

Saturday, March 16, 2019

To: Richmond Hill Town Council on March 25, 2019

RE: Territorial Acknowledgement prior to council meetings

From: Gale and Roger May

We were disappointed to read that Richmond Hill council declined to support a February 11, 2019 motion by Councillor David West to include a statement of Territorial Acknowledgement at the opening of council meetings.

Our family supports the motion and hopes that council will reconsider on March 25, 2019. The following is the rationale for our decision.

Richmond Hill is presently home to many different cultural and racial groups. This makes for a strong and vibrant community. However, for thousands of years before the Europeans and other cultural groups arrived here, the land was inhabited and cared for by the Wendat, Haudenosonee, and the Anishinaabe people. Acknowledging territory shows recognition and respect for Indigenous peoples in the past and the present day. We, as current citizens and decision makers, should acknowledge the stewardship role played by these peoples (our neighbours and friends).

In 2015 the Government of Canada produced the Truth and Reconciliation Report. As one of many calls to action for provincial and local governments, land acknowledgement is mentioned as a way to mark a small but important step in building a positive relationship with Indigenous peoples many whom still live in Richmond Hill.

The concept of a territorial acknowledgement may be new and unfamiliar to many. If Richmond Hill council supports this motion they will be in good company. The following is a partial listing of wide ranging groups who presently begin events and meetings with an appropriate acknowledgement. This list is by no means complete but shows the range and breadth of commitment to this living process.

Municipalities in the GTA

City of Markham

Georgina

Toronto (since 2014)

Guelph

School Boards

York Region District School Board

York Catholic District School Board

Religious Organizations

Diocese of Toronto (includes Richmond Hill's three Anglican churches)
Toronto Conference (United church)

Educational campuses

Laurier Students Public Interest Research (LSPIRG)
Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)
York University
Ryerson University
University of Toronto

The Arts

Professional Association of Canadian Theatres
Dancers and Performing Arts

Community Services

Toronto Public Library
Amnesty International

Even the Winnipeg Jets and the Edmonton Oilers have an acknowledgment!

Thank you for considering our letter.

Gale and Roger May
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Richmond Hill