

**Personal & Confidential**

August 24, 2010

Mr. Blair Cromwell

[REDACTED]  
Bear River, NS B0S 1B0

Dear Mr. Cromwell:

Re: Termination of Employment with Halifax Regional Municipality

On July 1, 2010, you were suspended with pay pending an internal investigation into allegations that, as a firefighter, you published defamatory comments concerning senior management of Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency (HRFE).

The investigation team met with you on July 27<sup>th</sup>. You were presented with four articles from the Coast website and eight identified comments that were posted regarding the four articles, as well as an email that was widely circulated within the HRFE. The identified posted comments and email contained statements that were insolent, disrespectful and/or insulting. During that meeting, you confirmed the following:

- That you created the username Neo24 on the Coast website.
- That you created the username LessTalkMoreAction on the Coast website.
- That you created the username I\_worked\_at\_sears on the Coast website.
- That you created the username scandalous2010 on the Coast website.
- That you created the email account [hrm\\_exposed\\_2008@yahoo.com](mailto:hrm_exposed_2008@yahoo.com)
- That you created the email account [pc.petercottontail@gmail.com](mailto:pc.petercottontail@gmail.com)
- That you used the username Neo24 to post the following comment on the Coast article, "Black firefighters file human rights complaint" on August 18, 2009:

**"yawn, still no answers, still waiting, wake up people hold these jackasses accountable. They are spending your money on cover ups you know"**

- That you used the username LessTalkMoreAction to post the following comment in response to the Coast article, "Black firefighters file human rights complaint" on April 12, 2009:

**“To add to “voice of reason”, when a manager lacks real leadership skills they tend to fall back on their use of emotions. In this case the deputy chief director we speak about lacks all the skills that one would hope a leader in his position would have. In exchange this chief uses, bully tactics, he intimidates everyone under him, and he’s not a nice person. The Chief Director is also intimidated by him, that in itself is pathetic, I mean it’s no wonder Bill Mosher doesn’t come to the stations, most members view him as weak and ineffective. The best thing for this department would have been hiring a chief from away, but alas nova scotia politics and cronyism. The taxpayers of this province needs to revolt against this crap. Think of the endless taxpayers dollars that’s being wasted at the hands of these self serving individuals. Sometimes I feel sorry for him, but not anymore. After reading the intentional misleading statements he has made over the past fews day in the Herald, forget about the fact he declined to comment on the coast article, which in my opinion had the potential to set a lot of facts straight had he chose to be interviewed. Instead he must now live with the words he chose to put out there and can either swin or sink by them, i am sure the Black firefighter may have changed their opinion of him. I am sure we will see more information come out that will shed more light on what is being said about some of these managers. Question is what will City Hall choose to do about it, answer nothing because they have known all along about these players. The lid is off the pot and it aint going back on, not for awhile anyways. stay tuned! Oh don’t forget the last round of fire department antics.....fire boats, untendered work, faulty hiring process, polygraphs testing that’s not working.....”**

- That you used the username LessTalkMoreAction to post the following comment in response to the Coast article, “Black firefighters file human rights complaint” on April 11, 2009:

**“ “in the know” email me @ [hrm\\_exposed\\_2008@yahoo.com](mailto:hrm_exposed_2008@yahoo.com) let me know the initials of your gal”**

- That you used the username LessTalkMoreAction to post the following comment in response to the Coast article, “Black firefighters file human rights complaint” on April 11, 2009:

**“ “In the Know”, you should contact this reporter at the coast with what you know, if you already haven’t.”**

- That you used the username LessTalkMoreAction to post the following comment in response to the Coast article, “HFD’s old boy network” on April 18, 2009:

