

WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE MOM?



HEATHER WRIGHT PHOTO

Andre St. Jean-Coates of Sarnia was getting up close and personal with some Easter Eggs during the Alvinston Optimist Easter Egg Hunt Saturday. Organizers planned for 190 children at the event.

Petrolia mayor faces Integrity Commission investigation

Heather Wright
The Independent

The Independent has learned Petrolia Mayor Brad Loosley is under investigation by the town's Integrity Commissioner over comments he made about the fire chief.

The probe underway now, sources tell *The Independent*, is linked to the fall out from an investigation into Councillor Marty Souch.

In December, Investigator John Fleming probed an incident which saw police tail Souch after a staff member went to police concerned an unnamed councillor was watching staff at work. Fleming found no evidence of the claim and said the staff had gone above the chief administrative officer's head in taking the matter to the OPP.

After Fleming's investigation, CAO Rick Charlebois, in a news release, said the actions recommended by Fleming after the two-week investigation into the staff/councillor relations problem would move forward. But the exact actions were not released, nor were the names of the staff members involved in the conflict with Souch. *The Independent*, which had talked to Souch long before the internal investigation, revealed he was the councillor involved in the conflict.

Three weeks after Fleming's report, the town changed the job description of Fire Chief Jay Arns.

SEE LOOSLEY PG 2

Corunna hockey family calls for openness, action after racist comments

Barry Wright & Heather Wright
The Independent

Bo Doxtator has been playing hockey since he was four. Usually, the Corunna teen is the only Indigenous player on the team.

While the cultural differences between him and his teammates were obvious, Doxtator felt part of each team and had never felt the sting of discrimination.

That all changed on March 16. Doxtator, an under-aged player

in the Provincial Junior Hockey League, was on the ice as the Mooretown Flags hammered the Blenheim Blades in the last game of the first round of the playoffs. With the lopsided victory assured for the Flags in the third, things got chippy and the fights broke out.

As Doxtator and Blenheim Assistant Captain Tate Bowden skated toward the bench, with a referee between them, Bowden hurled a racist comment at Doxta-

tor in an apparent attempt to egg him into a fight.

The ref immediately called a discrimination penalty and tossed the over-aged Bowden from the game.

"After that play happened, I was sitting on the bench just thinking about it. And then, soon as I got back on the ice, I was just back into it - the game," said the soft spoken Doxtator in an interview with *The Independent* after the Flags season ended last week.

The defenseman says he did feel

"upset" because the comment was made "just of who I am" but it didn't change his feelings toward hockey or how far he wants to go in the game.

"It's just one person trying to discourage me," he says.

Doxtator's dad, Jeremy, does his best to surround his son with positive Indigenous role models who want to see him excel in hockey.

But he also wants to know that the PJHL is taking a stand against racism in hockey.

And Jeremy says so far, the league has been silent.

The fate of the Blenheim player was never publicly stated, neither in a news release nor on the league's website.

It's also difficult to figure out exactly what the minimum discipline is for a player who has been given a discrimination penalty.

And it took some doing to find any public reference of the incident online.

SEE FLAGS PG 2

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Flags would release players making racist comments

CON'T FROM PG 1

Jeremy Doxtator wanted to know what had happened to the man who had hurled the racist comment at his son.

"I called the team manager asked him if he was aware of what was going on and what was said. And he said, Yeah, yes, he was. And that he was contacting the director of the PJHL or the president I guess of that league...he said they were looking into it," said Jeremy.

"I wanted to know how they were dealing with it.

"There was no expectations. I just wanted to know how they were handling it."

The senior Doxtator sent an email to the PJHL president, but weeks later as he sat with his son telling the story, he still had not heard from Commissioner Terry Whiteside.

"We should have got a courtesy call or something more... I think it would have been important," Jeremy says.

"With all the reconciliation between the Indigenous people, I felt like it would have been polite for them to reach out to at least Bo and ... to explain what the disciplinary action was."

Doxtator sent one email, saying he shouldn't have to chase down the president for an apology. "I found it a little bit rude on their part, and kind of just went 'Oh, Okay. You know, you're not going to reach out to me, I'm not going

to keep bugging you."

Jeremy Doxtator says the management of the Flags also had little information but did say this "wasn't the first dealing they (PJHL) have had with it (racism) this year."

While the league seemingly kept silent, there were some clues how the PJHL was handling the racist comments.

The Ontario Hockey Federation, of which the PJHL is a member, calls for a minimum five-game banishment plus the possibility of supplemental discipline for derogatory comments or racial slurs, according to the OHF website.

And there were some references to what happened to Blenheim player on the Blades' website.

In news articles about the clubs games, one line in an article nearly three weeks after the incident states Bowden had served three games of a seven game suspension, with out giving the reason for the suspension.

The Independent reached out to the PJHL Commissioner several times over the course of two weeks. Tuesday, the PJHL's Western Conference Manager, Mark Hagerman confirmed Bowden had received a seven-game suspension but says details of any additional supplemental discipline will not be released.

He says details of individual suspensions is not allowed because

such information is not defined as part of the league's Manual of Operations.

