

## Showdown imminent?

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Cumberland Pride chair hopes to avoid future confrontation with area municipalities

### **AMHERST - The chair of the Cumberland Pride Support Group wants to avoid a showdown with area municipalities over flying the gay pride flag next year during Gay Pride Week celebrations.**

Topics : Cumberland Pride Support Group , E.D. Fullerton Municipal Building , Truro , New Brunswick , Ontario

AMHERST - The chair of the Cumberland Pride Support Group wants to avoid a showdown with area municipalities over flying the gay pride flag next year during Gay Pride Week celebrations.

While neither Amherst nor the Municipality of Cumberland have indicated they won't fly the gay pride flag, Gerard Veldhoven is disappointed with both municipal units' response to the controversy in Truro. Instead of taking a confrontation approach, he wants to sit down with both councils and explain why he feels they should permit the gay pride flag to be flown.

"I want to explain the reasons for the need to have a proclamation of pride week and the raising of the pride flag means, to not only the gay and lesbian community, but also to the community at large," he said, adding it's an explosive issue with no easy solution.

He feels the time has come to lobby both councils to be proactive on the matter and fears their refusal could only "ignite the flame to its fullest extent."

Amherst has a policy in place for flag raisings and proclamations that leaves the decision up to the town manager and/or the mayor and council while county warden Keith Hunter feels his municipality needs to have a policy in place that permits only the county, the provincial and Canadian flags to be flown at the E.D. Fullerton Municipal Building.

"In a way it's a positive thing to have a policy in place. However, sometimes an issue arises where policies may be changed somewhat in order to accommodate the need of a group of citizens, in this case the gay and lesbian community," Veldhoven said. "Flying the pride flag is celebratory of the equal rights and opportunities our community has attained. A flag could be raised on a different poll, if that is the only way out of this unfortunate issue."

The local gay rights activist feels Amherst's policy could allow the town manager and the mayor to refuse his group's request and he is hoping what happened in Truro won't be repeated here.

Veldhoven believes the human rights commission may step in on the side of gay pride groups. The human rights commissions in New Brunswick, Ontario and British Columbia have already ruled on this issue and consequently a city, town or county council may not refuse the request to have the proclamation of Pride week and the flying of the pride flag.

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