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To: Councillor Kyle Rae

From: Rita Davies, Executive Director, Cultural Services

Date: November 19, 2009

Re: **Pride Parade and the City of Toronto Non-Discrimination Policy**

- The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies has commissioned a report on the rise of anti-Semitism at the Gay Pride Parade. To discuss this a small group (Martin Gladstone, Avi Benlolo, Carol Pasternak and Daniel Engel) met with Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, Lori Martin and me recently. The group argued that there is no relationship between the celebration of gay pride and anti-Israel advocacy as demonstrated by the participants in the Gay Pride Parade and that furthermore Pride Toronto should be abiding by the City of Toronto's Non-Discrimination Policy.
- Spokesperson Martin Gladstone stated that Pride has no mandate to engage in anti-Israel advocacy and that by allowing the marchers, some who wore swastikas and carried signs that read "End Israeli Apartheid" and "We Stand with Queers in Palestine", is contrary to the City of Toronto's Anti-Racism, Access & Equity Policy.
- Martin Gladstone presented a June 2009 article from the Canadian Jewish News which reported that while anti-Israel groups in Toronto have slipped into the parade without permission from organizers with members bearing signs denouncing Israel as an apartheid state, one group calling itself Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) would be officially welcomed by Pride Toronto as a participant in 2009 with Tracey Sandilands confirming that the QuAIA's application had "been accepted".
- The group also expressed concerns with the following statement on Pride Toronto's website which they believe is not compatible with Pride's official mandate -

Pride Toronto would like to clarify that it has no intention of banning any participants from the Dyke March and the Parade because of their political agenda. We wish to stress that any organization wishing to participate in the Parade is welcome to do so with the proper application process and within the boundaries of the laws of Canada and our anti-discrimination policy. Pride Toronto recognizes that politics is part of the community interest, and while the organization does not take a partisan position on any issues, we support the expression of political messaging."

- In response to city staff's continuing concerns, **Pride Toronto has confirmed that it is working with a consultant and has been receiving legal advice on how to curtail the anti-Israel marchers in next year's Pride Parade.** Pride Toronto intends to have a strategy in place that they will share with us in the New Year and more broadly in a press release in March 2010.