field of interest or with a similar background to the participant. The Disability Justice Network of Ontario (DJNO), based primarily in the GTHA, runs initiatives to promote an Ontario where people with disabilities “have personal and political agency”, “can thrive and

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<sup>1</sup> Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion, “Hamilton Civic Leadership,” Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion, September 4, 2020, <https://hcci.ca/civicleadership/>.

foster community”, and “build the power, capacity, and skills needed to hold people, communities, and institutions responsible for the spaces they create.”<sup>2</sup> One of their committees is the Youth Advisory Council, which consists of seven youth with disabilities from the GTHA that advise the organization’s Steering Committee on the Directions they want to see taken. Their Education Committee works to create educational resources and workshops on disability justice in Ontario. Also, the Hamilton Community Foundation runs a Neighbourhood Leadership Institute which, over 10 sessions, teaches participants about topics such as “communication and community awareness” as well as “conflict resolution and working with others.”<sup>3</sup>

In 2018-2019, the HCCI as well as the DJNO received a grant of \$7,800 from the Hamilton Community Foundation for “inaccessible health system research.”<sup>4</sup> In 2019, the Centre received a federal grant of \$127,000 from Canadian Heritage. This funded a series of anti-racism conferences held on March 28 and 29, 2020 in a virtual format. Upon receiving the grant, Kojo Dampitey, interim executive director of the HCCI said in a press conference, “This event will be open to participants from across the province of Ontario with an interest in exploring local contexts around anti-racism work and best practices. This event will be targeted specifically to the people from Hamilton who identify as Indigenous, black, people of colour, or as newcomers and immigrants.”<sup>5</sup> In April 2020, the HCCI worked with the DJNO as well as the Hamilton Student Mobilization Network (HSMN) and Erich’s Cupboard to establish an initiative to deliver food to people with disabilities or who can’t afford groceries during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative is run out of New Vision United Church on 21 Main Street West and operated mainly by volunteers.

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<sup>2</sup> Disability Justice Network of Ontario, “ABOUT,” Disability Justice Network of Ontario, Accessed April 8, 2021, <https://www.djno.ca/about>.

<sup>3</sup> Hamilton Community Foundation, “Leadership,” Hamilton Community Foundation, Accessed April 8, 2021, <https://www.hamiltoncommunityfoundation.ca/leadership/neighbourhood-leadership-institute/>.

<sup>4</sup> Hamilton Community Foundation, “2018-2019 Grants - Hamilton Community Foundation,” Hamilton Community Foundation, 2018, <https://www.hamiltoncommunityfoundation.ca/grants/2018-2019-grants/>.

<sup>5</sup> Lisa Polewski, “Hamilton to Host Anti-Racism Conference, Thanks to Federal Funds,” Global News, *Global News*, October 9, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6013165/hamilton-anti-racism-funding/>.

## **Instances of Discrimination and Action**

Although the impact of these organizations has not gone unnoticed, according to Statistics Canada, Hamilton had the highest rate of police-reported hate crimes in all of Canada in 2019. Several instances of discrimination in Hamilton in recent years include in October 2014 when a transgender woman was prevented from using the women's restroom by a guard at an HSR terminal. She was told to use the universal washroom and later filed a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal (OHRT). This led to a settlement with the OHRT in April 2016, and a transgender rights protocol approved by Hamilton city councillors at the time. It included statements such as, "The City of Hamilton will make all efforts to ensure that persons can use washrooms with safety, privacy and dignity, regardless of their gender identity or gender expression" (5.1) and "All persons have the right to use City washroom and change room facilities without harassment, sexual harassment, voyeurism, and physical and sexual assault. In addition to any legal sanctions that these behaviours may result in, employees engaging in these behaviours are subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy and Personal Harassment Prevention Procedure" (5.6).<sup>6</sup>

