

## **Asking for compensation**

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**Lakeshore Advance** — THEDFORD- For the first time in the 11 years since Dudley George was killed at Ipperwash provincial park, the neighbouring home owners spoke publically with recommendations to combat future violence.

At this public meeting , pegged "An evening with the Commissioner" Ipperwash Inquiry judge Sydney Linden was attempting to give the local residents a chance to voice their opinion, and they did.

Mary-Lou LaPratte has lived in the Ipperwash area for 17 years. Her suggestions began with 'rule of law' being observed. That became an entire theme for the people in the audience, including former Forest mayor and present Lambton Shores councillor Gord Minielly who said there are two laws here just as there are in the land struggles of Caledonia.

Jean Potthoff said the police asked her to evacuate in 1995, for her own safety. She said she thought the OPP did the best they could, under the circumstances but she said if "they" did some of these criminal acts, they would be arrested in a second.

In her recommendations LaPratt said • The law of the land must be upheld irregardless of the ethnic background of the perpetrator. •The OPP must enforce the law as per the Police Act, without political interference and must never under any circumstances desert a whole community leaving the citizens to their own devices to protect their homes and families. • There should be legislation in place to compensate third parties for their losses if a land dispute turns violent and causes financial hardship, loss of real estate value or emotional trauma. •All who will be primarily affected by the land dispute should be afforded concise, accurate information regarding what is being done at both government levels to resolve the dispute and what it is expected of the Municipality if the lands revert to Reserve Status. •Negotiations should not continue, if violence erupts, or barricades and blockades prevent the normal flow of traffic especially on public highways. •Court orders regarding the occupation by the deeded owner must be upheld. This will prevent frivolous land claims from harming the business, residential or financial interests of the existing owner until the land is proven otherwise.

•It is time for Native occupiers who willingly damage Hydro service, water service, or the land they are occupying to be made financially responsible for the repairs, not the innocent taxpayer.

•Land claims must be dealt with as quickly as possible to avert a violent eruption.

"I have listened to all of the seminars, and am most aggrieved that all the work in the last ten years among the governments, OPP and the Natives was of no help in the Caledonia dispute. Violence must not be tolerated. It only serves to leave the area in question paralyzed by fear and a sense of hopelessness. It will take years to recover on both sides.

"You didn't live here, you weren't here," she accused the Commission. Minielly, agreed with LaPratt saying this area was abandoned by the provincial and federal governments and were told nothing. He said this Inquiry needs to get those facts back to the federal government and if they had done their job by giving the land back to the First Nations people, none of this would have happened referring to the death of George, the circumstances today as well as the costly inquiry. He said the unlawfulness is still going on and the crime trail usually leads to the former base where the OPP are not permitted.

"Why is that?" he asked the Commission adding there are two laws.

Speaking on behalf of some of those people in the gallery, Minielly asked how many people had heard gun shots before 1995. Many people responded by raising their hands. He said he wanted that on the record and that since the people had often heard gun shots, there was ample reason for the police to be armed.

Commission lawyer Derry Miller said there has been evidence there were guns on the army camp as the native people hunt and so there would be hunting rifles.

"That's fine," said Minielly,

"The media has continually been told there were no guns and I want it on the record there were."

Former radio guy and Ipperwash business owner Gary Connors said he had a successful business until 1995 when that fell down the drain. He said he watched as police cars paraded down the road and he could not go to work. He said he was told the police were not allowed in the seven mile radius. Connors was surprised when his insurance people told him since he had no police protection, his insurance was cancelled. He said they went four weeks where they knew nothing.

"I worked in media then and didn't know why the police were there," he told the Commission. He said he left two signs on his business board. One said "If you want to break in, make sure you burn it down." and the other said " Closed down until our government gets their s... together."

"Is the Park re-opened? What is the status? No one knows," He then referred to the Caledonia compensation issues asking how much money property is worth here.

"The government at the time were blithering idiots on both sides," Connors told the forum, "The police told us nothing, there was no information given to us, no communication. The communication aspect sucks," he said.

"What will happen to the residents who have lived through this nightmare?" Connors asked. "What do they do, who do they call?"

"We do not have the power of the purse, just recommendations," said Nigh referring to the mandate of the Inquiry, "We can just take your ideas under advisement."

Resident Bess Sniderhan said this municipality wants the provincial park back and want concrete proof there is or isn't a burial ground in the park. Potthoff agreed saying there has been an incredible financial impact on the businesses here and the province due to the fact the park has not re-opened. (There is no land claim on this park to this day).

Another recommendation to the Inquiry was history and education be part of the school system. A participant said attitudes came from someplace, formed and fostered by early years and we need to learn acceptance of everyone. She said we need to know history of this land and how we got to the place we are today with the land claim issues.

Terry Laird said his family has lived in this area for six generations and although there were no problems in the past, the federal government has caused the problems this area has today.

"What would you do if your home was taken away 60 years ago and not returned?" he asked. He said he can't say he has not come up short since 1995, but this has been a raw deal handed down by the feds.

Resident Jim Hansen said there was destruction of possible evidence in 1995 and OPP should not be able to destroy their notes. He said there should be no interference with government and police unless there is an announcement of public state of emergency. He said the police should have to write their reports before they go to sleep so they have a better recall the next day and he said there needs to be real training of people issues, not native versus non-native. He said the federal government should not drag their feet when dealing with land claim. He asked the Commission the final probable forecast of costs for the Inquiry. "Inquiries cost a lot of dollars," said Thomas to which Hansen said "Is it \$20 million?" and the answer was "probably."

Lambton Shores mayor Cam Ivey said perception goes a long way and the lack of communication has been key in the last 11 years. He said from their standpoint there is a million miles from Ottawa to Toronto and the connection has been non-existent. He said it has been frustrating just trying to get information from the government.

"The OPP tried their best ...but one of the biggest problems and effective communication was not working." He said they are going through this in Caledonia. The mayor told the Commission that businesses and residents here continue to struggle from the 1995 incidents and there has to be a method to deal with this.

"Caledonia set a new standard as to what they are prepared to do. What can they do for us?" he asked.

Linden said this meeting was informative and helpful to staff and himself. He said there were going to be federal representatives this week at the Inquiry, which ends Thursday. The week of August 21 the lawyers hand in their written submissions and are allotted time for their oral submissions. Linden hopes to have his report by the end of this year.

In a phone interview with John Tory, Ontario PC leader, he said it is apparent that Premier Dalton McGuinty did not look backwards or forwards when he made this "knee jerk" decision to provide compensation in Caledonia. He said the people in Ipperwash need to contact their current MPP and with documentation in hand, ask that their cases be considered as a precedent has been set. He also wants an independent investigation in the civil rule of law and the purchase of land near Heamilton. Tory has been very vocal regarding the premier misleading the taxpayers about money spent in Caledonia.

The Ipperwash Inquiry was established by the Government of Ontario on November 12, 2003, under Public Inquiries Act. Its mandate is to inquire and report on events surrounding the death of Dudley George, who was shot in 1995 during a protest by First Nations representatives at Ipperwash Provincial Park and later died. The Inquiry is also to make recommendations that would avoid violence in similar circumstances