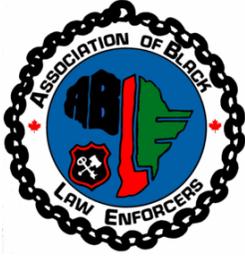


ASSOCIATION OF BLACK LAW ENFORCERS

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Friday June 01, 2012

Ms. Gabriella D. Lappa,
Director of Honours,
1 Sussex Drive,
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A1

Dear Ms. Lappa:

The Association of Black Law Enforcers (A.B.L.E.) is a non-profit organization formed in 1992 to address the needs and concerns of Black and other racial Minorities in Law Enforcement and the Community. The membership includes Police Officers, Correctional Officers, Probation and Parole Officers, Immigration Officers, Customs Officers, Court Services Officers, By-law Enforcement Officers, Sheriff's Officers, Special Constables and members from the Community. Our Membership is inclusive of Law Enforcement Officers at the Federal, Provincial, and Municipal levels.

The Peace Officer Exemplary Service Medal (P.O.E.S.M.) was created by the Federal Government of Canada by an Order-in-Council. Similar to other exemplary service medals awarded by the Governor General of Canada, the P.O.E.S.M. is presented to Peace Officers who have provided 20 years of exemplary service.

While other exemplary service medals make no distinction between recipients who work for Federal, Provincial or Municipal Services, the P.O.E.S.M. is eligible exclusively to those Peace Officers employed by Federal or Provincial organizations. This exclusivity means that the Special Constables employed by Municipal Police Services and Provincial Offences Officers working for Municipalities throughout Ontario are ineligible to receive the Medal.

Peace Officers working for Municipal organizations are ineligible as the Order-in-Council creating the Medal stipulated that only Peace Officers employed by five organizations were automatically eligible to receive the Award: Canada Border Services Agency; Department of Citizenship and Immigration; Department of the Environment; Department of Fisheries and Oceans; Parks Canada Agency. The Order also created an Advisory Committee made up of one representative from each of the listed organizations who can make recommendations on who is eligible for the award as long as they are employed by a Federal or Provincial organization.

The Criminal Code of Canada – the highest statute governing Law Enforcement in Canada – defines a Peace Officer as (R.S., C.C -34, S.I.C) a Police Officer, Bailiff, Constable, or other person employed for the preservation and maintenance of the public peace or for the service or execution of civil process. Furthermore, Canadian courts have ruled on several occasions that the definition of Peace Officer includes By-law Officers and Animal Control officers -- most notably in 2000 (R v. Turko). Nowhere in the Criminal Code, or in any Canadian court decision, is there a distinction made between Peace Officers who work for a Federal, Provincial or Municipal organization.

At the inaugural presentation of the P.O.E.S.M., Governor General Michaëlle Jean said, "Canadians are proud of our nation's open and welcoming nature." Yet this honour is denied to some sworn Peace Officers simply because they are employed for a Municipal rather than a Federal or Provincial Service. This denial would not, in our estimation, appear to be in keeping with the Governor General's words, nor the spirit of the National Honours System.

While Peace Officer Exemplary Service Medal eligibility is not a racial issue, it is one that affects Black and Visible Minority Municipally-employed peace officers across the Country, particularly in Canada's largest Province by population – being Ontario - and thus throughout some of Canada's largest cities and municipalities, especially when we take into account that Municipally-employed Peace Officers include Police Special Constables, University Special Constables, Transit Special Constables, By-Law Enforcement and Provincial Offences Officers, most of whom (including the vast majority of Black and Visible Minority Officers) are employed in and around the Province of Ontario where A.B.L.E is essentially based. Many of A.B.L.E.'s Members are employed by such organizations, or those Members interact with Special Constables and Provincial Offences Officers on a regular basis and value their work as Peace Officers. We in A.B.L.E. believe the duties that these Members perform are as equally vital to public safety as that of their Provincial and Municipal colleagues.

Thus, in support of all Special Constables and Municipally-employed Peace Officers in Ontario and across Canada, regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability, the Association of Black Law Enforcers (A.B.L.E.) urges the Advisory Committee responsible for the P.O.E.S.M. to reconsider the eligibility criteria for the Peace Officer Exemplary Service Medal. Should the criteria's wording be changed from "any other Federal or Provincial organization that employs Peace Officers" to "any other government organization that employs Peace Officers", then all Canadian Peace Officers could be justly recognized for the work they do and the notable contribution they make to the preservation and maintenance of the public peace in Canada, and therefore potentially receive the P.O.E.S.M.

On behalf of the ABLE Executive, I wish to express that A.B.L.E fully endorses the recent initiative championed by Peel Regional Police Special Constable Edo van Belkom, and supported by an extensive list of Members of Federal and Provincial Parliament, Mayors, Police Services, Police Services Boards, Police Associations, and Police Chiefs and Senior Officers, to have all Municipally-employed Peace Officers be made eligible to receive this prestigious national honour.

Broadening the eligibility requirement to be inclusive rather than excluding thousands of worthy individuals from recognition is consistent with the values upon which the Association of Black Law Enforcers was founded and in keeping with our current vision for our Organization.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,



Keith Merith,
President
Association of Black Law Enforcers (A.B.L.E.)