

Former army camp called 'sanctuary for criminals'

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Some Gratton subdivision and Port Frank's residents gathered in Bosanquet council chambers March 4 to discuss their discontent with the ongoing issues surrounding natives in the Ipperwash area. An overflowing assembly blamed the police and the government for their distress.

"They can't solve the problem because they are the problem. We have no security," said one of the many residents who asked not to be named. The delegation refused to be identified for their own protection. They all reported incidents where their homes or neighbor's homes were vandalized and trashed and said the OPP were standing by "just watching the break-ins." They were all in agreement that the tracks from the homes lead to the Ipperwash beach and then to the army camp. Councilor David Pugh told of a home that has been broken into four times in the past couple weeks. The third time doors and windows were smashed and furniture was loaded at the back door for later pickup.

"We are paying for protection and not getting it," said Pugh.

Another resident said she was afraid for her children. "We are told to stay in, stay out of sight, move out. We call the police and they don't come. Why are these people just getting a slap on the wrist while we live in terror?" Another mother agreed saying that her kids can't do normal play things. "They have to be watched every minute and one day a person was watching them through the back bush. I want security for my kids at their own home."

Pugh said that He has been informed that this is no longer a police issue but a government issue. "now that all the natives are out of the park." He said that the government, and the criminal investigators are under the assumption that everything is back to normal and that there will be no more native problems.

The council learned about major problems dating back to the September 6 shooting of Dudley George. Council told the residents that although they asked for OPP assistance to escort the people out of their homes to safety, the assistance was denied.

"The police are denying the evacuation, but it was them

who initiated it," said Administrator Ken Williams. A resident said that it was simpler for the younger ones to hop in their cars and "escape" but there were many seniors who found this assignment difficult. "They can't go through this again," she said.

Councilors said they have been negotiating plans since last fall so there isn't a repeat performance this spring. They have asked for policies from the government and have been given nothing.

"How can we protect our people?" he asked adding that they want answers, and to know exactly what the government plans for the security of the community.

Many people did not know of the shooting or that anything had occurred until the following morning. Others were unnecessarily alarmed. It was learned that the Grand Bend detachment called tourist park owners with the request for names and numbers of residents. The residents were then awakened and frightened with the news of the shooting as a preliminary warning of future events.

"I wish those names were not given," said the property

owner. The problem was not at our location. It was quiet there. People were frightened from one o'clock in the morning until the next day. The police really botched that one. I could have sent 25 families back to bed." He added that many of the break-ins were not native related and stated, "let's just catch them, whoever they are."

"I don't care what colour they are," said Pugh. "The military camp is a sanctuary for criminals. The police are not going in, they just stand at the gate looking in."

A resident said that there is a lot of politics being played. "The OPP are playing a wait and see game, waiting to see what the politicians will do next."

Mayor Fred Thomas said the federal government could not see any problems.

"They have no time and no money for you people." The mayor added that if the military camp was returned to the natives, many problems would be solved. He voiced his concern that this would not be done before the fast approaching May 24 weekend.

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Ipperwash area troubles

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this is not normal," said a resident, "Communications are non-existent." Many ratepayers said the RCMP should be brought in to take care of the problems. Others viewed the problems as not just "them" being afraid of the "so called Indians."

Thomas said that they will demand a plan from the government. "They are comfortable with what's happening here," he said with a member of the group declaring that of course they are comfortable. "they don't live here."

A motion was passed to have all the political and OPP representatives at a meeting. The motion said that if the people would not meet in Bosanquet, they would travel to see them.

Williams said that it is best for them to approach the province because the feds were not going to do anything.

"They are obviously not for the taxpayers," said Williams. "But they are for the natives." The motion was passed but not before a resident said, "surely we can resolve these issues without shooting each other."

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