



Office of the Mayor

June 26, 2025

Our recent Cobourg Town Hall regarding 310 Division and Transition House made it very clear...enough is enough.

The vast, vast majority of the general public are no longer going to accept the criminality, chaos, and unaccountability. The anger of our citizens is finally being heard and responded to.

310 Division, as it operated prior to Wednesday June 18, 2025, was a failure of public social policy. What was going on at 310 Division is tantamount to a taxpayer-funded criminal drug den. A "Low Barrier Shelter" has simply meant a free-for-all.

I voted for the creation of 310 Division as a County Councillor with every good intention. I now realize the meaning of the old adage, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." I deeply regret my misguided support.

However, my record, if you will, standing up to the majority of my fellow county councillors, senior county staff, and drug advocates is 100%, time and time again, clear and undeniable, often to my own detriment. I am in no way playing the victim, I am being factual.

From judicial reviews launched, to a "weaponized" Integrity Commissioner system, to myriad personal slanders, it has been the most difficult time I can say I have faced. There were never-ending personal antipathies, all because I won't be silenced and I won't agree.

This changed, however, on June 18th when all but one of my fellow county councillors voted collectively to finally make the beginnings of the changes critical for 310 to continue operations. I thank those councillors for seeing reason.

At the Town Hall, a presenter lashed out at me regarding "Strong Mayor Powers" given to me by the Province of Ontario, as it has done to the vast majority of mayors. This outburst, I found out later, was the false narrative around me using those powers to "fire" Chief Paul Vandergraaf or remove the Cobourg Police Services Board. Strong Mayor Powers have nothing to do with either of those propositions, so the assertions are wildly unactual and actually ludicrous.



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This stems from a recent private breakfast meeting I had with the Chief where I expressed my concern regarding the readiness of the Cobourg Police around provincial Bill 6. I made my frustrations--and again, those of the vast majority of citizens in Cobourg--clear in this meeting. The new provincial law, Bill 6, which came into effect in early June, allows for the appropriate arrest of anyone using criminally designated drugs in public and for the arrests of those who are criminally trespassing. I insisted, no, I frankly demanded, appropriate arrests be made whenever anyone, regardless of any reason, is committing acts of criminality. I believe we should make Cobourg as hostile a place as possible to criminals all day, every day. I also firmly believe Bill 6 removes any and all impediments to the contrary.

These sentiments are often warped by those who support decriminalizing dangerous narcotics. Drug addiction, no matter the origin story, does not allow you a "Get out of the Rules of Civil Society" card. Just like we prosecute to the fullest extent of the law when someone is driving drunk on our public streets or highways, just like we prosecute if an intoxicated person assaults their spouse or children while under the influence of alcohol, we fully expect our law enforcement officers to do just that.

The other ridiculously false narrative is around an attack on the homeless or those who are socio-economically challenged; utter nonsense and it is offensive. Cobourg is one of the most generous communities, I would argue, not just in this province, but in this country. By any metric, that is not a grandiose statement, but a true one. This is about criminals and their actions. To those who advocate for those who commit crimes in Cobourg, I say to you that being cloaked in self-righteousness will never make you actually righteous.

I'm proud of my advocacy on this file; to stand up for what is right...to stand up for the law-abiding citizens of Cobourg.

There will still, I believe, be short term difficulties for long term gains. I hope this is now the beginning of a new era, where the rights of those who live within the rule of law take precedence over those who do not.

Mayor Lucas Cleveland
Town of Cobourg