

Rainbow Crosswalk vandalized within 24 hours

It took less than 24 hours for Aurora's newly inaugurated Rainbow Crosswalk to be vandalized and now York Regional Police are seeking the public's help in identifying the culprit.

On Friday, August 21, York Regional Police received a report from staff with the Town of Aurora regarding a suspected hate crime incident in the Town of Aurora following the unveiling of a new rainbow crosswalk located at Yonge Street and Wellington, said Constable Laura Nicolle on Friday. Officers learned that just before midnight on Thursday, August 20, a pick-up truck drove over the crosswalk and left black tire skid marks over the rainbow area, then returned a short time later and left some more. Investigators believe that the marks were done intentionally and this is being investigated as a hate-motivated incident.

Police describe the pick-up truck as light-coloured.

Investigators are asking any witnesses, anyone with information, or anyone with dashcam or video surveillance footage in that area to please come forward. York Regional Police does not tolerate hate crime in any form. Those who victimize individuals based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or mental or physical disability will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Police released footage from nearby cameras to help identify the driver.

A second case of vandalism, this time in the early hours of Saturday morning, has resulted in an arrest.

57-year-old Aurora resident Roy Zinn is facing a charge of mischief after an officer patrolling the area of Yonge and Wellington spotted a man using black spray paint to damage a Pride rainbow crosswalk.

The man was placed under arrest and has been charged, said Sergeant Andy Pattenden.

The charges have not been proven.

In the last 48 hours since its installation, the crosswalk was already hit with two acts of vandalism, said Tristan Coolman, President of Pflag York Region, in a statement. There will always be hate in every community big and small, but these acts of hate are just an example of the hate that is woven through LGBTQ2 history and our daily lived experiences. These acts only continue to showcase to Aurora and surrounding communities that there are those who wish to obscure lived-experiences different from their own. It is a type of hate all marginalized groups like Black, Indigenous, Women, Muslim, Jewish and other communities continue to face that is both cultural in our behaviours and systemic in our institutions.

Those who continue act on their hate fail to realize our resolve is much stronger. Marginalized groups like LGBTQ2 folks and their loved ones are more resilient than they think. We have faced a long history of hate and discrimination carried on the shoulders of current and future generations. Every day we live with that weight and every June we carry on top of it our message of Pride. Anyone who thought a little vandalism can shake our resolve clearly don't know us very well.

Anyone with information can contact the YRP's #1 District Criminal Investigations Bureau at 1-866-876-5423, x101, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS, or leave an anonymous tip online at 1800222tips.com.

It is disappointing that someone felt that doing a burnout on the newly installed rainbow crosswalk was a good idea, said Mayor Tom Mrakas on Friday afternoon. First off, I am pleased staff have removed the marks. This is the benefit of the thermal plastic material used it can be cleaned immediately. Thank you to staff for swiftly removing the marks.

By Brock Weir