

June 6, 2023

Re: Pride Month 2023 in the City of Vaughan

I am submitting this deputation in my role as Advisor to the Board of The 482 Collective on Matters of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The 482 Collective is an innovative charity located in the City of Vaughan that supports women, children and individuals from diverse 2SLGBTQI+ communities who have fled intimate partner violence and human trafficking.

Our deputation aims to address an issue of great significance to our community, specifically the establishment of an annual Pride Month flag raising event and the allocation of support from the City of Vaughan. As an organization that respects diversity, promotes equity and fosters a culture of inclusion, we believe it is vital to celebrate diverse 2SLGBTQI+ communities, and their contributions to the cultural fabric of the City, and to recognize their ongoing struggle for safety and acceptance. We are committed to ensuring that everyone feels seen, heard and understood, without judgement, and knows that they matter.

There are real concerns to consider in terms of acceptance and the mental health and well-being of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals. According to Statistics Canada, 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians are more likely to be victims of violent crimes like hate crimes, more likely to experience poor mental health outcomes and be diagnosed with a mood or anxiety disorder and more likely to have seriously contemplated suicide in their lifetimes.

Research conducted through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health shows that there is a heartbreaking lack of 2SLGBTQI+ specialized services, supports and safer spaces in York Region, as reported by the *Toronto Star* in July 2020.

We propose the implementation of an annual Pride Month flag raising event in Vaughan as a symbolic gesture demonstrating the City's commitment to creating a welcoming, safe and accepting environment for all residents.

To ensure the success of this year's Pride Month flag raising event on June 13, we kindly request the following:

- support from the Communications department to promote the event via the City's official communication channels.

To ensure the success of the event next year and in future years, we kindly request the City's support in allocating a budget specifically designated for the organization and execution of the Pride Month flag raising event, including:

- support from the Communications department to design and issue invitations to invited guests, including VIPs and dignitaries like local MPPs, and to promote the event via the City's official communication channels;
- support from the Events team to manage logistics, food and beverage needs, décor and signage and setup and teardown; and
- performance fees/honoraria.

This financial support will enable us to create a memorable and engaging experience that encourages community participation and demonstrates Vaughan's dedication to celebrating diversity.

We respectfully request that the Pride Month flag raising event also become a part of the City's official list of annual events – perhaps evolving into a family-friendly celebration like Pride in the Park or Pride in the Square at Vaughan Metropolitan Centre – signifying its importance and the City's commitment to supporting 2SLGBTQI+ communities. By incorporating this event into the City's annual events portfolio, we aim to establish a tradition of celebration, support and allyship.

We assure you that our intentions are aligned with the City's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan and the stated objective of engaging 2SLGBTQI+ communities to support opportunities to build awareness and educate the public to effectively work toward the elimination of all forms of intolerance, discrimination and bigotry. It is essential that the City work closely with representatives from these communities to ensure their voices are heard and reflected in the planning and execution of the event.

We firmly believe that the establishment and support of community events, such as the Pride Month flag raising, fall within this jurisdiction, as they contribute to the social and cultural fabric of our city.

We kindly request your consideration and approval of our proposal during this Committee of the Whole (2) meeting on June 6, 2023.

Together, we can recognize, promote and celebrate the dignity of every human person.

Thank you,

Jumol Royes
Advisor to the Board – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion