

Colchester Council's Statement on Respect for Diversity

By Mayor Christine Blair

The County of Colchester embraces — and is made better by — the diversity of its people.

As Mayor, on behalf of the Council of Colchester, I make this affirmation of deep commitment to equality and genuine inclusion on the very unfortunate occasion of reports of allegations that some of our own Councillors may have violated these principles by expressing abhorrent views.

Council will not tolerate discrimination nor incitement of hatred toward anyone based on any of the characteristics set out in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. It is the duty of all elected representatives to be exemplary in their conduct. Each of us must inform ourselves about and make welcome our diverse citizens to be able to fully represent our communities. Each of us must be accountable for our conduct.

Council is extremely disappointed about this situation.



Colchester Mayor
Christine Blair

Voicing prejudice is certainly not acceptable conduct. On the rare occasion when issues of decorum have arisen, we have acted quickly to correct situations so that our culture of Municipal governance continues to be one of accountability and dignity.

We are taking these matters very seriously. While we know that we need to carefully consider the validity of allegations through a fair process, just the possibility of these harmful

ideas being expressed has caused injury to those who experience discrimination all too often.

For that reason, I have reached out to Chief Bob Gloade to express Colchester's sincere commitment to a respectful and positive relationship between the people of Millbrook and Colchester County.

Our desire is to work collaboratively as equal partners developing a prosperous and welcoming community. Additionally, I have expressed this same message in conversation with Dr. Don Julien, Executive Director of the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq.

In the coming days, I will also meet with local Islamic leaders to convey our concern about the allegations and to express our gratitude for their long-time and continuing presence as part of our communities.

A special meeting of Colchester Council has been convened to make sure that our

entire Council reaffirms and embodies the vital values of human rights that Canada espouses. We will further educate ourselves so that we are aware of the impact of words and we will bolster our current policies to

ensure the highest level of ethical standards and processes of compliance are put in place and implemented.

To those who face discrimination of any sort within Colchester County, we want you to know that we are determined to fight for a just community where you are valued. Each of us must strive for understanding and acceptance of others. Blatant abuses of this standard will be stopped, but let us also work toward eliminating even the subtler forms of racism and exclusion by education and actions.

Communities of caring and diversity: this is the vision we, especially those in leadership, all must pursue. This is who the communities of Colchester County will be.

Press release was issued at 3:57 pm, on Thursday, July 20, 2017



The above shows Stephane Simonsen's Facebook page. (Submitted)

What are the Councillors Saying?

By Maurice Rees

Even though councillors have been on holiday during the month of July, the Shoreline Journal reached out to the Colchester Councillors since news of Doug MacInnes' letter of resignation was made public on July 18th. Not contacted were Councillors Taggart, Gibbs, recently resigned councillor, Doug MacInnes and Mayor Christine Blair. She had made several comments, and also issued a statement on behalf the municipality, which is published in its entirety elsewhere in this issue.

From the first article appearing in Frank Magazine in its issue which was available on newsstands on July 11th, and then the first major local story in the Truro Daily News on July 18th announcing Doug MacInnes had submitted a letter of resignation on July 17th citing the story has gained a lot of traction.

Being a monthly, the Shoreline Journal is normally behind the faster paced daily, radio, television and social news activity. In this special report we are attempting to summarize how wide-spread the story has

become from July 18th until July 22nd. During the week of July 17th, the Truro Daily News (TDN) had major stories each day for the remainder of the week; the Chronicle Herald published a similar version to the TDN story on July 19th and Truro based radio stations Big Dog and Cat County also had comprehensive coverage. CBC Radio News, Halifax ran several news segments, plus a voice-over with Mayor Christine Blair followed by a lengthy interview with Stephane Simonsen in the afternoon of July 21st. Simonsen is the lady who overheard alleged racist remarks and posted data on her Facebook Page later that evening. CBC's interview with her was broadcast on radio between the 4:35 and 4:58 time slot on the afternoon of July 21st.

The story was the top story on CBC News Nova Scotia website on the evening of July 21st, even surpassing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and family of three children's visit to Shelburne and Keji Park before leaving for Halifax for a fund raiser and the Prime Minister's participation in the Gay

Pride Parade in Halifax on July 22nd. As of midnight July 21st, we are unable to detect any broadcasts on ATV.

Here is what each of the councillors had to say, when contacted by the Shoreline Journal between July 20th and July 22nd:

Eric Boutilier - District 1

I've been on council less than a year. What has happened is unfortunate. I'm looking forward to the meeting on August 2nd, so I can hear both sides. Other than that I have no comment.

Bill Masters - District 2

As of press time, Deputy Mayor, Bill Masters was not available for comment.

Geoff Stewart - District 3

I've just returned from vacation and I haven't checked all my emails. Even if I had, I would not make any comment or think about making a decision until I heard all the facts. I need to hear both sides, then I can make a decision. I will not even make a comment on a "what if scenario?".

Mike Cooper - District 4

It was the weekend voice messages were left for Councillor Cooper. As a result we

were not able to get his comments.

Karen MacKenzie - District 6

Nobody has been able to tell me who said what. Until I know who said what I can't make a comment or decision. I hope details will be forthcoming at the August 2nd meeting.

