

FRONT PAGE STORIES



Peaceful Black Lives Matter demonstration in Cornwall

NICK SEEBRUCH
nseebruch@seawaynews.com

CORNWALL, Ontario – Hundreds gathered at Cornwall City Hall on Saturday afternoon, June 6, to peacefully demonstrate in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the death of George Floyd in the United States.

George Floyd was a black man in Minneapolis who was killed on May 25 after a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds during the course of his arrest.

Video footage of his death sparked outrage in the United States with solidarity protests in Canada and Europe.

Cornwall Mayor Bernadette Clement, Police Chief Danny Aikman, and Deputy Chief Shawna Spowart all participated in the demonstration, and the Cornwall Police Service (CPS) escorted the march along its route throughout the afternoon.

At the start of the demonstration, Mayor Clement, who was the first black woman to be elected Mayor in the province of Ontario, addressed the crowd.

"Eight minutes and 46 second," she

said. "Eight minutes and 46 seconds. The words we heard during those eight minutes and 46 seconds were "I can't breathe". The words we heard were from bystanders as well, begging for George Floyd's life. The powerlessness in those eight minutes and 46 seconds was heartbreaking."

Mayor Clement also took the time to celebrate two of the organizers of the event, Bethany Brown and Annissa Mohammed, two local women of colour.

"These are the two young women who organized this day," said Clement. "And if I was struggling to find hope before, when I met them, I felt that hope. They want to lead conversations about racism, and do you know what we all need to do? We need to listen."

Bethany Brown, and 18-year-old black mother, explained to the crowd some of her experiences with race in Cornwall.

"At six-years-old, I came home and balled in my mothers arms because kids at school said my skin was the colour of poop," she said. "At 10 years old, kids threw rocks at me and said I was dirty."

"If you think racism doesn't exist here it is because you have been privileged enough to not deal with it," she concluded.

Mohammed explained that their goal was to put racism on the map.

"It is up to us to end the stereotypes and labels that are put on people with a different skin tone," she said. "Everyone standing here today is making a difference for the black community."

The march proceeded down Pitt St. to Water St., with many community members lining the sidewalks and applauding demonstrators as they passed. The march continued along Water St. to Cumberland, up Cumberland St. to Ninth St., across Ninth St. to Pitt before ending back at City Hall.

The march itself was peaceful, with a sole counter protester who followed the demonstration, but did not get involved beyond exchanging slogans with the crowd.

Once everyone had returned to City Hall, the demonstrators in attendance took a knee for eight minutes and 46 seconds.

EOHU: Beaches are ready to open

NICK SEEBRUCH
nseebruch@seawaynews.com

CORNWALL, Ontario – In a recent update to media, Dr. Paul Roumeliotis, Chief Medical Officer of Health with the Eastern Ontario Health Unit (EOHU) said that his organization was ready for the re-opening of beaches.

Dr. Roumeliotis explained that after checking with EOBU lawyers that there was nothing preventing beaches from opening under current orders under the Quarantine Act or the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA).

"Our legal opinion that we got from our lawyers says that beaches can open," Dr. Roumeliotis said. "Provided of course that there is social distancing."

Dr. Roumeliotis said that he sent a memo explaining this to local beach operators and municipalities and that it was up to the operator of the beach to decide when to open and inform the EOBU.

"We are now ready at the Health Unit to resume our seasonal testing of the beaches to do bacteriological testing on a regular basis," said Roumeliotis.

2 - Wednesday, June 10, 2020 - Seaway News - www.cornwallseawaynews.com