

Committee: **Police Services Board**

Organization/Sector represented: **myselt**

Name: **Stephanie Marentette Di Battista**

Occupation: **lawyer**

Work experience: **I am presently a commercial litigation lawyer with my own practice, focusing on construction law and estate law. Prior to opening my practice, I worked with a large, full-service firm and a boutique litigation firm. Before becoming a lawyer, I worked in the federal civil service as both a civil servant and a ministerial staffer for various departments including Public Safety Canada.**

Education: **I have an Honours Bachelor of Social Science from University of Ottawa in International Development and Globalization with the FLS 3500 certificate (French as a second language designation), a Juris Doctor from Western University and a certificate in international and European business law from Jean Moulin III. I am currently working towards my Master of Law (LLM) at Western University in evidence and privacy law. I am presently a licensed barrister, solicitor and notary in the Province of Ontario.**

Skills: **Because of my unique background in public policy, particularly in government service provision, and law, I believe that I would be able to serve as an impartial board member with a view to decisions that are grounded in delivering effective and efficient law enforcement services to the public while facilitating the creation of a knowledgeable, service-oriented police force.**

Interest reason: **I am writing my request for consideration for this post approximately 5 days following London's municipal election, which I ran in but was unfortunately not successful. The reason why I ran for a counsel position is simple: I think London has given a lot to me and I wanted to return the favour. But just because I lost does not take away my desire to serve my community. Consequently, I made the decision to apply to a handful of vacancies for committees that complete work in areas that formed large parts of my platform with the hope that I might still be able to contribute to the city that has given me so much. The Police Service Board is of particular interest to me for a couple of reasons. First, I think it is important to ensure that our local police force has the resources necessary to providing proper enforcement and protective services for our community. We are facing new challenges particularly in the downtown area concerning opioid abuse and mental health issues that require different resources than perhaps have been required in the past. I think our police force is doing a good job meeting these challenges such as by hiring full-time psychologists for each shift to help address these issues, but I believe we can do a lot more to support new and innovative approaches to these challenges. I would like to be able to assist with that. Second, I firmly believe that police officers face challenges that require greater support from our community. For example, a study was released very recently about the increased risk of PTSD, depression and, in severe cases, suicide, for police officers. I think it is very important that our community supports our officers by ensuring they have access to continuing education and mental health services to help them be successful.**

Contributions: **First, during my election campaign, I canvassed like crazy and attended town halls, debates and other forums where I was able to hear from a wide cross-section of Londoners on issues such as petty crime, mental health issues, poverty, the opioid crisis and other drug issues. As a result, I believe I have a strong, diverse knowledge of how London residents feel about various law enforcement issues and the current means of addressing them. Second, I believe that I have a good understanding of the issues facing police services, both from an enforcement perspective as well as in terms of providing support and training for officers. Prior to opening my own practice, I worked for a boutique insurance defence practice that focused on, among other practice areas, defending police forces from lawsuits concerning investigations. This experience has given me true insight into the challenges faced by officers and police forces as a whole in terms of striking a balance between the protection of Charter rights and protecting the public. I believe that these experiences would allow me to look at problems comprehensively in order to strike the appropriate balance between the concerns of the London Police Service and the concerns of the public.**

Past contributions: **Presently, I serve on the Red Shoe Society Board of Directors as Volunteer Chair, the Big Bash Committee in Support of Big Brothers Big Sisters and the London Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee. I also served as a Board**

Member to the London Chamber of Commerce, however, I unfortunately had to resign this position in order to be able to run for City Council. In all of the above capacities, the main goal is to analyze challenges and opportunities with a view to service delivery. This is true whether we are discussing the biggest fundraiser to support mentoring programs at Big Brothers Big Sisters, a meal prepared by volunteers at Ronald McDonald House or a policy paper that will be submitted on behalf of business owners in London by the Chamber of Commerce. I believe that my problem-solving experience, particularly with a view to collaboration, is applicable in this case and would allow me to be an effective member of the Police Services Board.

Interpersonal: First, I am a litigation lawyer, so I primarily spend my time debating with others. This may not seem like a job that would embody the qualities listed by this question, but a legal career is actually a fantastic teacher in the rules of civility. The practice of law demands that lawyers behave collegially and respectfully at all times despite often being required to advance diametrically opposing views either during negotiations or a hearing. Case in point, in Court we refer to opposing counsel as “my friend”. Second, as I noted above, prior to becoming a lawyer, I was fairly heavily involved in partisan politics and the federal civil service. Again, this occupation might seem counterintuitive to the question, but the reality is that you cannot accomplish anything on Parliament Hill or in a ministerial department if you are not willing to sit down with your opposition to work through a problem. I think that these two experiences have allowed me to develop into someone who listens to understand and sees criticism as an opportunity for improvement. I am someone who sees the value in a debate, and not an argument, where everyone has the chance to respectfully say their piece before a decision is made that, at minimum, considers all viewpoints, and hopefully results in the best possible outcome. This is the type of approach I would bring to the committee if I were given the honour of being selected to serve on it.

Interview interest: Yes