Another example includes the events of June 15, 2019 during the annual Hamilton Pride at Gage Park. At this event, several members of the yellow vest movement as well as religious extremists disrupted the celebrations and a violent physical altercation ensued between the protestors and those attending the event. Five people were arrested and charged by the Hamilton Police Service (HPS), including 1 protestor, 3 counter-protestors and 1 unspecified. In February 2021, the charges against David Prychitka, a counter-protester, were dropped after he agreed "to keep the peace and be of good behaviour and to not possess any weapons for a year."<sup>7</sup> In response to the situation in general, Mayor Eisenberger issued a statement, saying "I am sorry for the pain and fear that the Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+

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<sup>6</sup> City of Hamilton, "Protocol for Gender Identity and Gender Expression; Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Persons," City of Hamilton, March 8, 2017, [http://www2.hamilton.ca/NR/HRFormsDocs/Transgender-Protocol\\_2019.pdf](http://www2.hamilton.ca/NR/HRFormsDocs/Transgender-Protocol_2019.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Nicole O'Reilly, "Charges against Hamilton Pride Attendee Withdrawn," *MuskokaRegion.com*, February 18, 2021, <https://www.muskokaregion.com/news-story/10334170-charges-against-hamilton-pride-attendee-withdrawn/>.



communities, their friends, and allies experienced at the Pride event and which many are still feeling.”<sup>8</sup>

The Hamilton Police Service was heavily criticized for their response to the violence, with many saying that there was insufficient planning in advance as well as inadequate police response when the physical altercation broke out. The HPS was also criticized for arresting counter-protesters before the alt-right protesters themselves. A third-party report released by Toronto-based lawyer Scott Bergman on June 8, 2020 found that prior to Pride 2019, “The HPS fell short in its planning and preparation.” For example, “The Division 20 Crime Management Office was not aware of Pride 2019 until two days before the event because the S.E.A.T. (Special Events Advisory Team) application was not forwarded to their Office. It is unclear why the S.E.A.T. application never made it to the Crime Manager responsible for drafting the OP (Operational Plan).” Also, “The four officers assigned to Pride 2019 had no prior communication with or contact information for any of the Pride organizers. There was no coordination between the HPS and the organizers.” The report recommended that when planning for future Pride events, “The HPS should draft a formal policy and procedure to mandate communication between the HPS S.E.A.T. representative and the Crime Management Office within the respective divisions.”<sup>9</sup> On June 11, 2020, nearly a year after Pride 2019, the chief of the HPS at the time, Eric Girt, said in a statement posted to Twitter: “As Chief, I take full responsibility for what took place at Pride, during and after. I apologize to the community for inadequate planning and preparation for Hamilton Pride 2019.”<sup>10</sup>

Lately, actions have been taken against several Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) Trustees after Ahona Mehdi, a HWDSB Student Trustee during the 2019-20 school year, called out the racism she experienced and was witness to during her term via Twitter. This included, but was not limited to, anti-Muslim remarks as well as being prevented from presenting a motion to end the

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<sup>8</sup> Dan Taekema, “Mayor Apologizes for ‘Pain and Fear’ Felt by LGBTQ Community after Pride Violence | CBC News,” CBC News, *CBC/Radio Canada*, July 6, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/mayor-eisenberger-lgbtq-pride-1.5201828>.

<sup>9</sup> Scott Bergman, “Pride in Hamilton AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO THE EVENTS SURROUNDING HAMILTON PRIDE 2019,” COOPER, SANDLER, SHIME & BERGMAN LLP, June 8, 2020, <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/6940282/Pride-in-Hamilton-an-Independent-Review-Into-the.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Hamilton Police, “CHIEF STATEMENT,” Twitter post, June 11, 2020, 4:48 p.m., <https://twitter.com/HamiltonPolice/status/1271182654688374784/photo/1>.

