

Caledonia residents launch petition for Fantino's resignation

Posted 2 months ago DEC 24 | 08

Ken Hewitt and another Caledonia resident want an inquiry into Ontario Provincial Police commissioner Julian Fantino's handling of issues in Haldimand County.

On Dec. 22, they launched a petition which will be distributed across Haldimand County including Dunnville. It demands an inquiry into Fantino's actions and into overall policing based on the "tainted" report from Ipperwash, said Hewitt, who was a key Caledonia Citizens Alliance spokesperson in 2006.

The petition also demands that Fantino be suspended until the inquiry is concluded and be removed from his job if cause is found.

The petition will be circulated across Ontario and will soon be available on the internet.

The petition sprung out of frustration and anger over a recent letter Fantino wrote in support of Clyde Powless of Six Nations, Hewitt indicated. OPP officers charged him with assault and mischief related to events at the Dec. 1, 2007 smoke shop protest on Argyle Street South in Caledonia.

"He defies the charges made by his own officers by submitting a letter of support (for Powless)," said Hewitt. "I question why the commissioner of the OPP would submit a letter on a misdemeanour."

In the letter filed for a Dec. 5 court hearing on Powless's charges, Fantino wrote that Powless was "instrumental in diffusing serious conflict and confrontation" and has acted as a peacemaker.

In Fantino's letter, which was released last week by Gary McHale, the commissioner said he was making no excuses for Powless's behaviour. Fantino also said the volatile situation and provocation could simply be avoided if McHale and his followers were not in attendance. Three of five paragraphs in the letter mention McHale.

In an email, McHale said a preliminary hearing on his "counselling mischief that did not occur" charge spanned 10 days. His bail conditions which banned him from Caledonia were lifted and altered for the Christmas holidays. He can visit his lawyer and accountant in town and can visit people upon receiving an invitation but he can only visit one home in the vicinity of Douglas Creek Estates.

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