

Threatening letters terrify Acton family

'Leave our town' anonymous writer tells wrong family

By Frances Niblock

Two threatening letters mistakenly sent to a family with the same last name as one of the men charged in connection with a recent vandalism spree at Robert Little School is worse than the senseless destruction of school property, according to Robert Little Principal Bob Tadman.

"This is personal. The letter said, 'Our children don't deserve this. We don't want your kind here. Leave our town, Get out now.' This woman has two kids aged four and six, and she's terrified because it is a personal threat, and she doesn't know if the next step is going to be a rock through her window," Tadman said on Friday.

"That (letter) seems to

me to be a worse crime than breaking into the school and doing the stupid damage," a clearly upset Tadman said because it's "personal, pointed and focused." He said the writer was also mistaken because the Wilkinson charged with the vandalism does not live on the same street where the letters were sent, but his co-accused, Andrew Tressel does.

"No matter how this woman who got the letter reasons it through or says nothing else will happen, she still lives under a fear and a threat that something else will happen." Tadman said.

That fear was clear in a phone conversation with Lina Wilkinson on Monday. She said her family

chose Acton as a nice quiet community when they had to relocate to the Toronto area so her son could be close to Toronto doctors.

"I was horrified - my kids could tell something was wrong when I opened the letter and read it. It feels like we have to look over our shoulder and

now I'm terrified to let the kids out front because I'm worried - what if someone throws something at the house or shouts out something to the kids?" Wilkinson said, adding she did not open the first letter that arrived last Thursday because it was addressed to Chris Wilkin-

son. She also learned that the grandparents of co-accused Andrew Tressel, who are her neighbours, received a similar letter.

"It's just a real kick in the gut. My husband is a veteran and he now feels that he's not welcome here. Obviously, it's not how everyone feels, but we are hurt and devastated. This has invaded our sanctuary - can you imagine how violated I feel?"

Wilkinson said she reported the letters to Halton police.

Parents of Robert Little students received a letter from the school on Monday informing them of a meeting scheduled for Thursday (today) to help the community deal with the vandalism and its aftermath.

Tadman said the meeting is open to anyone affected by the vandalism that saw nine classrooms and the library trashed.

"If people want to come, that's fine. I understand that people have a kinship with the school - it's a big part of the community - so if they come with the idea of finding out how to voice their concerns and manage our feelings around all this, great," Tadman said, adding he doesn't want to try to control the focus of the meeting, but doesn't "want our passion and frustration to be counter-productive."

Police will be on hand to answer any issues relating to the law or the legal process. The public meeting is in the school gym at 7 p.m.

**Our children didn't deserve this!
We don't want your kind here!
Leave our town!
Get out now!
Leave!**

NASTY SENTIMENT: This is a photocopy of one of several letters mistakenly sent to an Acton family that has the same last name as one of the local men charged in connection with the vandalism spree at Robert Little School.

Deal could end protectionist measures

Mayor says the 'devil is in the details'

By Frances Niblock

While the "devil is in the details" Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette is pleased with the deal that Ottawa struck on Friday to ease the Buy American trade rules that left Canadian companies fighting protectionism.

The compromise weakens Buy American provisions that prevented Canadian exporters from bidding on hundreds of millions of contracts for materials and equipment for American stimulus construction projects.

Bonnette said the deal is good news for Canadian companies that have lost businesses or been forced to shift production south of the border to avoid the protectionist barriers.

"This agreement gives hope to Can-

adian businesses and families and leaves a level playing field as we recover from the global recession," Bonnette said on Friday, adding it is also a good reminder that all three levels of government must work together.

It was Halton Hills Council that championed a threat of "Buy Canadian" retaliation when a local firm asked the mayor for help with the U.S. protectionist moves. Town Council took the issue to the Canadian Federation of Municipalities that also joined the fight.

"This is the first time that municipalities have ever become involved in an international issue, but it had to be done. The agreement is an important first step, but there's still a lot to be done and lots of questions to answer

as the details become known over the next week or so," Bonnette said.

Although the Buy American Act runs out in six days, Bonnette said there are still a "few crumbs" on the table for Canadian companies to bid on, and there's been talk that the end date of the American stimulus program will be extended.

"As long as the governments work together in collaboration with businesses and communities, we're hopeful that this agreement in principle can lead to a concrete solution," Bonnette said.

In a press release, Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong said the agreement is crucial to protecting Canadian jobs and workers in Halton Hills.

Chong commended Bonnette for his "deep commitment" in seeing the issue

resolved in a way that didn't harm the community's business interests.

"This community's prosperity depends on an open flow of trade with our largest trading partner. While there are still challenges ahead, this agreement is a very positive step towards ensuring that we maintain a healthy trading relationship with the U.S.," Chong said.

Critics of the deal say Canada gave up too much - that Canadian provinces and municipalities should not have to permanently give up their right to use government procurement to help local growth by using home-grown suppliers and goods.

The agreement will be finalized when both Canada and the U.S.A. have completed their respective approval processes, hopefully by February 16.

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