

Thunder Pride Organizing Committee DEPUTATION TO CITY COUNCIL

Good evening Your Honour and Members of Council. On behalf of [#] organizations, and the many individuals involved in planning the first annual Thunder Pride week, I want to thank you for this opportunity to make a deputation.

When it comes to diversity and lesbian and gay rights, Thunder Bay has come of age. In 2007, the City of Thunder Bay signed on to Canada's Federal Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination.

A growing network of community, academic, health and social service groups continues to come together on issues of human rights including the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and two-spirited peoples.

Starting in 2004, when an Ontario Human Rights Complaint about homophobia in schools garnered headlines, Thunder Bay's public support of LGTBQ rights has continued to grow. This was no more in evidence than one year ago when over 1,300 people rallied at a local event and a further 8,500 on-line members signed on to support a man who was the victim of gay-bashing.

The first annual THUNDER PRIDE will take place from June 6 to 12, 2011.

Our vision is that THUNDER PRIDE will be a community celebration of the diversity of those living in Thunder Bay and the Northwest. Its goals are to:

- Celebrate the history, courage, diversity and future of Thunder Bay's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Two-Spirited community.
- Provide support, encouragement and education to LGBT and questioning people, their family and friends in Northwestern Ontario.
- Work with community groups, academic and other organizations to develop programming, initiatives and events dedicated to reducing homophobia- during THUNDER PRIDE and throughout the year.
- And, most importantly for the city, build a pre-eminent arts and cultural celebration for the City of Thunder Bay, its residents and the surrounding region.

We are projecting that 5,000- 7,000 people will attend pride events during June 6-12, 2011. Promotional and media efforts will be undertaken to attract Pride Week visitors from outlying areas across the Northwest and from the United States. After all, this will be the first civic Pride Week in the entire northwest region.

We are also mounting an aggressive corporate sponsorship program. We are looking to secure sponsorships from local and provincial companies and organizations, tourist promotions with our local tourism sector, and partnerships with local businesses for in-kind services and special events.

Let me turn now to the organization and planning that is underway for Thunder Pride 2011.

We believe that multiple events planned over a one week period will provide more opportunities for members of the LGBTQ and broader community to participate in south and north Thunder Bay.

We want to encourage activities that allow for full expression of LGBTQ communities and that appeal to varying age groups.

As well, a week of activities will offer more exposure and promotional opportunities for the city, its businesses and Thunder Pride sponsors.

So that you will understand that our reach does not exceed our capability, let me assure you that the [#] organizations and many individuals that are part of the Thunder Pride Steering Committee have each volunteered to take responsibility for specific activities.

That includes the planning, budgeting and implementation required for each activity.

Let me outline what we believe are a very exciting and community-inclusive host of events for Thunder Pride Week.

On Monday June 6, we will hold a kick-off Pride Week Breakfast to raise awareness of the effects of homophobia on our youth. Along with a report from Lakehead Public Schools on their LGBTQ initiatives, we will welcome keynote speakers including our elected officials.

Should Council agree to designate Thunder Pride Week, we would follow the breakfast with a flag raising ceremony at City Hall.

During the week, we will hold a LGBT Film Festival. And we will have an art curator put together an art show featuring LGBTQ visual artists. We hope to have venues for the art show in both the north and south end of the city.

On Wednesday June 8, we will hold a Pink Day at Elementary and Secondary Schools.

On Thursday June 9, we are planning an Evening Walk of Healing. This will be a memorial to loved ones who have died of AIDS, and who have faced discrimination. It

will include a Two-Spirit ceremony along with possible performances by musicians, poets and dancers.

On Friday June 10, we will hold a Rainbow Alliance Union Workshop and in the evening, a Thunder Pride Drag Show.

On Saturday June 11, we are organizing a family picnic and music concert featuring local artists. We will also work with local bars and restaurants to hold post-concert bar and dance events.

Our churches will hold Thunder Pride Church services on Sunday June 5 and June 12.

Other events such as literature readings by guest authors organized by the Northern Women's Bookstore, will also take place.

As you can see, Thunder Pride will be a community celebration with broad appeal; one that offers safe spaces for everyone.

Before opening up for questions, I want to say that a large cross-section of organizations and individuals have enthusiastically embraced the vision and planning for Thunder Pride 2011.

They believe, as we hope you will, that Thunder Pride is not only a celebration of LGBTQ rights; it is a celebration of the diversity that continues to strengthen our city.

As well, we believe Thunder Pride will continue to grow as an economic driver for the city, its businesses and its residents.

It is for all those reasons that the following organizations and individuals request that City Council designate the week of June 6-12, 2011 as Thunder Pride Week:

LUSU- Gender Issues Centre
Rainbow Health Ontario
Westminster United Church
Canadian Auto Workers Local 229
Canadian Union of Postal Workers Local 620
Lakehead Elementary Teachers of Ontario
Ontario Public Service Employees Union
Thunder Bay District Labour Council
Northern Women's Bookstore
Norman Sponchia, Artist
Paul Morralee, Filmmaker

Thank you.