

Amaranth Mayor Bob Currie removed from role as chair of key County committee

Written By PAULA BROWN

Amaranth Mayor Bob Currie has been removed from his position as chair of a County committee following comments he made about the LGBTQ community in June.

'There is simply no place in leadership at any level that includes hateful and divisive comments that serve only to hurt,' said Dufferin County Warden Darren White in a statement to county council last week.

Currie was asked by Warden White to step down from his role as chair of the Infrastructure and Environmental Services Committee last Thursday (June 25).

'Any leader who truly had the best interest of the County and its residents at heart would not make comments and cause the type of pain felt today by a segment of our community,' said White later in his speech adding 'Given your comments, and my belief that you violated the Code of Conduct, I don't believe you should remain in a position where you are a committee chair, representing a department and being a spokesman for the County of Dufferin.'

While asking Currie to step down from his position, the Warden also requested that he apologize for the comments he has made - but only if he meant it.

'No apology at all is better than a non-apology,' said White.

In his response to the Warden, Currie said that he wouldn't apologize for how he spoke at the township meeting and media interviews, but said 'I did not properly express my Christian values and love and acceptance for all people. It came across in a hateful way, which (for) that I apologize. It was not my intention whatsoever to zero in on anybody.'

When broached with the request again to step down from his position by Warden White, Currie said he had no reason to step down.

'That has nothing to with the comments I made at Township council, you're trying to relate two different things,' said Currie.

A motion was put to the floor by Warden White, calling for Currie's immediate removal as chair of the Infrastructure and Environmental Services Committee. All members, other than Currie himself, voted in favour of the motion. The seat of chair of Infrastructure and Environmental Services Committee will remain vacant until the next county council meeting, where a new chair will be chosen.

Currie's removal from the position comes following comments he made during an Amaranth Town Council meeting on June 17 regarding the raising of the Pride flag.

'If everybody was either lesbian or homosexual this would be the last generation on earth, because two homosexuals cannot produce offspring. Two lesbians cannot produce offspring. So, why would I want to support something when this would be the last generation on earth? I'm not going to go there,' said Currie in the council meeting.

Many Dufferin County politicians at the municipal, provincial and federal level have spoken out about Currie's comments, condemning the intolerant tone.

'Bob Currie's statements were absolutely disgraceful. I fully condemn his statements and his clarifications,' said Dufferin-Caledon MP Kyle Seeback in a press release.

Seeback added, "The time to make excuses for people who make discriminatory comments and statements is over."

Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones also made her feelings known during a post to her social media accounts.

"Generally, I do not insert myself into the affair of other levels of government, but I am compelled to address recent comments made by Amaranth Mayor Bob Currie. I have zero tolerance for hate and discrimination in any form. As elected officials we have a duty to represent everyone in our community with the respect and dignity they deserve. Government, at all levels, has a leading role to play in standing against all forms of discrimination and hate " in our actions and in our words," said MPP Jones in a statement published on Facebook and Twitter.

Orangeville Coun. Lisa Post, who also serves as one of the organization leads of the annual Celebrate Your Awesome event, Orangeville's celebration for Pride, spoke with the Citizen regarding Currie's comments, calling Currie's removal by the county "bold and fabulous".

"When I first heard the comment from Mayor Bob Currie I was upset, I was angry and I was sad more than anything else," said Post. "As somebody who is in municipal politics I understand the importance of making sure your entire community feel safe and welcome and included. Disparaging comments like that really take that away " it leaves an entire section of their community feeling unsafe and unwelcome and unloved."

A petition calling for the resignation of the mayor was started anonymously and by print has over 14,000 signatures. In an interview with Jim Richards from NewsTalk 1010 back on June 24, Currie suggested that if an additional 20,000 signatures were on the petition, which had around 2000 at the time of the interview, he would resign.