



Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter

全加華人協進會(平權會)多倫多分會

Dorset Park Community Hub, 1911 Kennedy Rd #105 Toronto, ON M1P 2L9

October 21, 2016

Councillor Marlene Kyle

Ward 3

McClintock, Livingstone, Lawrence & Nightingale

Township of Algonquin Highlands

705-635-9816

mkyle@algonquinhighlands.ca

Dear: Councillor Marlene Kyle

Re: Algonquin Highlands Township Fall Colours Road Closures and No Trespassing Signs by Local Residents

The Chinese Canadian National Council - Toronto Chapter has been serving and supporting the Chinese-Canadian community for over 35 years promoting equity, social justice & diversity through community & civic engagement, and public education initiatives.

We are writing to you out of serious concern over your municipality's recent decision to close roads during the fall colours season as a solution to complaints from a number of local residents and businesses about people trespassing on their properties. As reported by the Muskoka Region news (October 7, 2016), you suggest it was a matter of security and handling the volume of traffic; furthermore, 'no trespassing' signs in both Chinese and English have been posted over the past few weeks by area residents.

We see these actions as indicative of a culture of targeted exclusion of one specific group out of many who visit the Algonquin Highlands. The very public act of closing local roads sends a very specific and negative message to Chinese Canadians that they are not welcome in the area. Racist acts against Chinese Canadians are not unprecedented or uncommon in Cottage Country - the beliefs and stereotypes that lead to these acts have real consequences on people's lives. These recent actions continue a long history of Canadian portrayals of our community as unwelcome, not belonging, and forever foreign.

We do not need to look very far back in Canadian history to see parallel examples of inappropriate use of Government powers against Asian peoples, in the form of anti-Asian government legislation, programs, and public thinking. The Chinese Head Tax (which the Canadian Government recently apologized for) and the Internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II immediately come to mind. We view the rationale that you gave for the road closures as a poor cover for what we see as thinly-veiled racism: If traffic congestion is an appropriate reason to close roads, no one would ever be able to drive to and access Algonquin Park, Cottage Country, or most of the Greater Toronto Area during peak times; more importantly, law-abiding visitors support local businesses and learn about the desirability of the region, raising local property values. The long and deeply ingrained history of anti-Chinese exclusion that has led to bigoted profiling and discrimination against Chinese Canadians must not continue, and we hope that you can be part of the solution to bring this to an end.



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In order to address these concerns, we recommend that the Township of Algonquin Highlands consider and implement these measures:

- All township committees make a documented effort to include people of colour/diverse populations, ensuring that decisions reflect and are sensitive to the needs of marginalized people
- Work with local tourism & police to provide more information about appropriate locations for visitors to stop for sightseeing, and ensure those locations have appropriate sanitation facilities
- Encourage the use of pictogram signs, which are easily understandable & accessible by more people with varying levels of literacy.
- In response to complaints from local residents, provide them with knowledge and appropriate resources to help them manage the annual surge of visitors, respecting their private rights without resorting to restricting public access to public property

Sincerely,

Chase Lo
Executive Director
Chinese Canadian National Council - Toronto Chapter

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