Hamilton Police liaison program in HWDSB schools. The tweets along with student activism through groups, such as HWDSB Kids Need Help, lead to a third party writing a report investigating the issues raised as well as sanctions against Alex Johnstone and Carole Paikin Miller, with the latter being asked to resign. Additionally, there have been instances where the City of Hamilton has failed to protect the security of its marginalized public servants. It was first reported in a 2019 VICE investigation that Marc Lemire, a noted white supremacist and former leader of the neo-Nazi organization “Heritage Front”, had been working in the City of Hamilton’s IT department as a network analyst since 2005. This job entailed handling city communications and information about City workers. Matthew Green, Hamilton’s first Black city councillor, told VICE, “Given Marc Lemire's ties to violent white supremacist organizations, I feel that both my family and I were placed in a serious undue risk of harm. People with Marc Lemire's publicly reported past and extremist ties should never be provided high level access to private and confidential government information.”<sup>11</sup> Lemire’s employment with the City was ended after the investigation was published.

## **Current Situation**

Many instances of discrimination previously mentioned are still ongoing. Recently, after the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd in the United States at the hands of police officers, law enforcement institutions around the world have been forced to confront the past and current systemic racism upheld by their profession. In Hamilton, the City Council creates the laws that govern the Hamilton Police Service (HPS). In June 2020, several peaceful anti-Black racism protests, standing in support of Black Lives Matter, occurred in places throughout the City such as Gore Park and Dundurn Castle. Several Black Lives Matter activists also presented a list of demands in front of local institutions such as City Hall and the HPS Headquarters. The list included calls to defund the HPS and use the funds towards food security, affordable housing, anti-racism and other initiatives as well as for the HPS to stop

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<sup>11</sup> Mack Lamoureux, “Former Neo-Nazi Leader Marc Lemire Has Been on City of Hamilton's Payroll For Years,” VICE, *VICE*, August 5, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2P3APjM>.

ticketing people who are homeless. Despite this, the 2021 budget for the HPS is currently \$175,597,980. This is a 2.98% increase from 2020. Mayor Eisenburger defended this decision, saying that “the only way to defund would be to drastically reduce police staff, which would result in slower response times and impaired ability to be proactive.”<sup>12</sup> In Toronto, the police budget was freezed from the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

In February 2021, Hamilton’s City Council moved towards reestablishing the Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource (HARRC) upon selecting a board of directors. The Centre was first introduced in 2018, but in February 2019, the project was paused to “allow for more community engagement and stakeholders’ input to better define the centre’s mandate, activities and success factors.”<sup>13</sup> The centre would help to support those who have been affected by a racist incident by connecting them with the anti-racism lead as well as conduct much-needed research on racism in Hamilton. The next update on this initiative is set for July, 2021.

### **Guiding Questions:**

- To what extent do activist movements and organizations have the power to influence political action on a municipal level?
- What work still needs to be done to ensure proportional demographic representation in Hamilton’s elected officials? How does proportional representation affect municipal public policy?
- What have been the effects of different forms of discrimination as they affect municipally funded sectors such as law enforcement, community support centres, city planning, etc?
- To what extent do the views of elected officials influence anti-discrimination legislation for better or for worse?

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<sup>12</sup> Jeff Mahoney, “Hamilton Police Services Board Approves 2.98 per Cent Increase in Police Budget,” *thespec.com*, *The Hamilton Spectator*, December 17, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2QcSpSW>.

<sup>13</sup> City of Hamilton, “Anti-Racism Resource Centre,” City of Hamilton, *City of Hamilton*, June 14, 2019, <https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/priority-projects/anti-racism-resource-centre>.

- As Hamilton prepares for its next municipal election in 2022, what can be done to make sure that marginalized voices are heard, represented, and addressed?

**Links For Further Research:**

- [Hamilton public school board still weighing sanctions against four trustees](#)
- [Audit of HWDSB staff shows concerns about discrimination, harassment and hiring issues](#)
- [Racism runs deep at Hamilton schools, student leaders say](#)
- [Hamilton Police Services: 1.21 Equal Opportunity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination](#)
- [Why this advocate fights for disability justice — not just accessibility](#)
- [The Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Dismantling Systemic Racism in Schools: 8 Big Ideas](#)

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