

Thursday, July 22, 2010

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Police Raise Flag, Eyebrows

Jon Willing - July 20th, 2010

I think the Ottawa Police Service will be watching closely who gets to speak at their events after a flag unveiling ceremony at headquarters today.

For those who don't know, the police service often has flag and banner ceremonies to promote the city's multiculturalism. Today the police service had a Turkish flag draped over headquarters to celebrate the start of the Ottawa Turkish Festival this weekend. Tomorrow the police service will unveil the Lebanese flag as the Lebanese Festival officially begins.

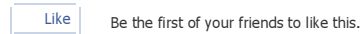
During today's noon-hour ceremony, there were several speakers: Chief Vern White, MPP Yasir Naqvi, police services board chair Coun. Eli El-Chantriy, Coun. Marianne Wilkinson (who brought the flag back from a trip to Turkey), and mayoral candidate Jim Watson.

The MC for the event introduced Watson as "minister."

"I'm no longer a minister. I do like to preach, though," Watson quipped when he took the mic.

But what really raised eyebrows was Watson being invited by the police service to speak. No other front-running mayoral candidates spoke (or was in attendance, as far as I saw) and the optics are bad for police, who don't want to be seen as supporting a mayoral candidate. It was very clear police brass didn't know Watson would be a speaker at the event and I'm pretty sure they'll make sure something like that doesn't happen again.

Nice opportunity for Watson, though. Even if there were only a few dozen people there.



1 comment

- 1. Sara says: July 21, 2010 at 10:12 am
Instead of focusing on the negative, Ottawa Sun, why not write an article about the actual Turkish Festival and the festivities! Like maybe mentioning the dates of the event, where it is taking place?

Who cares why Watson spoke, the event is about celebrating Turkish culture, not political gain.

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Submit Comment Columnist Susan Sherring is an experienced Ottawa journalist and a Day One staffer at the Sun.

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Jon Willing joined the Ottawa Sun City Hall bureau in December 2009 after spending several years covering crime and justice.

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