



NEWS RELEASE

Ruling to disallow uniformed police and floats in Toronto Pride parade

Tuesday, January 17th, 2017 marks a dark day for LGBTQ Law Enforcement professionals in the province of Ontario, the provincial capital and Canada's largest city, Toronto. We are deeply disappointed and saddened by the Toronto Pride ruling to disallow uniformed police officers and floats in future Pride parades.

Serving with Pride will continue to move forward with the resolve to do what is right and to lead by example.

History has not been kind to those who identify as LGBTQ, and the police actions associated to those injustices are well known. But we have made tremendous strides, we have listened, we have spoken and we will continue to do so in the name of human rights.

Despite this setback, there are, and will continue to be, change agents within the law enforcement and criminal justice communities who are working tirelessly behind the scenes to affect change within their organizations.

Constable Danielle Bottineau, Toronto's LGBTQ Liaison Officer works tirelessly by meeting, calling and consulting with members of her LGBTQ community. Regardless of the time or day, one would be hard pressed to find her at a time when she doesn't have her finger on the pulse of the community. Cst. Bottineau and others along with Trans community member and TPS LGBTQ Civilian Co-Chair, Christine Newman lecture at Ryerson University and other community organizations to ensure that the message of police and community inclusivity is loud and clear.

Constable Brian Mitchell, a former Hamilton officer who has since moved to York Regional Police is the president of Serving with Pride. He was the first male officer to come out in the history of his service and worked with Hamilton towards their first Pride flag raising, installing safe spaces in each division, participation in Toronto Pride and working with Hamilton's LGBTQ youth community. Cst. Mitchell also lectures about LGBTQ terminology, rights, and stories at the Ontario Police College during their Basic Constable Training program, a program that every single sworn officer in the Province of Ontario must attend prior to working at a police service. Over the course of four years, over 1,000 sworn Police Constables have heard from Cst. Mitchell and his community panel guests.

Cst. Dena Peden is an ally, from Durham Regional Police Service who has spent countless hours working with her LGBTQ youth community, starting programs such as Colours – a program for LGBTQ youth between the ages of 13-20 in the Durham region. Again, another example of an officer who has put their heart and soul into closing those gaps within their profession when such an outreach is not mandated nor required by her employer.

RCMP's Communication Specialist Jean Turner spends countless hours working with community organizations, serves as a Director at SWP, and bravely came out in a [YouTube video](#) about abuses experienced at the hands of her family as a young woman. Jean proudly wears the RCMP crest while sharing these experiences, representing Canada's National Police Service to inspire others to come forward and share their experiences. Her story clearly shows that police are just like the rest of us, we all have trials and tribulations, failures and successes. Jean was the driving force behind the historic move to have all RCMP Detachments in Ontario fly the rainbow flag in their lobbies, she started an LGBTQ internal support network within her organization and sits on various diversity committees at the provincial and national levels.

Chief Laurie Hayman, who recently retired from her post as Chief of the Strathroy-Caradoc Police Service was the first openly gay female Chief in Canada. Chief Hayman was a visionary who foresaw a workplace where every one of her colleagues can be open and inclusive regardless of what background they come from. Chief Hayman was active in many community organizations and boards and will forever be known as a door opener for our colleagues in the law enforcement and criminal justice communities.

These are just 5 examples of police colleagues who are going above and beyond their day to day job in their organizations to affect change. There are hundreds of others within their police and criminal justice organizations too, we know you are out there and we need you now – more than ever.

We are proud to say that Serving with Pride has the full support of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Police Association, and many other proactive and pro-police community organizations.

Our colleagues will not waiver in their support of our LGBTQ community. They will continue to provide the highest quality service regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, sex, etc. LGBTQ liaison and diversity officers across the province will continue to reach out and provide guidance to their communities.

SWP will continue in our mandate to educate and provide a safe space for our LGBTQ colleagues. We will be at four locations in Ontario in 2017 to provide "LGBT 101" training to our law enforcement and criminal justice colleagues, along with many, many other community events – a first in our history.

In a time where misinformation and discrimination is so easily thrown around, we ask for your continued and unwavering support of your LGBTQ law enforcement and criminal justice colleagues. We will stand by you and we ask that you stand by us too.

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