

## Matthews, Rayanne

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**To:** Proton, Adriana  
**Subject:** RE: Permissive Tax Exemptions

**From:** Avi Goldberg [REDACTED]  
**Date:** October 24, 2023 at 1:59:51 PM PDT  
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**Subject:** Permissive Tax Exemptions

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to express my support for Councillor Jolicoeur's motion to remove permissive tax exemptions for Aaron House Ministries and Youth for Christ/Youth Unlimited.

On September 20, I attended the "No Space for Hate" gathering and walk to support 2SLGBTQIA+ rights and SOGI123 in schools, organized by the Pride Society of the Comox Valley. As you know, we were a counter-protest to the hateful anti-2LGBTQIA+ gatherings across the country, the so-called "1 Million March 4 Children".

I was so pleased to see the City release a strong statement that same day, denouncing discrimination and hatred, expressing support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and declaring there's no place for hate in Courtenay. I was heartened to see several elected school trustees attend the gathering. We were assured by the organizers of the gathering that our Mayor and Councillors would have attended as well, had you not been at UBCM, and your support was loud and clear.

The hateful anti-2LGBTQIA+ gathering was small. Only a handful of adults were there. Alain and Christine Lepine were quoted in the Comox Valley Record: "We want school to be about ABC's and reading, and not about basically just pushing this sexual ideology on children in schools."  
<https://www.comoxvalleyrecord.com/news/courtenay-1-million-march-4-children-protesters-vastly-outnumbered-by-counter-protesters-4419484>

Alain and Christine Lepine are the pastors of Aaron House Ministries.

I am sure you would agree that human rights and equality are not "sexual ideology." This kind of rhetoric from the Lepines fuels disinformation about SOGI123 in schools, and it fuels hatred towards the 2LGBTQIA+ community.

Youth for Christ/Youth Unlimited has a long and well-known history espousing anti-2LGBTQIA+ dogma. Just last year, human rights groups challenged public funds being given to YFC in Winnipeg, due to their exclusionary hiring practices:  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/youth-for-christ-winnipeg-government-funding-1.6661489>

You can speak to the Comox Valley school trustees who had to make policy changes to prevent YFC from proselytizing in schools. You can ask them about a trustee candidate who ran in the last election,

who worked for YFC, spewed hateful anti-2LGBTQIA+ rhetoric in the all-candidates debate, and shared materials from Action4Canada in her campaign (the Canadian Anti-Hate Network has written extensively on Action4Canada's hate-fuelled campaigns).

We have a long way to go to create communities that are truly inclusive and supportive of all. I have been confident that the current Mayor and Council are up to the task of taking on that work in a municipal context.

So, it was with great disappointment that I learned that Councillor Jolicoeur's motion to remove permissive tax exemptions for Aaron House Ministries and Youth for Christ/Youth Unlimited was defeated by council. Tax exemptions for non-profit organizations are the will of council. I plead with you to walk the talk. While your statements of support for the 2LGBTQIA+ community are encouraging, it is hollow to not back them up with action. I encourage you to reconsider removing the permissive tax exemption from those two groups.

Finally, I implore you to develop new policies to ensure permissive tax exemptions DO support the many non-profit organizations working in the City of Courtenay who value diversity, equity and inclusion, and support marginalized folks in the community. These are important actions that show what this council stands for.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Avi Goldberg