



# THE REVIEW

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## Hawkesbury lawsuits: Mediation next?

### “Let’s mediate,” lawyer tells Jolicoeur

By Richard Mahoney

**HAWKESBURY** – “We would like to proceed immediately to mediation in this affair.”

That is the message St-Eustache businessman Jean Jolicoeur has received from the lawyer acting for Hawkesbury administrator Martin Bonhomme and former mayor Jacques Héту, two weeks after they launched a lawsuit against Jolicoeur.

In a December 7 letter, Justin Bertrand, of the Ottawa legal firm of Heenan Blaikie, suggested that a mediation session be held sometime in January. The goal is to settle the case so that the parties do not incur unnecessary legal costs, Bertrand said.

The offer to settle the dispute comes after Hawkesbury council met privately with Heenan Blaikie December 5. The firm had been hired in a motion that was approved at a special council meeting September 18.

In a lawsuit filed November 30, Héту and Bonhomme said they were seeking \$300,000 in a libel lawsuit against Jolicoeur. Héту, who did not seek reelection, and Bonhomme, who has been CAO since 1998, allege that their reputations have been sullied by Jolicoeur.

The move by Bertrand is surprising since lawyers for the town and its insurers have over the past 15 years objected to Jean and Huguette Jolicoeur’s mediation proposals, Jean Jolicoeur writes in a December 12 letter addressed to Mayor Jeanne Charlebois.

Jolicoeur has complained that the town has been unable to produce documents which he pertains to a lawsuit he has launched against the town.

Bonhomme and Héту had each been seeking \$150,000 from Jolicoeur, arguing that Jolicoeur had made libellous comments during council meetings that were televised by the Cogeco cable TV station, as well as in postings on his Internet site, correspondence and material recorded on CDs.

Jolicoeur has refused to issue a retraction as demanded by Héту and Bonhomme. In his letter to Charlebois, Jolicoeur said he was prepared to defend himself in the libel case. If he had won, after legal costs had been paid, he would have donated any financial award to young people, Jolicoeur said.

Jolicoeur was scheduled to meet council tonight (December 13).

He continues to press the town for details on the legal bill taxpayers face in the ongoing controversy over the disappearance of several records.

The town’s inability to provide the documents sought by Jean Jolicoeur is “troubling,” the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario concluded. in an October 19 ruling. But adjudicator Catherine Corban dismissed the appeal by Jolicoeur, concluding the town conducted “reasonable research” in trying to locate the papers Jolicoeur sought. The town has maintained that while certain documents could not be found, there was no wrongdoing on the part of the municipality. Jolicoeur filed his appeal, saying that the town had disregarded its own regulations governing the recording of destroyed documents. He and his wife had offered \$5,000 to anyone who can produce two records – the original copies of September 3, 1993 construction permits and minutes of a September 8, 1992 land use advisory committee meeting.