**Rationale- This week’s article is one that I noticed a few days ago. Seeing that it’s about the LGBT community, mostly everyone knows about these people and have seen or heard of one of their pride parades or events that they host all across the country. Consequently, it should be easy to spark a discussion. It is relevant.**

Halifax police bow out of Pride parade amid ‘national debate’

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The Canadian Press

Mon., Feb. 6, 2017

Moving to avoid a Toronto-style conflict, Halifax’s police force says it will not participate in the city’s Pride parade this year.

Halifax Regional Police said the decision was made after several months of discussions with Halifax Pride, and took into consideration the “national debate” about police involvement in such events.

Chief Jean-Michel Blais said the police service might have contributed to divisions in the Pride community had it participated in the parade

“We recognize that as a result of what we’ve seen elsewhere in the country, specifically in Toronto, as well as what we’ve heard here locally, that there were some concerns about police presence in the parade,” Blais said at a news conference Monday.

“In our view, stepping away temporarily from the parade will best support the LGBT2Q+ community to help allow for meaningful discussion of the issue.”

Last month, Pride Toronto members voted to ostensibly ban official police floats from marches and parades, adopting a list of demands put forward by that city’s chapter of Black Lives Matter.

The list of requests from Black Lives Matter has been the source of controversy and polarization within the community since the 2016 Toronto Pride parade, during which the group staged a half-hour sit-in to present their list of demands.

Halifax Pride executive director Adam Reid said he believes the Halifax force is the first in Canada to take such an approach.

“I think it demonstrates that (Halifax Regional Police) is a partner that understands community concerns,” said Reid, although he would not elaborate on what those concerns are specifically.

“It’s a debate that’s going on locally and across the country ... and I think it’s a really great opportunity for the community, no matter what they think of the decision, to take a look at what that debate is and examine everyone’s point of view.”

The force said it would be involved in other Pride activities — to be determined through consultation with the community — such as a barbecue or public lecture.

Uniformed officers have participated in the annual Pride parade for at least 10 years, said Blais.

Officers will provide security and direct traffic at the event in Halifax’s downtown, he said.

Blais said he still plans to walk in this year’s parade with other Halifax Regional Municipality officials in a T-shirt or golf shirt emblazoned with the force’s logo. He added that other officers are welcome to participate in the parade in plain clothes.

The force’s future participation in parades will be assessed on an ongoing basis, he said.

Last year’s Toronto parade ground to a halt and only resumed when Pride Toronto’s then-executive director Matthieu Chantelois signed the list of demands that included better representation for radicalized communities during Pride events, and a ban on police floats in future parades.

He later told the media that he only did so in order to get the event moving again. Chantelois resigned about a month later amid allegations of racism and harassment in the workplace.

Pride Toronto issued an apology in September for what it described as a “history of anti-blackness” and “repeated marginalization of the marginalized,” pledging at that time to honour the promises made to Black Lives Matter.

Blais acknowledged that reaction to the force’s decision not to participate in the parade has been mixed, but said he believes it’s the best move.

“This isn’t a matter of Halifax Regional Police versus Halifax Pride. This is a matter of Halifax Regional Police and Halifax Pride coming to a decision,” he said. “Sometimes we have to step back a little bit, especially to be able to improve relationships and to further those relationships.”

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: In your opinion, do you believe it is right for the police to be a part of the parades/gatherings of these kinds of groups? Would it be different for an officer who is not in uniform to attend?**