

Group protests lack of diversity on Hamilton Police Services Board

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Diversity advocates sat on either side of council chambers during a Hamilton Police Services Board meeting on Thursday.

Diversity advocates are letting the Hamilton Police Services Board know they're unhappy with a recent appointee to the board.

A group of protesters, who held signs that read "representation matters" during Thursday's board meeting, said the appointment failed to represent Hamilton's diverse community.

Lyla Miklos, who was among the 22 applicants for the position, says it was a missed opportunity for the city in light of its recent commitment to establish an equity, diversity and inclusion lens.

"In the end, the choice was a white man — heterosexual, cisgendered, able-bodied, affluent — sitting on this board," said Miklos. "Which doesn't really speak to the many diverse voices in our community. And we're missing something: sitting on a very important board that does very important work for our city."

The position went to Fred Bennink, former president of Zip Signs.

Miklos says the protest isn't critical of Bennink himself but is meant to call into question the process that was used to select him. She says it overlooks people from unrepresented and marginalized communities who are impacted by the policies established by the board.

"There's also people that say, 'Well, you know, the best candidate was selected,' which seems to negate the fact that people of colour, queer people come with excellence and skills and board experience and financial experience," said Miklos. "They do bring things to the table where they can say, 'Hey, I have skill sets that I can bring to the police board that you might not have already that will bring a different voice and perspective to the way you do business.'"

Protesters remained silent during Thursday's meeting, and board members did not comment on their presence.

In an interview with Global News Radio CHML's Bill Kelly earlier this week, Mayor Fred Eisenberger, who is a member of the board, responded to criticism of the appointment by saying he hopes and wishes for better diversity going forward.