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Statement from the Lord Mayor

For Immediate Release

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I, along with Council Members and Staff, respect and recognize the constitutional protection of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Members of the public have a right to gather and protest, and open, constructive dialogue is essential for creating a thriving democratic community. I support this.

Protest should be used as a method of making opinions heard in an attempt to influence government policy in a democratic society. This is constructive.

Protest should not be used as a method of attempted intimidation and attack on individual character. This is not constructive.

Constructive engagement and respectful discourse are crucial for building a positive and inclusive community. I want to thank those in attendance at last night's protest who demonstrated agreement with these principles in their actions and words. By demonstrating mutual respect, particularly amidst differences and diverse viewpoints, we can uphold a Town and community we are all proud to be a part of.

I am deeply disappointed, however, by the actions of some protest attendees whose behaviour towards Council Members and Town Staff was an unacceptable form of engagement in our democratic process.

This response adds to growing concern regarding the mistreatment of Town Council and Staff. In recent months, Councillors have been spat on and accosted in restaurants and grocery stores, among other things. While this behaviour is not reflective of the whole community, its negative impact undermines Niagara-on-the-Lake's longstanding legacy as a welcoming, inclusive and respectful community for all. While aspects of criticism and various challenges are expected in this role, the recent behaviour of some community members is unacceptable and must stop.

On behalf of our community, I am sorry that Town Council and Staff were subject to some of the offensive conduct displayed during last night's protest.

I am hopeful that we can work together to foster more respectful dialogue moving forward.