

# Hamilton Police Chief Eric Girt says he is open to an ‘adjudicative’ review of response to Pride violence

*The public has only heard “one side of the story” about how police dealt with a clash of protesters at Pride, Girt said in a radio interview.*

**By Matthew Van Dongen**  
**The Hamilton Spectator**  
**July 17, 2019**

Chief Eric Girt says he is open to an “adjudicative” review — rather than a “trial” by media — of the controversial Hamilton police response to violence at Pride.

Councillors Maureen Wilson and Nrinder Nann have asked the Hamilton Police Service Board to support an “independent review” of how police dealt with a violent clash between homophobic demonstrators and masked counterprotesters at Pride in Gage Park June 15.

Pride organizers said police were slow to intervene when violence broke out, while police argue they were respecting a request from organizers to keep a low profile at the event.

In the aftermath, many LGBTQ+ resident and allies also reacted angrily when early arrests focused on Pride-supporting counterprotesters, with only one homophobic demonstrator facing charges.

In a radio show interview Tuesday with CHML’s Bill Kelly, the chief said the public has only heard “one side of the story” and that police rarely share specific operational details or tactics in public for fear of giving a playbook to criminals.

(He did note, however, that police were simultaneously monitoring June 15 protests at Gage Park and city hall, with intelligence suggesting the latter location might see a “major altercation.”)

Regardless, Girt said he would welcome the chance to respond to specific criticisms about the Pride police response “in front of an adjudicative body” if the board endorses such a move.

“I don’t think that it is productive to have a trial or a review strictly in the media,” said Girt, adding the police services board will discuss the request for a review at a Thursday meeting.

He also noted it is possible a resident will make a related request or complaint to a provincial watchdog agency such as the Office of the Independent Police Review Director.

“We have oversight bodies, they have the authority to review those things,” he said. “I look forward to the (prospective) review ... by those adjudicative bodies.”

It’s unclear what “adjudicative bodies” have legal jurisdiction to review specific police operations or what role, if any, concerned residents can play in that process.

Wilson and Nann have called for “community review working group” to provide advice on both the proposed review as well as a broader look at police protocols related to “hate-based activity.” They argue often-targeted marginalized groups, including the LGBTQ+ residents, should be part of the consultation.

Their request for a review is on the agenda for Thursday’s police service board meeting — along with letters from citizens and several requests to speak.

It remains to be seen how much board support there is for such a review.

Mayor Fred Eisenberger, who also chairs the police board, has previously taken flak for defending the police response at Pride, at one point calling accusations of a slow response a “false narrative.”

But the mayor has since suggested he would support a review to help “clear the air.”

The two councillors were unavailable Tuesday to talk about their proposal for a review, but Nann’s office indicated the Ward 3 councillor planned to attend Thursday’s police board meeting.

A Pride Hamilton representative is also expected to delegate to the board Thursday.

Pride board member Cameron Kroetsch, who stressed he was speaking for himself rather than the organization, said he believes the police service and its board “must be held accountable” for actions both at and after Pride.

“I think if there is a review it has to be external and independent, an arm’s-length process. I don’t think the board can independently review itself,” he said. “We deserve a transparent process with an outcome that is clear to everyone in the community.”

Other residents and agencies also hope to speak to the board Thursday about the relationship between police and the LGBTQ+ community.

Lyla Miklos, a vocal LGBTQ+ activist who once interviewed for a position on the police board, says in a request to delegate she wants to help board members “understand the community’s fears” and offer advice to help “repair the relationship” between wary residents and police.

A representative from the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic is also hoping to convince police to join a new campaign, "No Hate in the Hammer," said executive director Hugh Tye.

"We want police to take community concerns seriously, to work together to address hate in our city," he said. "We need a community-wide response, a broad coalition ... Allies need to speak up, too, for those marginalized residents most affected by hate."

**From:** [https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/hamilton-police-chief-eric-girt-says-he-is-open-to-an-adjudicative-review-of-response/article\\_0bf8bced-e3b6-5821-a590-d7a8c270a756.html](https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/hamilton-police-chief-eric-girt-says-he-is-open-to-an-adjudicative-review-of-response/article_0bf8bced-e3b6-5821-a590-d7a8c270a756.html)