

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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FNLC Condemns BC Conservative Candidate's Racist and Demeaning Statements

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is calling on the BC Conservative Party to remove Marina Sapozhnikov from the party immediately. Sapozhnikov made a number of extremely racist statements about First Nations and First Nation people during an interview with a student journalist on October 19th.

"We have seen an alarming pattern of derogatory comments by members of the BC Conservatives. John Rustad has shown a complete lack of leadership in his failure to respond to racist commentary by some of the BC Conservative Party candidates in this election. A true leader would have taken swift and decisive measures to deal with the problem. John Rustad needs to draw a line now. Does he support division, racism, and hate? Will he allow Sapozhnikov to poison his caucus and eliminate any hope of his party working constructively with First Nations in BC?" said Terry Teegee, Regional Chief of the BC Assembly of First Nations. "By not dumping this toxic, shameful candidate already he is clearly more interested in power than maintaining his integrity and standing on his purported values and principles. His inaction will mute any apology he may offer and will unfortunately be a telltale sign to all British Columbians of the true priorities of the BC Conservative Party," Regional Chief Teegee continued.

In an interview with Vancouver Island University student Alyona Latsinnik, Sapozhnikov called First Nations "savages" and claims that "90 per cent of Indigenous people use drugs." John Rustad's written response claims that he is "appalled and deeply saddened" by Sapozhnikov's comments, yet he does not indicate that he will take any action to remove her from his party.

"Sapozhnikov's comments are atrocious and represent gross stereotypes that dehumanize First Nation people and diminish and marginalize First Nations' voices and truths about their complex societies and systems of governance, trade and conflict resolution," stated UBCIC Grand Chief Stewart Phillip. "It is very telling that Rustad has refused to take swift and meaningful action in response to these racist and hateful comments. Merely stating that he condemns Sapozhnikov's comments has no mitigating effect whatsoever to the harm her comments cause."

"Sapozhnikov needs to be held to account. Her comments are extremely hurtful and damaging and clearly show we have a long way to go on our collective work to achieve true and meaningful reconciliation," noted Cheryl Casimer, Political Executive of the First Nations Summit (FNS). "Regardless of whether John Rustad takes action, the FNLC will be requesting censure for these racist and hateful comments from the BC College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Office of the Superintendent of Health Professions and Occupation Oversight, as well as making inquiries with the BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner."



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