

*A non-profit organization that promotes the integral development of Latin American women and youth*

720 Bathurst Street, Toronto, ON M5S 2R4. Email: [info@mujer.ca](mailto:info@mujer.ca) 416-515-9413



Monday, November 3, 2015

Dear Toronto City Council and Community Development & Recreation Committee,

For over 10 years, MUJER has been promoting the well-being of Latin American women and youth through education, leadership training, research and advocacy. MUJER is deeply committed to building equity, anti-oppression and inclusion both inside and outside the Latin American community, especially as the only Latin American organization in Toronto that implements a feminist and gender analysis. It is because of these values we, MUJER, feel compelled to ask for your support in bringing transparency and accountability to the Community Legacy Initiative (CLI) grant funding process.

The CLI grant is an extraordinary opportunity for Toronto's Latin American and Caribbean communities and we commend City Council on their efforts in making these funds available. However, we are greatly concerned that one organization, the Hispanic Canadian Heritage Council (HCHC), has managed to bypass the CLI grant process by jumping ahead to the short-list stage without being recommended in the first round of the competition.

On April 2, 2015, a report from the Acting Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration on the Community Legacy Initiative, presented 11 short-listed letters of intent and HCHC did not qualify. However, on April 20th during a Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC) meeting, a Councillor motioned to amend the recommendation and add HCHC to the list of short-listed applicants, which then was approved by Council. This was prompted by Oscar Vigil, Executive Director and other HCHC members writing letters to CDRC to reconsider their application because they were "misled and misinformed" on grant criteria. We request clarification as to why this occurred and whether this same opportunity would have been given to the other 70 or more applicants across the city who did not get short-listed. We also ask for clarification on whether other applicants were notified that this was a possible course of action and that this change even occurred.

On October 15, 2015 the CDRC moved to adopt the recommendation that HCHC receive CLI funding, which will now be considered by City Council on November 3rd. The project HCHC proposes focuses on Hispanic Pride, despite the fact that numerous community organizations, including MUJER, Latin American Education Network, Latin American & Caribbean Solidarity Network, Latin-America History Collective, Latin American Queer Education Project and Casa Cultural Ecuatoriana have expressed concern over using the term "Hispanic." This is because using the term "Hispanic" centres Spanish ancestry and excludes the many Afro-descendant, Indigenous, Asian and non-Spanish speaking communities across Latin America.

In addition, a change.org petition and hard-copy petition already have hundreds of signatures calling for the re-naming of Hispanic Heritage Month because the term is exclusionary. Since these petitions have been launched, HCHC has not attempted to engage with feedback and one of their members, the Latin American Education Network, has resigned because of these practices.

Community organizations often face challenges in securing funding to better the lives of people across Toronto. We ask that you work to bring transparency to the CLI grant process

in order to be accountable to the many applicants as well as the taxpayers. We urge you to not approve the funding of HCHC and move a motion for the CDRC to reassess proposals and be transparent and accountable to all applicants. Please see the attachments, which show how HCHC was not short-listed in the initial round of the CLI competition and then suddenly became a short-listed candidate recommended for funding, as well as community opposition to Hispanic Heritage Month.

Sincerely,

MUJER Board of Directors

Attachments:

[City Council and CDRC Relevant Minutes for first round of CLI:](#)

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.CD3.9>

[Letter from HCHC to CDRC:](#)

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/cd/comm/communicationfile-52385.pdf>

[City Council and CDRC Relevant Minutes for final Recommendation:](#)

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.CD7.6>

[Change.org petition to rename Hispanic Heritage Month: https://www.change.org/p/john-tory-cesar-palacio-norm-kelly-cristina-martins-kathleen-wynne-change-hispanic-heritage-month-to-latin-america-history-month-toronto-ontario-amp-canada](https://www.change.org/p/john-tory-cesar-palacio-norm-kelly-cristina-martins-kathleen-wynne-change-hispanic-heritage-month-to-latin-america-history-month-toronto-ontario-amp-canada)