



Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians

*Executive Branch of Tribal Government
Office of the Chief Executive*

August 6, 2025

Sheldon Boyd, Speaker of the Assembly
Carolyn Beaulieu, District I Representative
Wendy Merrill, District II Representative
Harry Davis, District III Representative

Re: Commissioner Nominations

Dear Band Assembly:

In the past several weeks, the Band Assembly has denied four Band member nominees to the positions of Commissioner of Administration and Commissioner of Corporate Affairs. All Band members, all highly qualified. Recently, the Band Assembly amended its rules to deny hearings to three of these nominees. I cannot pretend that I am pleased with this decision to operate in such a non-transparent manner.

I also feel obligated to speak up for the positive qualifications of all my nominees who have been denied. Beginning with Darcie Big Bear, she is an extremely talented individual who persevered day and night to move the Band forward. I will always be grateful for her sacrifices because I witnessed them firsthand. Second, Sarah Oquist has a resume as impressive as any I have seen. Her track record of turning around troubled businesses is every bit as impressive. Third, Michele Palomaki's skillset, reputation, work ethic, and service to the Band speak for themselves. She is respected by so many Band members and employees, and would have done a tremendous job in stabilizing Band government during these challenging times. Finally, Ronda Weizenegger has worked for 24 years in faithful service to the Band's casinos. She also understands our businesses, our government, and our culture. These nominees are all strong and fantastic Anishinaabe women.

These nominees have a combined total of more than 75 years of service to the Band. If none of them are qualified for these positions, it is not clear to me who is.

In response to the Band Assembly's demand that I post the Commissioner of Administration position, this is a process I already went through last year. Although I respect the Band Assembly's recommendation, I am fully aware of the Band members interested in the position and what their qualifications are. Moreover, when I send a nominee for Commissioner of Administration to the Band Assembly, it is because I have already assessed that person as best fit for the job. The Band Assembly may not always agree with that assessment, but it remains both the Chief Executive's prerogative and responsibility to decide the nominee.

Letter from Chief Executive Virgil Wind to Band Assembly

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As for the Band Assembly's demand that I post the Commissioner of Corporate Affairs position and conduct a national search, my preference is to find a talented Band member to fulfill these duties. Under 4 MLBS § 6(b), it is the responsibility of the Chief Executive, not the Band Assembly, to appoint Executive Officers. The Band Assembly, in contrast, possesses only the power of confirmation. And by insisting that I conduct a national search, the Band Assembly seems to be implying that there isn't a single Band member—whether working at MLCV or elsewhere—who is capable of running our business enterprises. I wholeheartedly refuse to accept that mode of thinking.

Moving forward, I ask that the Band Assembly to delineate a clear confirmation process so that I can properly prepare my nominees.

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Virgil Wind
Chief Executive

CC:

MLCV Corporate Board of Directors
Caleb Dogeagle, Solicitor General
Jared Miller, Legislative Counsel