

April 2, 2023

Dear Mayor Morgan and Councillors Lewis, Van Meerbergen, Hillier, Prebil, Lehman, Cuddy and Stevenson,

We are writing to you with respect to last week's SPPC committee's decision to recommend appointing Mr. Ryan Gauss to the London Police Services Board ("LPSB"). We write to you as experienced former members of the LPSB. We have the benefit of each having been an LPSB member for multiple years. Jeff Schlemmer served for two years, Susan Toth served for six years, former Mayor Matt Brown for four years, Dr. Javeed Sukhera for four years, Jesse Helmer for five years, Stephen Turner for three years and Vanessa Ambtman-Smith for two years. Combined, we have 26 years of LPSB experience. It is that lengthy experience that allows us to unequivocally state the need for greater, not less, diversity and representation on the LPSB.

We hope those of you who have never served on a police services board, or have only served for a few months, will benefit from our collective knowledge and be able to confidently rely on our extensive experience and heed our recommendation.

To be clear, none of us are disputing that Mr. Gauss is a committed community member with the qualifications for the role. Many of us know Mr. Gauss personally and agree that he is a very qualified and dedicated person. None of us doubt his initial motivations for applying for the job.

However, at this juncture, and given the current makeup of the Board, the next appointment needs more than just qualifications and a desire to serve. The next appointment needs to bring the lived experience of being from an marginalized and overpoliced community.

We write to you knowing that you have a difficult decision to make. We know many of you may feel that you have already made a decision and there is no going back.

But it is not too late.

You may be chafing at the media coverage of this issue and thinking it is overblown. We ask you to consider, is it possible you cannot fully comprehend the devastation and helplessness that BIPOC communities experience when, no matter how qualified, their/our voices are rejected from positions of power? Is it possible you cannot understand why their/our voices are so crucial when it comes to policing? Could this be the very reason why their/our voices are so critical?

We write this letter to sincerely and without pretense ask each of you to reconsider. You have an extraordinary opportunity to re-evaluate your position, and consider appointing someone that can bring not just extensive experience, but also brings an equity lens.

Consider this: in all the time that the LPSB has been a legal entity, we have only had one Indigenous member, and who only served for a two year term. How is this possible? Are you all

prepared to tell the public, through your vote, that there is no Indigenous person that will ever be qualified enough for the role? Despite having a candidate that has served on a police board already and has served in numerous advisory roles, and is a community leader? Are you prepared to tell the world that this was truly a matter of merit, and not bias? What will it take for an Indigenous person to finally be considered?

We also note, Mayor Morgan, that you (and your campaign team) chose the following as pillars of your campaign platform:

3. Implement recommendations put forward in the city of London's Community Diversity and Inclusions Strategy.

- Support London's Director of Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression to continue to engage with Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, and LGBTQ2+ communities, so all Londoners feel supported and represented by their city.

4. Support the continued implementation of Truth & Reconciliation calls to action at the municipal government level.

Mayor, we ask you to not break your campaign promise to the people of London.

There are many systemic and historic reasons why Boards continue to lack representation from the BIPOC community. We know that it may be easier to choose someone who runs in your circles, feels familiar, has access to you and can pick up the phone and call you. **This is how systemic barriers work.** We cannot ignore that these factors result in promoting a greater proportion of white people to positions of power resulting in an abysmal lack of representation due to these institutional inequities.

This is your chance to break the cycle and appoint a strong Indigenous leader to the London Police Services Board. Your public support of such an outcome would be consistent with the City of London's obligations to Truth and Reconciliation. These obligations are not just words. They require action.

We are asking each of you to take a stand for inclusion, anti-oppression and diverse community representation. We are sure you would agree that a board with diverse voices and lived experiences brings forward far more viewpoints which result in better governance and a better, safer community for all. Please consider the incredible benefits that having an Indigenous voice on the LPSB would have.

We know you each individually. We have all spoken to some degree or another. We are neighbours, and in some cases, friends. We know you all ran for city council because you believed in this city, in what we can build together, and what we can do. We know you as compassionate and caring people. We ask you to have open minds and hearts, and to re-evaluate your vote and consider doing something that will have a profound impact on our City. Show the world that our city believes in a better London for all, and not just for a select few.

Thank you,

Susan Toth

Jeff Schlemmer

Dr. Javeed Sukhera

Jesse Helmer

Matt Brown

Stephen Turner

Vanessa Ambtman-Smith

Cc:

Councillors Hopkin, Franke, Rahman, Trosow, Ferreira, McAllister, & Pelosa