**“Hmmm, Rafiki I think your argument is too dismissive. Granted the underlying tone in this organization appears to be a management team that lacks leadership and appears to be incompetent and uses questionable tactics to run the fire department. Having said that, If I were a Black firefighter and I will use this as my**

example because it appears their issues have been illustrated more clearly than Ms. Tessier's. If I were a Black firefighter and I was subjected to racist comments regardless of the fact many firefighters say they are being treated the exact same way, bullie tactics, refusal to address issues etc.....If Ms. Tessier is saying she feels she is being discriminated because of her gender, and you have a deputy chief named Thurber who is actually stating this amongst fire department members, that women should not be hired to the fire department because they will eventually get pregnant and pose a staffing problem. Then I think she can make the argument that her complaint is gender based. Hell from what I've heard this Thurber idiot has even stated he regrets hiring the 13 black firefighters. How could this be when the former chief Mike Eddy has said the designated recruitment was his decision. The real issue in Tessier's complaint seems to be the fact that she was qualified to be hired and the only reason she wasn't was because of the bad references given by people that had issues with her. Rafiki, you've made up your mind about these types of issues and demonstrate your intention to discredit them, you should run for chief, although your attempt at discrediting the issues is no better than Mosher's. Mayor and council, it's time to clean house. Thurber and his chief Mosher have to go, they're destroying the fire department, like a cancer that needs to be cut out. I believe this was stated by Thurber in describing the old Halifax fire dept. Unbelievable!"

- That you used the username Neo24 to post the following comment in response to the Coast article, "Spryfield Fire questions" on May 28, 2009:

"Ridgepeeps to add to your lists of "morons" i add the following...

Steve Thurber (Head Thug in charge of everything)

Larry Williams (thanks to his wife's unannounced visit to HQ, they now have 3 levels of security, you'd think it was NORAD with all the security in there)

Bryan Clarke (Thurber's bitch)

Phil McNulty (ex union prez. and chief in waiting, or more like lying in wait)

Donald Strachan (sick time management thug)

Roy Hollett (fire boat fame, the boy wonder)

The list goes on and on and on...

Bill Mosher (couldn't make a face like a chief, let alone a fireman)

Now what do all these "morons" have in common...

Incompetent!"

- That you used the username LessTalkMoreAction to post the following comment in response to the Coast article, "Spryfield Fire questions" on May 28, 2009:

"Tim i think you should rate the management of the fire service as you did the city councilors. Let the fine citizens of HRM know what value they're getting for their tax dollars. Me thinks they would be very appalled, shocked with the waste of

**money! I hope your not holding your breath waiting for the “official” fire cause report.”**

- That you used the username I\_worked\_at\_sears to post the following comment in response to the Coast article, “Black firefighters enraged” on March 20, 2010:

**“Well, i am sure the media is aware of the alleged corruption that is happening within the fire service, they just need to get the balls to do a worthwhile story in an attempt to expose it. Plenty of people have their own stories to tell in regards to Chief Thug Thurber. I don’t know if Thurber is a racist or not, but if the information contained in the previous coast article is accurate, which i have no reason to doubt it, Thurber was hell bent on jamming the 2004 designated class of Black firefighters out to the outer core where they would be exposed to the predominately racist/white supremacist views held by most of the volunteer compliment, HRM’s finest. With this latest incident out at station #50 i’d have to question their logic in placing minority firefighters in such a hostile work environment. On another note, i heard that Thurber worked at the Sears warehouse back in the day, in fact so did a lot of firefighters, Halifax and Dartmouth both, lots of stories around about what went on back then (-; ”**

- That you used the username scandalous2010 to post the following comment in response to the Coast article, “Black firefighters enraged” on March 19, 2010:

**“I would have to agree with The Truth’s observations. Steve Thurber is well documented by all in the fire service, including the union itself, that he is indeed a thug lacking any real competent skills as a manager, i’ve heard from those who worked with him as a firefighter that he lacked those skills as well. At this very moment, Steve Thurber is preparing to give a high paying job to a croonie of his, that being Chris Mitts, a man who came into the fire service through the back door. Shameful how this man has been able to use the fire service for his own gain, that of his and his friends. Shame on Chief Mosher for bowing down to this thug, as quoted by former chief Mike Eddy, “bill mosher is afraid of Steve Thurber.” Similar to the MLA expense scandal, the fire service needs to be audited to uncover the wasteful and questionable spending that has occurred there under Mosher’s and Thurber’s watch”**

