

Subject: re: Application to the 2010 Vegetarian Food Fair

Dear Maria,
(President, Toronto Vegetarian Association)

This is to confirm the details of the decision by the Toronto Vegetarian Association to decline the application of the Health Ministry, Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for a booth at the 2010 Annual Vegetarian Food Fair.

First, we wish to clarify that we recognize and value the work done by the Adventist community to promote healthy vegetarian living. We also want to stress that our objection is not to those who have tabled at the Vegetarian Food Fair in the past. We have every reason to believe that those present at the fair on behalf of the Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have provided helpful information and shown respect for all members of the public.

Yet despite our respect for this work, the Toronto Vegetarian Association must take issue with the public statements of the General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists regarding homosexuality. It has been brought to our attention that the General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists is "opposed to homosexual practices and relationships," and that the Church views homosexuality as "a manifestation of the disorder and brokenness in human inclinations and relations caused by sin coming into the world."

<http://adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat46html>

<http://adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat53html>

As noted in the Toronto Vegetarian Association Anti-Racism, Access and Equity Policy, TVA acknowledges its responsibility to provide an environment and services that are free of racism, sexism, discrimination and bias, where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. In order to provide a positive space for all visitors to our events, the Toronto Vegetarian Association reserves the right to deny participation by groups or individuals known to be in contravention with the aforementioned policy from our activities.

Concerns have been raised with us that the presence of an organization with anti-gay views is troubling to those who have faced discrimination and been made to feel ashamed on the basis of their sexual orientation. Our decision is to provide a positive space for all visitors by excluding those that make public statements against homosexuality. In this case, we must decline the application of the Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church . The same decision would be made regarding any business, organization or guest speaker that was found to have made public comments so at odds with our values as to hinder our efforts to provide a positive space for members of our community.

As indicated above, at issue is not the conduct of the individuals who have participated at the Food Fair in previous years, but with public statements made on behalf of the organization under which you have

applied. Should you wish to register for space to promote healthy eating as individuals or through organizations that do not condemn homosexuality, we would welcome that application.

Alternatively, if the Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church can provide evidence that it does not endorse the positions relating to homosexuality cited above, we would be happy to reconsider our decision.

Best regards,

Executive Director
Toronto Vegetarian Association