

April 24, 2021

To members of council,

I am writing to you today to with a number of questions regarding the Prime Minister's Path consultation process. I write these as a long time Wilmot resident who actively served our community and only recently made the difficult decision to move to Kitchener.

I want to make it abundantly clear that my main concern with regards to the PM Path consultation process are:

- 1) that no further harm be brought to Indigenous people in Wilmot and the broader Waterloo Region through this consultation process, and
- 2) that their voices be intentionally amplified in this process. It is fundamentally essential that their voices be given more weight.

It is abundantly clear the incredible harm and damage that this entire process has inflicted on the Indigenous community. Even just the act of having a consultation process is harmful as it is centered within a context of white systems of oppression. The Indigenous people have had their voices blatantly ignored and dismissed by having been called time and time again to speak to their own pain and relive that in a public forum as delegates at council, only to be met with silence and further harm.

Because of this, we have to assume that many of them will not feel safe engaging in this process. So when you put a general call out for feedback, it is possible that they will not willingly volunteer their voices, their pain, their trauma all over again. They have already offered this.

Their willingness to speak needs to be on their own terms. And most importantly, if they can't, what they have already spoken through past delegations, reports, etc needs to be accepted into this process as their contribution. And that contribution needs to be given weight.

This is about equity, not equality.

We are obligated to lift their voices above others.

We are obligated to give their voices weight over others.

This is what our white privilege demands. This is what "we are committed to showing you, not by words, but by action" looks like.

Equity is not assuming that the voice of the dominating system shares equal weight with others. It demands that the voices that are most hurt be given an elevated voice.

Questions for First Peoples Group:

- 1) How will this process elevate Indigenous voices and ensure that their voices, regardless of numbers, are given higher weight than others? What ratio will be used to weigh their voices in the final report from First Peoples Group?
- 2) What is your plan to engage Indigenous people within Wilmot and the broader Waterloo Region, knowing that a general offering to speak into the process may not be enough to engage them?
- 3) With regards to the recommendations of this report, how will you ensure that Indigenous voices are centered and allowed to shape and share their own story going forward – regardless of the outcome? For example, if one of the outcomes is that we need to add more to the story of the Prime Minister's Path, then that needs to be developed by them.
- 4) Will you be using any of the funds granted to First Peoples group in this process to give back to the local Indigenous community for the work that they have already put forth?
- 5) What will you do to ensure that symbolic acts of reparation in this process are deep and meaningful and beyond acts of performative allyship?

Finally, as council, I encourage you to reach out to other cities in Canada who have gone through this process – specifically with First Peoples Group – to inquire about what gaps, inherent biases or learnings they garnered from going through this same process, and how Wilmot can use those to build on to create a more fulsome and equitable process.

The number one concern of this process should be that no further harm is done to Indigenous people, both within Wilmot, Waterloo Region and the broader area as a whole.

Respectfully,
Charlene (Nafziger) Gingerich