- That you used the email address “pc.petercottontail@gmail.com” to send the following mass email to members of the Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency on March 28, 2010:

**“This coast article should read “ALL” firefighters enraged at how the job is being run by a bunch of incompetent managers. The time for management having their way with bullying members of local 268 is slowly coming to an end. It appears having the shoe on the other foot doesn’t fit so well with them, especially when their dirty laundry is being hung out for all of HRM to view... The Coast doesn’t fall far under HRM fire’s dictatorship. For the record, and I believe President Boyle can**

**attest to this, Mosher didn't release a statement to the job until the point was made by local 268 members. A recommendation that was made in their \$50,00000 taxpayer funded report by Maureen Shebib, be safe and strong and stay united."**

You were given the opportunity to explain why you posted each comment and sent the mass email. You described the comments as "venting", "in the heat of the moment" and "not meant to be malicious." However, you stand behind most of your comments as the truth, with the exception of three comments that you admitted you "overstated": (1) that you should have referred to Steve Thurber as a "Bully" and not a "Thug", (2) that not all of the members of management that you specifically named and labeled as "incompetent" and "morons" deserved those labels, and (3) that "some" volunteers, not "all" volunteers, have "predominately racist/white supremacist views." To support your contention that your posted comments are the truth, you provided the investigation team with many examples of what you believe to be mismanagement on the part of the HRFE, in particular Steve Thurber and Bill Mosher, especially when dealing with racially oriented situations.

The investigation into this matter has concluded. I have thoroughly reviewed all of the examples that you provided to the investigation team to support your comments and have found that the majority of these have already been investigated and dealt with through the proper channels. The others that we are hearing about for the first time have been relayed to you by other parties and were not experiences that you have direct, first-hand knowledge of. The comments are your own personal feelings about the management of the HRFE based on your own interpretation of decisions that have been made or actions that have been taken in response to past incidents.

The comments that you have admitted to posting in a public forum, the Coast website, as well as the mass email, contain statements that are contemptuous of specific, named members of management and the HRFE in general. You created and used the email address [hrm\\_exposed\\_2008@yahoo.ca](mailto:hrm_exposed_2008@yahoo.ca) to solicit information about HRFE from another Coast website user that you suspected was an internal employee. You deliberately attempted to hide your identity by using multiple usernames, email addresses and internet connections and by making statements such as "if I were a black firefighter" within the posted comments. The comments were made over a period of one year and, therefore, cannot be described as being made "in the heat of the moment."

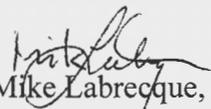
The misconduct that you have been found to have engaged in amounts to insolent and insubordinate behaviour. Your actions have undermined the authority of the management of HRFE and have irreparably severed the employment relationship. We conclude that you have not demonstrated any rehabilitative potential; you show no acceptance of responsibility, you have not admitted to any wrongdoing, you were unapologetic for your actions and have given us no indication that your conduct will improve. You have not presented any objective evidence to explain or mitigate your conduct and, in fact, stand behind most of the comments you made as fact, even those that have been proven otherwise through proper channels. As a result of this behaviour, your employment with Halifax Regional Municipality is terminated effective immediately.

All property in your possession belonging to HRFE is to be returned. Please contact Divisional Chief David Smith at 430-6203 to make arrangements to return the following items by September 7, 2010:

- Clothing: station uniform, dress uniform, epaulettes, hat badge, bunker gear, and all personal protective equipment
- Departmental Firefighter ID
- Any other property belonging to Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency

You and your family may access HRFE's Firefighter & Family Assistance Program services for one month after this termination by contacting Paul MacKenzie at 483-6068.

Sincerely,

  
Mike Labrecque, DCAO  
Corporate Services & Strategy

Cc Personnel File  
IAFF, Local 268