

Caledonia residents create militia

OPP not protecting citizens: organizers

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THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR CALEDONIA - A group of Haldimand citizens have decided enough is enough and are moving to set up a Caledonia civilian militia after police did nothing about a native smoke shack being moved onto privately owned farmland.

MPP Toby Barrett has told Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty the occupation of a chunk of private farmland on Highway 6 south of the town is "without precedent."

"There is a clear perception in the community that this is criminal behaviour - organized criminal behaviour and extortion, blatantly intimidating the owner of the land - and that the OPP have not prevented this from occurring," Barrett said in a letter.

It was that action, says Doug Fleming, a Caledonia entrepreneur and vocal critic of the native occupation of the former Douglas Creek Estates subdivision, that prompted his call for a civilian militia.

But police told Haldimand council Monday night that there was no intimidation involved in the smoke shack move. The Grand River Sachem reports that OPP Inspector Dave McLean said the owner agreed to it going up.

Fleming and others in Caledonia feel an unarmed militia is necessary to enforce laws they say the OPP has failed to uphold.

"(The OPP) have failed miserably to protect law-abiding citizens," Fleming says.

Fleming said an information meeting on the fledgling organization is planned for next Tuesday. He said he could think of no other term besides "militia" to dub the group, but he plans to screen out troublemakers.

"There are times when diplomacy and appeasement don't work, and we have a situation right now in Caledonia where appeasement doesn't work," Fleming said.

Claudine VanEvery-Albert, a member of the Six Nations elected council, said harassment complaints are overblown and the militia idea is a bad one.

"You shouldn't have militia people. I think it's called anarchy," VanEvery-Albert told Canwest News Service.

In his letter to McGuinty, Barrett said citizens have government for a reason.

"We have law for a reason," he said. "It is unacceptable and dangerous for government to abdicate responsibility and put this situation in the hands of private citizens."

OPP spokeswoman Constable Paula Wright said police do "not support the formation of a local militia."



Ron Albertson, The Hamilton Spectator
Landowner Ernie Palmer, who asked us not to show his face, looking at the smoke shack at the corner of his property.

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Not everyone in Caledonia thinks it's a good idea, but they blame authorities for making locals believe they have no other option.

"People here are starting to hate. They hate the OPP, they hate the natives, they hate anyone who isn't speaking out against it," David Hartless, a Hamilton police officer who lives next to the occupied site, told Canwest.

"It is just a vicious circle, and it is being watered and nurtured and fertilized by the government and the OPP standing back and saying, 'We are doing the best we can.'"