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Coming clean on Caledonia

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By any reasonable standard, we, the taxpayers of Ontario, should be able to know the details of the out-of-court settlement reached in the suit involving Caledonia homeowners David Brown and Dana Chatwell, the OPP and the province. After all, the tax dollars we all pay make up the whatever sum of money was paid. And those same tax dollars paid the expenses accrued by the police and province up until now in their efforts to defend the case.

Since we financed the whole endeavour, why shouldn't we be able to look at the books? And shouldn't we be able to hear the remaining evidence to judge if the allegations contained in the suit are true or not?

It's not going to happen. Out-of-court settlements happen all the time in civil litigation, and it is standard procedure for there to be certain confidentiality stipulations, typically around the amount of the agreed-upon settlement.

So, what are we left with? At minimum, this is a black mark -- another one -- that reflects terribly on the conduct of the OPP and the government. We're left with the reality that a double standard exists in policing the Caledonia land dispute, and neither the police nor the province are prepared to address that sad reality.

The credibility of the OPP, on Caledonia at least, is shot. It's the job of the police and the McGuinty government to strike an appropriate and fair balance between protecting Caledonia residents and wisely policing the simmering native protesters, and so far, they've failed miserably.

It would be nice if OPP Chief Julian Fantino and senior government ministers, including the premier, would speak up on this issue, if only to explain how they plan to do better going forward. Don't hold your breath for that, either.

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