

From: Sharon Chisholm

Sent: Monday, June 20, 2022 8:27 PM

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Subject: Agenda Item: Other Business Motion 14.1 "Land Acknowledgement"

Dear Mayor West,

Please find attached my petition to have the "Land Acknowledgement" contained in the
aforementioned agenda item referred back to City staff for task completion. I
respectfully request that the attachment to this email be read into the minutes of
Council, for the meeting of Wednesday, June 22, 2022.

To reiterate my note, the proposed Land Acknowledgement contained in Motion 14.1
(June 22,2022) is unacceptable and disingenuous as written. It should not be adopted
for use by the City of Richmond Hill.

Respectfully,

Sharon Chisholm

Richmond Hill, ON

June 20, 2022

David West, Mayor
Councillors of the City of Richmond Hill
225 East Beaver Creek Rd.
Richmond Hill, ON L4B 3P4

Dear Mayor West and Councillors:

Re: Agenda Item: Other Business

Motion 14.1 "Land Acknowledgement"

With all due respect to Council and the residents of the City Richmond Hill, I urge City Council to refer Motion 14.1, *Land Acknowledgement*, as presented, back to city staff for reconsideration and redrafting with an eye toward a more fulsome and appropriate statement.

Considering Councillor Perrelli's earlier statement that a Land Acknowledgement is "clearly not of interest to the majority of Richmond Hill residents," (June 23, 2021) I am surprised and concerned by the Councillor's most recent - and seemingly urgent - motion to the City of Richmond Hill.

Mr. Perelli has labelled this motion a "Land Acknowledgement" however, Land Acknowledgement is a term with specific meaning and import. Such items are drafted as living documents; no modern Canadian Land Acknowledgement bears the name of its author(s) for good reason. Land Acknowledgements serve to formalize collective recognition of historical fact and, as such, should never be presented haphazardly or without careful consideration.

According to <https://honouringindigenouspeoples.com/reconciliation-land-acknowledgements/> :

"A land acknowledgement is a single act of reconciliation. Recent version of land acknowledgements have been inspired by the 94 Calls-to-Action published in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report. It is important to note that land acknowledgements are not new and have been around for hundreds of years before the arrival of Europeans. When Indigenous Peoples visited other territories, it was, and still is, customary to respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land.

Land statements are about acknowledging, establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Land acknowledgements should come from the heart and by expressing a statement before beginning our events, work and decision making, we are reminded of our responsibilities... to each other, to the land, to our values and to future generations....

Copying or quickly composing a statement, risks offending the very Indigenous Peoples you are intending to recognize and completely misses the point of what reconciliation is about."

In contrast, the “Acknowledgement” presented by Councillor Perrelli is a glorified thank you note, written by, identifying, and directed to a single Indigenous organization. His proposal contextually puts them forward as the recognized leaders of our local Indigenous community (and arguably impacted First Nations at large) *vis* the City of Richmond Hill. Ontario is home to 13 distinct groups of First Nation peoples, each with their own languages, customs and territories: the Algonquin, Mississauga, Anishinabe’waki, Cree, Odawa, Pottowatomi, Delaware, and the Haudenosaunee (Mohawk, Onondaga, Onoyota’a:ka, Cayuga, Tuscarora, and Seneca). While well intentioned, the *Indigenous Action Committee of Richmond Hill* is essentially a five-member, non-profit social group. It is not a nation.

The lands of modern Richmond Hill have been formally recognized as the traditional territory of the Anishinabe’waki, Haudenosaunee, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation peoples. Mr. Perrelli’s written submission erases the complexity of our local Indigenous history, favouring a narrative where inhabitants included only the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, Rama First Nation, Beausoleil First Nation and the Mississaugas of Scugog Island. It does so by recognizing individuals who have not, to my knowledge, been appointed by or authorized to speak for any First Nation, including their own.

The critics of Richmond Hill's prior attempt at a Land Acknowledgement had suggested using the statement developed by the University of Toronto as a suitable template for approaching this topic. Of particular note in this instance is the absence of any wording concerning “commitment(s) to on-going learning,” which the proposed draft appears to demand. *Call to Action #57* relates specifically to the professional development and training for public servants, not to the creation of appropriate Land Acknowledgements. Motion 14.1’s current statement conflates these two disparate subjects.

As the Motion 14.1 Land Acknowledgement explicitly mentions various Chippewas Peoples I ask first, were legitimate and authorized representatives of this nation consulted? If so, by whom, specifically? As an example, the Chippewas of Rama First Nations have explicit protocols in this regard:

"You will find the Chippewas of Rama First Nation Consultation and Accommodation Protocol here <https://www.ramafirstnation.ca/rama-research-ethics-and-community-consultation/>. Please be sure to read and understand the process fully before submitting your Application to Consult."
<https://airtable.com/shrlieeO6h4qZnHZG>

For your convenience, I have attached my personal land acknowledgement from my earlier presentation to Council on March 22, 2022. While it may not be perfect (nothing ever is) it was written under the watchful auspices of Denise Boissoneau [LL.B., Reconciliation Advocate, Local Truth Reconciliation Group and Knowledge Holder, Anishinaabe Kwe, Manitoulin Island]. Ms Boissoneau is a recognized Elder and a much-respected member of the Canadian Indigenous community. When she speaks, it is with the legitimately derived voice of her people. Of course, I in no way mean to present a unified version of “Aboriginalness” or put forward One to speak for All.

As I stated previously to Council, it is imperative that we respect and honour the lands we occupy; too many Canadians still do not know the history of Aboriginal peoples' contributions to Canada, or understand that by virtue of the historical and modern Treaties negotiated by our government, we are all Treaty people. To build for the future we must look to, and learn from, the past.

Any Land Acknowledgment must be based in fact; to assume that only one group represents the totality of knowledge required to create this living document does a disservice not only to those City staff tasked with the responsibility of presenting to Council appropriate recommendations but also diminishes the input brought to the process by the authorized and representative Knowledge Keepers of the aforementioned Nations.

I implore you to refocus the City of Richmond Hill's staff and energy on completing the task they were assigned - crafting a Land Acknowledgement that truthfully and accurately acknowledges the history of this region where we gather and live, together. I am deeply concerned that the draft presented by Mr. Perrelli serves only his limited interest while unduly favoring specific individuals and their supporters at the expense of both City legitimacy and First Nation integrity.

In closing, the proposed Land Acknowledgement contained in Motion 14.1 (June 22, 2022) is unacceptable and disingenuous as written. It should not be adopted for use by the City of Richmond Hill.

Thank you.

Sharon Chisholm
81 Shaftsbury Avenue
Richmond Hill, ON L4C 0P9

Encl:

Personal Land Acknowledgment

“I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the land on which I stand today; where we gather as Council, support staff, and members of the City of Richmond Hill. This land is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishi’nabe’waki, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We are guests in this space, and it is our shared obligation to respect, honour and sustain this land.”

Sharon Chisholm

March 22, 2022