

CITY REVERSES ON PRIDE BOOKLET
BY NICOLE MACINTYRE
THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR
FRIDAY, JUNE 15, 2007

The city returned a gay community guide to its brochure shelves yesterday, less than a week after pulling the booklet because of a “sexually explicit” ad.

Joe-Anne Priel, the city’s general manager of community services, said she asked that Hamilton Pride Pages be removed from city-owned recreational facilities after receiving complaints about an ad for a gay chat line.

“It’s about paying for sex over the phone,” she said. “Is that appropriate?”

Priel reversed her decision yesterday after gay leaders accused the city of censorship and homophobia.

“It smacks of oppression,” said the guide’s editor Martin “Joe” Whelan.

The booklet, which features local resources, businesses and letters from the mayor and police chief, is the only such guide available in Hamilton, said Deirdre Pike, chair of the city’s gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender advisory committee.

“The city’s response is purely based on homophobia,” she said.

The advertisement on the second to last page shows two shirtless men reaching into one another’s briefs.

“Size matters,” it states.

Priel, who called the line, instructed her staff to put the brochure behind the counter last week until she consulted with the city manager, mayor and gay community leaders.

Mayor Fred Eisenberger declined to comment.

Priel said she decided to put the material back yesterday afternoon after learning tourism and police offices were still making it available. The city needs to be on the same page on the issue, she said.

"I may have acted in the absence of good solid policy ... the next time I'll approach it differently."

nmacintyre@thespec.com 905-526-3299 Would you pull the booklet? See the ad and offer your feedback on the Spec's City Hall blog at <http://hallmarks.thespec.com>

MORE SHAME THAN PRIDE IN GAY SEX AD

BY ANDREW DRESCHER

THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

MONDAY, JUNE 18, 2007

I'm not homophobic.

By that, I mean I'm not afraid of or prejudiced against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, or anyone who belongs to any other adult-to-adult sexual minority group.

Who people love or how they have sex has always been a matter of supreme indifference to me, ethically, morally or spiritually.

I no more judge individuals or groups by their sexual orientation than I do by their race, gender, colour, religion, ethnic origin, age or marital status.

For me, there are far more relevant attributes or traits for weighing folks than how they happen to grab on, get down or do the do.

Fairness and good judgment, for example.

By those standards, Hamilton Pride Festival Inc. showed appallingly bad judgment by accepting an overtly sexual ad for a gay community guide that is partially funded by the City of Hamilton.

Gay spokespeople then compounded the foul-up by unfairly accusing the city of oppression and homophobia when, after receiving complaints, the city yanked the guide from shelves in municipal recreation centres where it shared space with brochures for food banks and other community services.

Unfortunately, Joe-Anne Priel, general manager of community services, reversed her decision to pull the offending booklet after discovering it was still on display in other distribution centres such as tourism and police offices.

Priel still thinks it's "inappropriate" for the ad to be available in city-owned facilities. But she says the city needs a formal policy for these kind of things. Or at least have a discussion about the issue. Or possibly toss it to a community panel to wrestle with.

Fair enough, but I think Priel should have stuck to her guns and let common sense prevail. And I sure hope she didn't cave because of media attention or what amounts to bullying allegations.

The publication in question is called Hamilton Pride Pages, a helpful 40-page gay-friendly business and community guide with links to last week's annual Pride Fest and stamped with greetings from local MPPs, MPs, the mayor, and police chief.

It's all neatly and professionally done except for the last two pages.

On one, there's an advertisement for a spa that shows the naked towelwrapped torso of a man whose hands are covered in a viscous white liquid which may or may not be soap.

That isn't the significant issue for Priel. It's the man-to-man phone sex ad that show two topless men reaching into the crotch of each other's undies.

Both ads are credibility-killers for the guide. They cheapen it in the same way a heterosexual sex ad would cheapen any serious community publication. They're also amazingly insensitive to the sensibilities of the larger community to which gays belong.

Priel makes the point that if the sex ad depicted a man with his hands inside a woman's pants or vice versa, her reaction and response would have been the same.

So would mine.

It doesn't matter if these kinds of ads are prevalent in alternative newspapers and magazines. Or if our sex-saturated culture bombards us daily with similar commercial come-ons.