"This is the first racial slur in the Western Conference this season," Hagerman said via text.

"I've had a couple of derogatory comments, they fell under the same call and a sexual orientation slur. I believe there has been a few in the other conferences but I wouldn't know the exact number of events.

"This is something that the league takes very seriously. Because in many cases these are young influential players we try to handle these events swiftly and professionally in house and infractions often warrant an in person or by telephone interview and information meeting."

The issue has obviously been on the PJHL's mind. Hagerman says the league is looking for better ways of handling players who use racist and derogatory language in games.

"We are currently working on implementing a program based on diversity and sensitivity training for the players that are penalized during game play that would be a requirement before returning to play after such an event," he says adding they also hope to make the discipline process more transparent.

"The league is also looking at a preseason package that would be read and signed by players when



PHOTO VIA INSTAGRAM

Bo Doxtator of the Mooretown Flags

they sign player cards that would outline our stance, discipline and lack of tolerance regarding derogatory comments and discriminatory behaviour during game play."

Some in the game would like to see the league go further.

The general manager of the Mooretown Flags John Baker says his team would not tolerate such comments or actions and would immediately release any offending player or staff member.

"I understand in the heat of the moments things can be said, but anything racially motivated is never acceptable, no matter what the circumstances might be," he said.

And Jeremy Doxtator is on the same page. "I hope for one of two things, either that they come down hard and ban players from their league because there's just no place for it in today's world,"

he says.

"Either banned the players totally - that'll certainly put an end to it because they will not be there - or maybe a fresh start would...be to educate them have a program in place for racism."

"For someone to say those words to Bo...it's all wrong," says Jeremy adding he hopes by speaking out now that "next year there isn't some 16 year-old Indigenous player who will have to go through this."

For his part, Bo Doxtator is focusing on the game.

He's been selected to represent Team Ontario at the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships in Membertou, Nova Scotia. He'll leave in early May for practice with the championship running until May 14.

All this as he eyes the ultimate hockey dream, playing in the NHL.

Loosley's comments on fire chief probed

CON'T FROM PG 1

Loosley, in an interview with *The Independent* after the bylaw was approved by council without changes, linked the changes to Fleming's investigation.

Loosley says the bylaw clarifies Arns position which had been termed Protective Services.

"There's a difference on his responsibilities now basically to be related to fire and crossing guards and parking tickets, that type of thing," Loosley is quoted as saying in the Dec. 16, 2021 edition. "And that's where he will stop. So, it won't be all the other things that ... what he was involved with - you know, that part of the idea of somebody following somebody and him getting involved with that," he said.

The Independent asked the mayor then if the fire chief "felt empowered" to go to the OPP because his duties included protective services. "That's my understanding, yes," says Loosley.

"It was as recommended by Fleming to do that. So, he was just empowered under certain areas and not everything," said Loosley.

Petrolia's Chief Administrative Officer, Rick Charlebois, would not say whether an investigation was underway. "All matters related to code of conduct complaints are managed independently by the Town's Integrity Commissioner who must handle all matters pursuant to the statutory duty of confidentiality under the Municipal Act. This duty of confidentiality extends to every person acting under the instructions of the Integrity Commissioner. Neither council nor staff are at liberty to comment on any matters that the Integrity Commissioner may or may not be currently hand-

ling," Charlebois wrote. He directed *The Independent* to the town's Integrity Commissioner for any further information.

In an email, Integrity Commissioner John Mascarin said he was not able to speak to the matter under the Municipal Act duty of confidentiality rules; "The Commissioner and every person acting under the instructions of the Commissioner shall preserve secrecy with respect to all matters that come to his or her knowledge in the course of his or her duties under this Part," Mascarin quoted.

"There are statutory exceptions but none that would permit us to provide you with the information that you are seeking at this time."

When contacted by *The Independent's* Heather Wright, Loosley said "I can't comment on that. My understanding is you were involved with that," he said.

When Wright responded the newspaper did not file a complaint, Loosley said "I'm glad to hear that."

It's not clear how long the investigation will take or who is being interviewed. *The Independent* has not been contacted by the Integrity Commissioner to make a statement.

While Integrity Commissioners has to keep all matters they're investigating, the Municipal Act states municipalities are required to ensure that reports received from the Integrity Commissioner are made available to the public.



Brad Loosley

The Warwick Township Municipal Office is on the move!

The Township of Warwick is relocating to 5280 Nauvoo Road, Watford effective Tuesday, April 19th at 8:30 a.m.

To accommodate the move, the Municipal Office will be closed on Thursday, April 14th until opening day.

Please note that along with the move we will have a new telephone number, fax number, and mailing address.

They are as follows:

**5280 Nauvoo Road, PO Box 10
Watford, ON N0M 2S0**

Telephone: 226-848-3926 • Fax: 226-848-6136

We look forward to welcoming you at our new office!

We will be hosting a Community Open House on Monday, April 25th.

Stay tuned for more information on the Community Open House in your local paper, on the Township's Facebook Page and website.

TOWNSHIP OF
Warwick