

Fantino not home for rally

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If past injustice legitimizes future injustices, then injustice will eventually become legitimate. This was the rationale behind the actions of protesters who took their case to the home of OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino last weekend.

"Fantino and McGuinty are justifying their abandonment of Caledonia based on an inquiry that deliberately excluded residents and all evidence of native crime against them," said Mark Vandermaas, editor for voiceofcanada.ca and co-author of The Ipperwash Papers, to a crowd gathered in the Haldimand County Caledonia Centre parking lot on Sunday, March 2.

"Today, we hope to send a unique and unmistakable message that we will not allow our leaders to abandon communities while they remain safe and distant in theirs," stated Vandermaas.

The group of Caledonia residents he was speaking to was preparing to travel to Woodbridge, ON to protest the perceived failure of the Ontario Provincial Police to provide protection to those living alongside the disputed Douglas Creek Estates as well as to those occupying it. They protested outside the personal residence of OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino.

"Until Fantino admits that McGuinty is giving orders to the OPP, then we have to assume Fantino is in charge of the OPP," said Vandermaas.

However, while protesters were outside of his home in Woodbridge, Fantino was in Caledonia grabbing a coffee at Tim Horton's.

Vandermaas claims that he and many residents of Caledonia have made repeated requests to meet with Fantino and have been turned down. This apparent unwillingness of Fantino to meet with them made his visit to Caledonia while they protested in his neighborhood appear to the protesters as a slap in the face.

Vandermaas believes that the McGuinty government and the Ontario Provincial Police are making grave mistakes in relying on the recommendations of the Ipperwash Inquiry to guide them through the policing of Caledonia while the native occupation of the former Douglas Creek Estates continues into its third year.

There are 100 recommendations in the Ipperwash Inquiry, yet Vandermaas says that the Inquiry fails to provide even one recommendation to specifically address prevention of violence against residents. A failure to address the prevention of violence against residents in Caledonia is reflected in the 'hands-off' approach that the OPP have assumed with native protesters since April 26, 2006.

Vandermaas is a former United Nations peacekeeper and full-time activist working to stop violence and OPP civil rights violations during native land claims.

He and fellow activist, Gary McHale, claim to have obtained 1,000 hours of audio recordings revealing interference by native protesters with police and ambulance routing on 6th Line.

They also claim the recordings reveal native occupiers' authorizations to shoot civilians and police.



Activist, former UN peacekeeper, and co-author of The Ipperwash Papers, Mark Vandermaas (right), spoke to residents of Caledonia before departing for Woodbridge, ON to protest in front of OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino's home on Sunday, March 2. (Left) Meryn Kinrade, long-time Caledonia resident and former UN peacekeeper.

"And if I have to I will go to Bryant's home and McGuinty's too, if there is even the slightest chance that it will move us even a tiny bit closer to the day when OPP cars are rolling down the 6th Line," promised Vandermaas

Vandermaas said that for residents living near Douglas Creek Estates - particularly on 6th Line where non-native residents claim they have no police protection, including refusals to respond to 911 calls on 6th Line - to have the OPP Commissioner and those under his command abandon them for an indefinite period of time is not acceptable.

The Caledonia residents travelling to Woodbridge agreed.

One resident, who would only identify himself as Mark for fear of retaliation by DCE occupiers, says "the rule of law has been abandoned...we have no faith in the OPP."

Vandermaas, McHale, and former Ipperwash resident (1990-2007) Mary-Lou LaPratte, who claims to have experienced first-hand the effects that two-tiered, race-based policing has on communities caught in the middle of native land claims, co-authored The Ipperwash Papers (ipperwashpapers.ca).

As cited by Vandermaas at voiceofcanada.ca, the Ipperwash Papers are "a collection of over 400 pages of documents that reveal the suffering of innocent Ipperwash residents at the hands of native criminals, and by Department of National Defence and OPP Two Tier Justice policies during 3 separate land claims, how the Ipperwash Inquiry completely excluded their testimony, and why the Ipperwash Inquiry can NEVER provide any credible recommendations designed to prevent future Landclaim Terror."

Vandermaas partially attributes this flaw of the Ipperwash Inquiry to the fact that a mere total of 90 minutes was granted to the victimized residents of Ipperwash over the course of the three year long, \$20M inquiry.

Vandermaas is clear to point out that his issue is not with land claims. He feels that it is neither the OPP nor civilians who are to determine the legitimacy of land claims nor how they are negotiated and settled, but that it is for governments and First Nations to solve.

What is of concern to Vandermaas and the protesters who travelled with him to Woodbridge is the safety from violence and crime for all innocent native and non-native civilians who find themselves geographically caught in the middle of native land claims disputes - both now in Caledonia and in the future elsewhere in Canada be provided.

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