



08 October 2007

Statement for the Freedom March, Caledonia

Today is a day when we should all be at home with family celebrating Thanksgiving. Instead, sadly enough, you are here making an important point about freedom: freedom of expression, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom not to live in fear in your own homes and your own city. We have been blessed to live in Canada, a country that usually celebrates these freedoms even when they challenge us on sensitive issues such as this.

Everyone wants to see a peaceful resolution to the troubles in Caledonia. Everyone wants a quick resolution to the troubles and disagreements in Caledonia. Governments need to step up to facilitate an end to the standoff so freedom can be returned to Caledonia.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation is a national, not-for-profit organization with 68,000 supporters. Our mandate is to fight for lower taxes, less waste and greater accountability in government. The standoff has cost taxpayers over \$50 million dollars and government has not been accountable for the tremendous hardships all have faced. People like the Gualtieri's and the Brown's, injured OPP officers and so many others can attest to that.

It has been more than 19 long months since this standoff began and it appears no closer to resolution today. Thanks to the unfortunate acts of a few, the failure of governments and the failure of police to act, all are suffering.

This growing rift is not the result of the Six Nations reserve and residents of Caledonia wanting to continue the standoff. It stems from complacency shown by politicians in Queen's Park and Ottawa.

There is no clear cut evidence that the people of the Six Nation's reserve have a legal claim to disputed land. That is what the legal system will help determine. A swift decision on the land issue would be desirable. However, governments should not negotiate with occupiers or those who support them or fail to condemn them. When governments offer cash settlements to occupiers and their supporters they damage the principle of the rule of law. They also give the appearance that there are different laws for native lawbreakers than for non-native law breakers. The government should enforce the rule of law.

In Toronto on June 3rd a group of women anti-poverty activists held their own protest and occupied an abandoned building. Toronto police had them removed and four were arrested in a matter of a few hours. This double standard should not be allowed.

Lawbreakers should be charged and the amount of the settlement offer from the government should be reduced by the amount it has cost taxpayers during this standoff.

It is time for governments to act. We are at the end of the provincial election, a time when promises are flying left and right. Instead of promises we need to see action to end this standoff and quickly and fairly settle the land claims. Thank you for your time.

- Kevin Gaudet, Ontario Director