

CD12.6.3



Wednesday 18 2015

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

RE: CD 12.6- 2015 Allocations: Community Legacy Initiative, Follow-up

We are writing you on behalf of the families, educators and community organizations that encompass the Latin American Education Network (LAEN). We are requesting that your respected Committee Members recommend that community voice be the central and guiding voice in the process to ensue for the re-allocation of CLI Funds.

We first wrote the City about this issue in November 2015 when we learned of the lack of transparency occurring in the selection process of the CLI recipient, Hispanic Canadian Heritage Council. This organization was already on our radar as an organization that was complacent to racist, homophobic and elitist practices under the leadership of Claudio Ruiz, Oscar Vigil, Duberlis Ramo, Maria Luisa Grimaldi, and their Advisors Caesar Palacio, Fernando Valladares and Ericka Aguilera. While we acknowledge that many of these members have since been asked to leave by HCHC since our complaints were deemed as having basis, we have it on good authority that the string-pulling is still occurring in the opaque corners of this process. We are available to provide our supporting documents to your Committee as needed.

As reflected in the letter from LAEN organizational member, MUJER, which has been quoted by City Staff as playing a role in the decision-making process today, we are calling on equitable, accountable and transparent processes in what can only be described as a clear example of systemic racism issues within the civic arenas of Toronto.

In particular, we are calling for the removal of Caesar Palacio from this process all together. He is in clear Conflict of Interest and it is our opinion as a community group that he does not speak for our community. He prioritizes European colonial narratives in his focus on Hispanic identity (also academically understood as a caucasian Spaniard identity term).

We are calling on you all as City Staff dedicated to seeing a successful legacy initiative, to

request a Community Forum allowing for members for a steering committee reflective of multiple stakeholders from the Latin America, South America and the Caribbean be created so that the re-allocation of funds does not occur without transparency and further award Hispanic individuals in power dedicated to advancing the singular narrative of Hispanic Heritage. For other advancements on this issue, please note the following changes:

(1) The Toronto District School Board unanimously voted April be recognized as Latin-America History Month."

<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Leadership/Boardroom/AgendaMinutes.aspx?Type=M&Year=2016&Filename=160420+Summ.pdf>

(2) Senator Tobias Enverga stance: "Honourable Senators, after some consultation with members of the public whom we are here to serve and some further consideration of what would be the most inclusive and neutral wording, I decided to change the focus of this bill to "Latin America" as a geographic linguistic community, which would not only add lusophone and francophone communities but also those of indigenous peoples of the region. In addition, as one person stated, it: ". . . allows inclusivity of all/any multiple identities because it allows self-identification meanwhile celebrates a land and histories that connect us all."...Latin American Canadians are of diverse cultural and national backgrounds but are united by geography. Many Latin American countries also have a shared colonial history stemming from the time when Spain and Portugal were world powers, as were, with less impact, France, Holland and Great Britain."

http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/Sen/Chamber/421/Debates/019db_2016-03-08-e.htm#33

Esteemed Committee Members, while you may not understand how all these pieces fit together, please understand or at least consider why people and organizations of Hispanic identity are making the decisions for such a diverse peoples. Our communities are new in Toronto, and we need the opportunity to grow in social and economic capital. This community legacy grant is for us.

Please see to it that we are no longer shut out of the conversation. Had we been included in the events following our complaint, or at least even made aware of this decision ahead of time, we would have been able to coordinate a deeper dialogue with you. The Latin American Education Network looks forward to supporting in the coordination of a forum in the near future to elaborate on these issues alongside community.

Best Regards,

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