Michael Gregory - District 7

I've been away and busy and I haven't checked all my emails. It's very sad. In fact, I would not make any comment. I would leave it up to the Mayor to comment on behalf of council. I look forward to discussing when council has the opportunity to meet.

Ron Cavanaugh - District 8

"I find it very shocking". I am just getting in from a hot long day. I have not read all my emails about it, but it's a very sad situation. I haven't been in contact with other members of council. It's not for me to say what others should do, but I hope everyone does what is right.

Wade Parker - District 11

I've been adamant about this since the beginning. I am not going to make any comments until we are able to meet as a council and I can learn all the facts.

Council to Decide August 2ND

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she was waiting for to have lunch, who did identify the councillors. The third person at the table was identified as B. J. Tan, of Debert.

Both Simonsen and Blair confirmed to the Shoreline Journal, the content of the conversation was not discussed during lunch. It was later that evening Simonsen posted to her Facebook page. As a result of the allegations posted on Facebook, Simonsen received a visit from the RCMP, who indicated they must investigate all comments regarding threats to the Prime Minister.

Additional stories, comments and OP-ED pieces are published elsewhere in this issue.

It was Mayor Blair who

Chief Bob Gloade Enters "Racism" Discussion

By Maurice Rees

Through a combination of published print and social media, Chief Bob Gloade, Millbrook First Nation entered the discussion about racist comments in the Municipality of County of Colchester council chambers.

Chief Gloade started questioning what was going on after learning about published reports about Doug MacInnes' letter of resignation reference to hearing a councillor making disparaging comments about representatives of the Confederation of Mainland Mi'kmaq and also Councillor Taggart's subsequent admission and apology he had made such remarks, in council chambers.

Taggart's remarks have been published on his Facebook page, submission of the same article to the Truro Daily News, which was published on July 21, and Taggart's submission of the same article to the Shoreline Journal, which is published elsewhere in this issue.

Through its network of non-council contacts and doing a lot of research the Shoreline Journal learned about the following Facebook exchanges between Chief Gloade and Councillor Taggart during the evening of July 19th. The comments we've received are as follows:

Gloade 10:28pm - July 19, 2017:

I have a question Tom Tag-

gart. Did you make derogatory statements about First Nations either in chambers, committee meetings or while serving on council as has been reported?

Taggart 10:40pm - July 19, 2017:
Yes I did Bob It was during a debate discussion it was in camera but I did make a derogatory comment, which I immediately regretted, It angered Doug and he left. I apologized to Doug the next Day and would be more than happy to have coffee with you and apologize as well and or I would be happy to do so to your council. However I do dispute that I would in anyway be considered to be a racist. I do my absolute best to treat people as they treat me. Should you wish to view my statement it is posted here and I have publicly admitted to a comment, truthfully cannot say that it was the comment Doug has spoken to. as I do not recall exactly what was said

Gloade 10:57pm - July 19, 2017:

Before I provide any response I must first hear all sides and think this one over and engage in a conversation with some of my elders then council. I will pray for a peaceful resolution and as a political official if I treat people as they treat me then i will face the same scrutiny as yourself. Personally I try to face any negative situation in a positive manner.

MacInnes Cites "Racism" as The Reason

By Maurice Rees

It's a moral decision on my part, I can't be associated with racism", is the reason Doug MacInnes wrote a letter of resignation and handed it to Rob Simonsen, Colchester's CAO on Monday, July 17th. He was referring to a late April Facebook posting by Stephane Simonsen in which she alleged two Colchester Councillors made during a conversation with a third male in a downtown Truro restaurant.

Simonsen's posting, which is printed elsewhere indicated three things were mentioned, including a threat against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau; treating the K'urhan as hate speech and mosques should be burned.

The Shoreline Journal spoke to MacInnes this week after his resignation letter was published on Tuesday, July 18th, but he was adamant he would not name or identify the two councillors involved in the restaurant meeting and that the racist overtones were not representative of other members of council.

According to MacInnes his intolerance of racism has been



Colchester District 5
Councillor Lloyd Gibbs

festering for about three years with a variety of racial comments that he has heard, witnessed the most recent incident was the final straw. "I just can't take it anymore", he said.

Several members of the media, and the councillors Tom Taggart and Lloyd Gibbs have admitted they had a meeting in a restaurant with Debert resident, B. J. Tan. Sources say the three meet regularly, almost on a monthly basis. Taggart and Gibbs have denied making any racist comments. "I said absolutely

nothing that anybody could attribute to, as being racist," Taggart said, but he has admitted to making a derogatory comment about First Nations. (See separate story).

Gibbs is quoted as saying, admitted to "I have Muslim friends," he said. "I do not hate the Muslim people ... I never said anything about the Muslim people. He denies making any racist comments during the restaurant meeting. However, he does admit to speaking out against Sharia Law because for his distaste for it. Since the story broke on July 18th, Gibbs has constantly denied making any racist comments against Muslim people.

While he admits he did talk about his distaste for Sharia law itself, his position was not against Muslims themselves.

The Shoreline Journal has not spoke to B. J. Tan about the restaurant meeting, but in the July 18th Truro Daily News story, Tan was mentioned in that he disagrees with the Liberal government's immigration policy as it applies to Muslims. But he said that is only in reference to those