



April 2, 2023

Aanii/Shekoli/Sge:no/Taansi/Hello,

We are writing to share our collective thoughts on the recent decision made by the Strategic Priorities & Policy Committee (SPCC) on March 29th, 2023, regarding the appointment of the vacant seat on the London Police Services Board (LPSB).

For those of you who are unfamiliar with our grassroots collaboration formed in 2017, we are Indigenous professionals in education, health, government, non-profit, community services and many other sectors within the City of London.

We are concerned with the decision not to appoint Mr. Joe Wabegijig, an Odawa\* man from Wiikwemkoong First Nation on Manitoulin Island who lives and works in the City of London. As you are familiar, Mr. Wabegijig has considerable relevant expertise in that he is on the Wikwemikong Tribal Police Services Board and held an advisory role to the federal government and prime minister's office. Mr. Wabegijig's professional experience aside, it is our belief that he would bring significant understanding of his culture and lived experience to the LPSB. At a time when our city is working as hard as it can to address matters of reconciliation, we see Mr. Wabegijig's appointment as a key opportunity to broaden and strengthen the LPSB.

At the heart of this decision is the importance of representation.

As Indigenous peoples, we hold the unfortunate privilege of being included in the most egregious and persistent statistics related to homelessness, poverty, addiction, food insecurity and mental health in this city. Our children, parents, sisters/brothers, cousins, aunts/uncles and grandparents are impacted by the decisions considered and moved forward by the LPSB. As such, I'm sure you can appreciate we are very concerned that there is not adequate representation on the board. As it stands, who on the board will understand and carry our concerns forward?

The City of London's boundaries are overlapped by several treaties made in the years before and since Confederation. Added to that are the thousands of urban Indigenous people who have made this city their home.

Additionally, considerable efforts have gone into respecting or honouring the idea of reconciliation at the municipal level, whether that's through hiring the City's first-ever Indigenous Community Liaison Advisor or offering a community-led land acknowledgement and campaign promises made by those on council.

Where is the continued action to these words?

We have welcomed you to our ceremonies and celebrations and you have told us that our community is important. To put it plainly, we feel this decision is an action that very clearly counters those words.

We commend former LPSB chair Susan Toth's recommendation to have her replacement be from the BIPOC community and we reaffirm her call to have the current candidate, Mr. Ryan Gauss step down in favour of Mr. Wabegijig. It is our firm conviction that no one on the LPSB has the lived experience to rely on and can who fully speak to the trauma and perspective of Indigenous peoples.

We encourage you to reflect on this very important decision at the upcoming Council meeting scheduled for April 4th, 2023, and to consider the Indigenous population who study, live, work and grow their families in the City of London. This is our home too and as such our voices should be heard.

Miigwech/Yaw^ko/ Gayogohó:nq'/Anushiik/Maarsii/Thank you,  
The Indigenous Leadership Circle

\*Odawa (oh-daw-wah) is a Nation that is part of the Three Fires Confederacy that also includes Ojibway (Chippewa) and Bodewadmi.