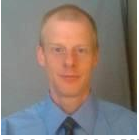


Toronto lawyer will lead review of police actions at 2019 Hamilton Pride celebrations



BY DON MITCHELL GLOBAL NEWS
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The Hamilton Police Services Board has brought on a Toronto lawyer lead the review of police actions before, during, and after Pride events at Gage Park in 2019. *Will Erskine / Global News*

A Toronto lawyer will review how Hamilton police responded to violence at Pride celebrations in June.

Criminal defence lawyer Scott Bergman of Cooper, Sandler, Shime & Bergman LLP has confirmed to Global News he will be undertaking the review after a recommendation from a city subcommittee.



Toronto lawyer Scott Bergman has been tasked with conducting a review of how police responded to violence at Hamilton Pride celebrations in June.
Cooper, Sandler, Shime & Bergman LLP

Bergman says the goal of the probe won't be to lay blame or establish misconduct, but to assess what happened with the view of preventing any type of reoccurrence.

"The first step in the process is going to be meeting with members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities to obtain input with respect to the terms of reference, which will outline the scope of my review," said Bergman.

Bergman says he expects to have the outline of his review ready for the Dec. 12, 2019 police board meeting.

In early October, the police services board unanimously voted in favour of having an external legal counsel lead the review of police actions before, during, and after the June 15 event at Gage Park.

The review will look over criticisms from members of Hamilton's LGBTQ2 community about how police responded when homophobic and far-right protesters showed up at the Pride festival, violently clashing with Pride supporters.

Some have accused police of taking too long to respond to the violence. Four members of the LGBTQ2 community and one from an anti-Pride contingent were arrested after the altercation at Gage Park.

In October, Mayor Fred Eisenberger agreed having a lawyer lead the review was the best option, adding it was important not to drag out the process.

"I think the external legal counsel approach is not only cost-effective, but will also be timely, and I think timeliness is an important factor in this," Eisenberger said.

"We don't want this to go on for years, we want this to have an end time. We want it to be thorough, fair, [and] equitable, but also timely in terms of reporting back."

Meanwhile, former Hamilton Pride chair Lyla Miklos — who spoke out and supported a motion for a review at a July police board meeting — told Global News her excitement over the announcement is "coloured with a lot of caution" and "a slight wave of disappointment."

Miklos says when the idea of a review was put forth to the board by councillors Maureen Wilson and Nrinder Nann, they asked for a "community review working group" made up of marginalized community members to set parameters for it would look like.

What also stood out to Miklos during Bergman's presentation to the board on Thursday was the stipulation that the review would not place blame on any party.

"I think that was the one that really jumped out at me, was the fact that it is not his role to place any blame," said Miklos, "And that was a bit of a red flag for me, because if we're not going to place any blame, then it also seems to me that there's not going to be any accountability for what happened.

"And that's really problematic."

Bergman says he has no "preconceived views" of where the review will go or end, but expects to provide recommendations when it's done.

The review is expected to be completed before Hamilton Pride 2020.



Police arrest suspect involved in Hamilton Pride altercation

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