This is about maintaining certain civic standards. Under that same banner, the city has previously pulled at least one sexually suggestive hetero ad from bus shelters.

The same should apply here.

The fact the ad depicts gay sex doesn't automatically excuse it from being judged by the same sensibilities as advertisements pitched to the hetero market.

Bear in mind, the guide was produced with financial assistance from the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender advisory committee of Hamilton. This year, taxpayers are supporting that group to the tune of \$3,890, of which about \$1,500 was funnelled to the booklet.

Since municipal money is supporting both the guide and the centers where it's being distributed, surely in return the city has the right to expect some sensitivity and tolerance to the views of others.

Rather than levelling knee-jerk accusations of homophobia, Hamilton Pride should remember that responsibilities go hand in hand with rights.

***Andrew Dreschel's commentary appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
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Why is sexuality still a taboo subject?

Re: 'More shame than Pride in gay sex ad'

(Dreschel column, June 18)

By Lyla Miklos

THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, 2007

Andrew Dreschel seems to be saying it's OK to be queer as long as he doesn't have to see any overt displays of your sexuality.

Pride celebrations are about embracing and displaying our sexuality proudly and openly. Sexual orientation and identity defines the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Community (GLBTQ). If Hamiltonians embrace and accept sexual diversity, then we should celebrate sexual expression in all its forms.

The Hamilton Pride Pages have been a fixture in Hamilton's GLBTQ community since 2000; the GLBTQ advisory committee to the City of Hamilton has contributed funds to its production since 2004.

Cruiseline and Central Spa have almost the exact same ads in the exact same locations in the Pride Pages as last year, although the image in last year's Cruiseline ad were the faces of two gay men sharing a phone, rather than each other's anatomy.

Every edition of Pride Pages has had ads and listings for bathhouses, sex shops and sex phone lines. These businesses have never been an issue for city staff before. Why now?

Does the city have a policy against queer adult men engaging in consensual phone sex?

Dreschel's column is a reflection of sexual repression and oppression within society. GLBTQ culture is far more sexually overt than "straight" culture. In this day and age, why are ads for sex related products and services still regarded as indecent and immoral? Why is sexuality still such a taboo subject?

— *Lyla Miklos, Hamilton*

MY ORIGINAL LETTER TO THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR (UNEDITED):

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Date: Monday, June 18, 2007

Re: The Hamilton Spectator Column "More shame than Pride in gay sex ad"

by Andrew Dreschel

Dreschel seems to be saying that it's okay to be queer as long as he doesn't have to see any overt displays of your sexuality.

Pride celebrations across the globe are about embracing and displaying our sexuality proudly and openly. Sexual orientation and identity defines the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Community (GLBTQ). If Hamiltonians claim to embrace and accept sexual diversity then we should celebrate sexual expression in all its forms

The Hamilton Pride Pages have been a fixture in Hamilton's GLBTQ community since 2000 and The GLBTQ Advisory Committee to The City of Hamilton has contributed funds towards its production since 2004.

Cruiseline and Central Spa have almost the exact same ads in the exact same locations within the Pride Pages as last year. Although the image in last year's Cruiseline ad were the faces of two smiling gay men sharing a phone, rather than each other's anatomy.

Every edition of The Hamilton Pride Pages for the past seven years has had ads and listings for bathhouses, sex shops and sex phone lines. These businesses have never been an issue for City Staff before. Why now? Does the City of Hamilton have an official policy against queer adult men engaging in consensual phone sex?

Pride is also about rejoicing in the fact that we are all sexual beings and shouldn't be ashamed of being designed to want and enjoy sex. Sexuality is a fundamental aspect of humanity. Sex is as natural as breathing or eating.

Dreschel's reaction to the ads in this year's Pride Pages is a reflection of the sexual repression and oppression within our society. GLBTQ culture is far more sexually overt than straight culture. This does not mean that the GLBTQ community should conform to a conservative sensibility regarding sexuality.

In this day and age why are advertisements for sex related products and services still regarded as indecent and immoral? Why is sexuality – queer or straight – still such a taboo subject?

Lyla Miklos
Hamilton, Ontario