

From: Vicki Van Linden
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2023 9:00 AM
To: SPPC <sppc@london.ca>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] For the SPPC agenda regarding Police Board

Dear Members of the SPPC:

I am grateful that council decided to take some time to further review the applications to the Police Board. That was an important step. Thanks to everyone who supported that with their vote.

Now, I am urging you to take a further step as you decide who will be interviewed for this position. Please recognize that at this time in our history it is essential that an Indigenous representative is appointed to the Police Board.

Let's note that there are at least two applicants who identify as Indigenous.

It's clear that there is significant support for greater representation from various diverse populations including BIPOC members on the Police board. And this is important.

As a nation, we owe special consideration to members of Indigenous nations. I believe that it is inadequate to appoint a member of a non-Indigenous but still diverse community at this time. I agree that there are many diverse communities that also deserve and need greater representation on advisory and decision-making entities. However, at this time as we have declared as a nation that we must strive to achieve meaningful Reconciliation with First Nations peoples, we must not miss this opportunity to appoint an Indigenous person to this important board.

Indigenous communities and their members have surely waited long enough. The goals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission must be followed up with meaningful action, and this appointment to such a significant board is an opportunity toward healing that we must not miss. Land acknowledgements become meaningless if we don't take opportunities like this to address historical harms by recognizing that First Nations peoples are not just any diverse community in Canada. They are the very founding nations of Canada. They are founding nations far more than the English and French communities that have enjoyed entrenched privileges and power for generations. Instead of being granted the privileges of the other founding communities, we know how abused their treatment has been as carried out by governments since before Confederation.

No other cultural or racial group is owed the same debt that we owe to Indigenous peoples living in Canada. So, resolving to appoint an Indigenous representative person only, is indeed fair.

My proposal is that the five candidates to be interviewed must include both Indigenous candidates, at the very least. And, at the very least, extra weight should be given to those with Indigenous identity. The end result, however it is worked out, should be that the successful appointment is an Indigenous representative.

I've also been informed by some members of local First Nations communities that it matters to them that it is recognized that all Indigenous peoples are not members of the same Nation. They said that while there is a shared understanding and history among the various First Nations, they want it recognized that they are not an amorphous people. The local citizens who I

have spoken with told me that a member of a local community is best able to represent them. So, I urge you to also give added consideration to whether the Indigenous candidate represents a local community.

I am a non-Indigenous person myself. But I want to be clear that I see providing greater respect, influence and political representation to First Nations peoples as my fight too. My reasons are mostly selfish.

I want to live in a non-violent society where all citizens thrive. I want to enjoy peaceful neighbourhoods free from social unrest. Social peace can only come when we face what was done to First Nations peoples without flinching, and resolve to find every opportunity to heal these deep national wounds. Of course, we need to do more, healing relationships with all BIPOC members and other under-represented communities, and do all we can to address systemic racism and prejudice. But our greatest debt is to Indigenous citizens and communities.

I urge you to not waste this opportunity to move us forward. There will still be much more to do, but this appointment matters.

Sincerely,

Vicki Van Linden
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