

February 15, 2019

Hon. Colleen Mayer
Minister of Crown Services, Manitoba
314 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Mayer:

I have received written notice from MPIC recently that my license plate NDN CAR is being recalled because it is prohibited. I have read MPI's guidelines for personalized plates and for the life of me, I cannot understand how this plate is offensive to anyone, how it can be construed as racial slang even if by some stretch it can be considered a political message of any description, in any language.

If someone could provide me with a reasonable explanation in writing as to why this plate should be surrendered before my February 21, 2019 deadline, I will consider doing so.

I have received nothing but happy smiles and thumbs up signs from fellow travellers across Canada and the United States because people recognize the sign for what it is, a tribute to being an indigenous person driving a car. The plate follows from the song "Indian Car" by Keith Secola. This song is an anthem to humble people just trying to get around our country the best way we can.

I am a producer with Aboriginal Peoples Television Network National News. We had Mr. Secola on our show InFocus, one of our internationally televised current affairs programs, to talk about his life and career. A wall sized photo of my license plate was the backdrop to the interview and performance of "Indian Car. I don't think anyone called in to complain about the photo, Mr. Secola or the gigantic photo of my plate.

I was told over the phone on May 10, 2018 by MPI employee [REDACTED] that someone called in with a complaint that the NDN CAR plate was offensive possibly because it is ethnic slang.

I was told pretty much the same thing over the phone by [REDACTED] on February 12 this year. [REDACTED] asked what the letters stood for. I said it was an English contraction for the word "Indian." "Oh it's racial, I bet that's why," she said. [REDACTED] reiterated that a complaint came in from someone who was not comfortable with the plate and "we have to listen to the public."

Neither [REDACTED] nor [REDACTED] would say how many complaints came in or what the context of these complaints were or the ethnicity of the complainants.

-more -

It is unfair that MPI would force someone to surrender a license plate which they issued on the basis of some anonymous person who says they are uncomfortable with the plate.

MPI approved this plate several years ago. I never heard a bad word for six or seven years then bang, some unknown person or persons call in, says they're offended by NDN CAR for some ambiguous and uneducated reason for all I know and now I have to surrender the plate; no process for appeal, do not pass go, do not collect \$200.

I feel that I should not be bullied into submission over this expression of who I am -Nehiyaw winew ota- especially since that expression is made in a humourous and friendly way.

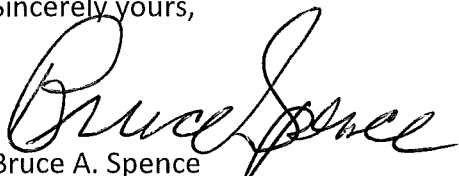
I have gone to MPI's website and read the guidelines for personalized license plates. I believe my understanding of those guidelines is as good as anyone else's. As I said before, I do not see how NDN CAR violates any of those guidelines, even the "political message of any description."

MPI has to be more transparent as to how they can approve a plate at one moment then recall it seven years later. There has to be a process in place where there is open discussion of a proposed personalized plate and good solid, logical reasons put forward as to why a plate is acceptable or not. Some guy phoning in and saying he doesn't like my plate just doesn't cut it.

Here we are in a time of reconciliation, rebuilding our nations, self determination and public treaty land acknowledgement at Jets and Blue Bombers games. In that vein it's time for the indigenous tribes of this land should issue our own plates.

I trust you will consider the points I am raising here and at least have a discussion with me about MPI's rather arbitrary decision to recall NDN CAR. I don't think that surrendering my plates would do any good for me, or the province of Manitoba.

Sincerely yours,



Bruce A. Spence

1 attachment

Cc: The Registrar, Personalized License Plates, MPI



CERTIFIED

REF: 1932717

SPENCE BRUCE ALLEN


Customer Number: 4327920

Date: 07 FEB 2019

We have attempted to contact you by telephone regarding your personalized license plate slogan "NDN CAR" but have been unsuccessful.

We are reviewing all slogans to make sure all active personalized plates fall within our guidelines. Your slogan "NDN CAR" has been identified in our review as phrases or innuendoes that may be considered offensive. As a result, it is now being recalled as it is prohibited, as per our guidelines.

Personalized plates cannot include: any profane, sexually suggestive, racial/ethnic slang, religious, or alcohol/drug-related words, phrases or innuendoes that may be considered offensive, suggestive or discriminatory, promote violence, or contain political messages of any description, in any language

Please visit any Manitoba Public Insurance Service Centre or Autopac agent to surrender your existing plates by **February 21, 2019**. At that time, you will be issued regular license plates at no charge.

You may replace your existing personalized plates with a different slogan at no charge. If you decide to choose a new slogan, please call our office at 204-985-7722 to make your request after you surrender your existing plates.

If you choose to keep the regular license plates, arrangements will be made to refund the \$100 (plus GST) you paid for your personalized plates.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this request or process, please feel free to contact our office.

Licensing Services Department
Manitoba Public Insurance

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