



RE: JNE Recovery and Towing sign & challenging transphobia in Niagara

OPIRG Brock stands in solidarity with the efforts of OUTniagara to call attention to the harmful impacts of the transphobic store sign at JNE Recovery and Towing on Queen Street in Vineland, and the wave of online comments that deemed this sign as “just a joke”.

It is common for transphobic people, businesses, and organizations to use anti-trans language and then when challenged on it, argue that it was a joke to minimize or distract from the harm it caused. JNE Recovery & Towing’s “joke” is a clear example of this all-too-common pattern. It was never intended to be funny, it was intended to use a discriminatory term in order to promote a world that maintains oppressive norms in Niagara. The harm it has caused to trans communities was intentional, and the wave of support it received highlights how our trans communities can never live in a world where trans people are celebrated and can thrive without fear of violence, minimization, or erasure. We cannot settle for these oppressive norms. We cannot settle for a subpar world where people just need to get over oppression and violence. We have to do better and demand better.

Doing better by trans communities, in Niagara and beyond, requires much more than an apology. An apology can’t assure that this won’t happen again nor does it change anything for those impacted by this intentional dismissal and hate. Change requires action, and as a community organization run by multiple trans and gender diverse people, we have some very easy suggestions to start off with:

- 1. Do not give money or promotion to businesses or organizations that use transphobic commentaries like this one. Better yet, give the money or promotion that you might have given to these spaces to trans-led ones instead!**
- 2. Overhaul and reimagine what you believe is normal, and then do the work to create new norms where all forms of violence are never acceptable, let alone funny. Whether this comes from self-education and training or building relationships with those impacted by transphobia and other forms of violence (or even better - both), there is no excuse for not doing the work to better understand the issues, especially ones you are actively choosing to comment on.**
- 3. Take a stand when other instances of transphobia and systemic violence come up - and we know they will. For example, to truly show commitment to change and support for trans communities, JNE Recovery and Towing can no longer be silent or supportive when local politicians, other businesses, or their customers make transphobic, or really any hateful, comments or jokes.**

Ongoing occurrences, like this sign, showcase how transphobia is alive and well in Niagara, and instead calling for those who were harmed to “get over it”, we have to do the work to build a region and world where they don’t need to deal with it in the first place.

To support the work of OUTniagara and their community partners, go to www.outniagara.org and follow them on social media @out_niagara.