

**Gay community still reeling over Pride clash  
Rally this morning at main site of incidents  
By Carmela Fragomeni  
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The Portuguese-Canadian National Congress is condemning a number of soccer fans who harassed Hamilton's gay and lesbian community during the Pride parade on James Street North Saturday.

The congress issued a statement from Toronto yesterday saying: "This group of individuals does not reflect the attitudes of the majority of those in the Portuguese-Canadian community, who hold the values of respect, tolerance and acceptance towards those with different cultural or sexual orientations."

The Portuguese will not allow "a small group of intolerant people" to destroy their goodwill with the gay community -- which include "our children, brothers, sisters ...," said congress president Peter Ferreira.

The condemnation comes as Hamilton's gay and lesbian community is still trying to recover from the shock and outrage of being cursed, harassed, vilified and spat upon in a Portuguese area downtown Saturday during their Pride parade.

"It brings shame to the city of Hamilton," says Betty-Anne Thomas, executive-director of the AIDS Network of Hamilton. The attackers seemed very close to violence, she said.

Parade participants report that about 50 young men celebrating Portugal's soccer win scuffled, pushed and slapped extended hands offered in friendship. They called those in the parade offensive names and swore at them.

Police intervened quickly and moved at least one soccer fan into a police van until the parade passed.

"It was really quite shocking to us," says Jae Adams, Hamilton Pride festival chair. "We thought we were welcomed."

Ronald Burridge, president of the James Street North Merchants and Business Association, says they were welcomed and are wanted back for next year's parade.

Hamilton Pride has since received phone calls and e-mails of support, including from Vancouver's Portuguese gay community expressing shame at what happened.

But Adams would like to hear from Hamilton's Portuguese community and talk over the incidents.

Adams is particularly concerned for the young Portuguese man who joined the parade at City Hall where it started. The man proudly carried the Portuguese flag until bystanders yelled at him and demanded he get out of the parade.

Lyla Miklos, a spokesperson for Hamilton Pride, said the organization believes the incidents may have been hate crimes and will report them to police as such.

Pride organizers put out a press release late Monday evening condemning the incident. They had never experienced such hate in the festival's history and are particularly disheartened that this should happen on the event's tenth anniversary.

The AIDS Network is holding a press conference and rally today against homophobia and AIDS-phobia. It will be held at 9:30 a.m. in front of Christ's Church Cathedral where most of the incidents took place. Parade participants stopped there to commemorate people who have died of AIDS.

"It's unfortunate we have to stand in solidarity against something, instead of for something," says social planner Deirdre Pike, who chairs the GLBT advisory committee of the City of Hamilton and is also chair of the new LGBTQ Community Wellness Centre of Hamilton.

Pike now has sad memories every time she sees the Portuguese flag, but adds this could have happened in any ethnic community where a mob mentality develops among "young heterosexual men in a context that it's wrong to be gay."