

Thursday, May 4th, 2023

An Open Letter to Norwich Township Mayor and Council:

We are writing this letter to ask you to reconsider two recent decisions.

- 1) The decision to ban Pride flags in the township of Norwich.
- 2) The decision to not recognize Pride Month during the month of June in the township of Norwich.

The Board of Directors of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC) serves individuals and diverse communities living with, at-risk for, or affected by HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C in Perth, Huron, Lambton, Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford Counties. We are proud to provide all communities within our regional boundaries, including the township of Norwich, with education, programming and client services.

Like many across our region, we were alarmed by the comments made by many members of your town council as you were deciding to restrict the types of flags permitted to fly on municipal properties and downtown lamp posts and to not recognize the month of June as Pride Month. These decisions effectively ban Pride flags and other meaningful flags for so many communities (i.e. flags representing Every Child Matters, etc.). Pride flags and Pride Month are more than just symbolic gestures. They represent the continuing legacies of hope, pride and love, which are so important to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

As elected representatives of the township of Norwich, you have previously stated your commitment to community safety via the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan to address mental and physical health, housing and addiction; yet, your recent actions do not align with these goals. Removing these symbols of love and acceptance for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals contributes to a culture where violence and hate is tolerated. Unfortunately, your actions are not isolated and contribute to an alarming increase in homophobic and transphobic discrimination and violence in our region and across Canada.

Members of Norwich Township Council, we urge you to reconsider and reverse these exclusionary bylaws and realign yourself to your stated commitment to a safe community for all, especially those at increased risk of violence.

Sincerely,



Chris Moss
Chair of the RHAC Board of Directors



Martin McIntosh
RHAC Executive Director

P.S.: Attention Mayor and Clerk, please include this letter on the public agenda of the next meeting.

Serving Perth, Huron, Lambton, Elgin, Middlesex, and Oxford Counties

Main Location | 201-602 Queens Avenue, London, Ontario N6B 1Y8 | Tel: 519.434.1601 or 866.902.1601 | Fax: 519.434.1843
Harm Reduction Services | 446 York Street, London, Ontario N6B 1R2 | Tel: 519.434.1601 or 866.902.1601 | Fax: 519.434.1843
John Gordon Home | 596 Pall Mall Street, London, Ontario N5Y 2Z9 | Tel: 519.433.3951 | Fax: 519.433.1314

www.hivaidsconnection.ca

Charitable Registration # 118779008 RR0001