

I got the memo and I keep my clothes on

Chris Cooke - September 2025

I don't take my shirt off in public and certainly not at city hall.

At my advanced age it isn't a good look.

I also don't drop "F" bombs at city councillors or, for that matter, municipal bureaucrats.

And I certainly wouldn't do it with young people in the audience.

Aside from lousy optics it is likely bad for business.

My father who successfully sold industrial gases in Sarnia's Chemical Valley subscribed to the belief one should think it but not say it.

Sage advice that former city councillor Nathan Colquhoun would do well to heed.

He obviously missed the memo.

I had planned to attend the mid-August public meeting at which the powerful charity Indwell did its dog and pony show for a proposed five-storey enhanced supportive housing complex on George Street in mid-town Sarnia.

Yes, enhanced supportive housing not affordable housing.

But I was called away on business and by the time I arrived at my destination in Cincinnati, Mr. Colquhoun's vulgarity and shirtless display of chubbiness had gone viral.

I can't prove it but I suspect something went very wrong in the time between the county rejecting a proposal from three local doctors to build a medical clinic on the site and Indwell scooping up the property for enhanced supportive housing.

If Bill Dennis is correct, and I suspect he isn't wrong, the five city representatives on county council never heard about the medical clinic before donating the property to Indwell for something other than enhanced supportive housing.

Dennis believes he and the four other city representatives on county council, including the mayor were "duped" by the charity into believing it wanted George Street for affordable housing not a drug rehabilitation facility for enhanced supportive housing.

What we appear to have now are enraged mid-town residents who are watching their houses devalue with each passing day.

The neighbourhood is already subjected to the River City Vineyard homeless shelter, a nearby detox centre and now this?

If the lengthy public meeting in the chambers at city hall is any indication, residents feel betrayed by the county which donated the property at a closed meeting, and Indwell which seemingly misrepresented its objectives.

Dennis, a retired realtor believes residents who purchased houses on the former hospital site for \$579,000 just four years ago will take a 25 per cent financial haircut if Indwell gets its way.

Which is the fear of residents who have lawn signs inscribed with the words "No Indwell, we are already doing our part".

They want the county to take the property back, sell it to the doctors and consider locating Indwell in the north end on the former site of St. Bartholomew's Church on Cathcart at Colborne Road.

As for Colquhoun, who obviously can't keep his clothes on and needs a lesson in civility, I'm reasonably confident Indwell executives are thoroughly embarrassed.

If not, they should be.

He made an incoherent argument for enhanced supportive housing and is an inappropriate proponent for a project that appears to have more detractors than attractors.

I could be wrong about this but I'm usually not.