

Kristin Fast

September 20, 2024

Red Deer Tennis Club Board of Directors  
4501 47A Ave  
Red Deer, AB T4N 6Z6

To the RDTC Board of Directors,

I am writing to urge the Tennis Club Board to respond publicly and substantively to the harassment incident that took place at our club on Sunday, September 15, 2024. While I hope all Board members are unhappy with this action and agree it is gross and unethical, I wish to underscore that each and every one of you has a legal obligation to act.

As you may know, uttering threats is a [crime](#), and racist attacks are hate crimes which fall under the purview of the [Human Rights Commission](#) (they can also be a [crime](#)). As a Not For Profit entity, RDTC has a legal obligation to ensure a safe workplace for all employees (see the employees and volunteers section of [this page](#)). While Rene Simon is technically a contractor, the fact that his income is dependent on access to club facilities essentially makes him an employee in the eyes of the law (see "who is an employee" [here](#)). The law expects employers to create safe work environments for all employees (as well as contractors, volunteers, etc) as well as a safe environment for clients (members, players).

I understand that there are differences of opinion about the value Rene brings to the club. However, Board members must recognize that Sunday's incident is entirely separate from any discussion about coaches and coaching contracts. Whatever your opinion on those matters, as a member of a Not For Profit Board the law requires you to protect Rene from actions like this. Failure to execute reasonable effort in this matter can expose you individually to legal risk should Rene file a human rights complaint. It can also expose the club as a whole to legal risk.

Beyond legal risks are the risks the club faces in the court of public opinion. I expect the Board is aware that, in the community more broadly, there is already some public consternation about RDTC following last Friday's [article in the Red Deer Advocate](#). The timing of Sunday's attack following on the heels of this article might suggest to others (as it did to me) that dissatisfaction at the club helped to create a permissive environment for the perpetrator(s) to act. A public response can demonstrate that, regardless of differences in individual politics or perspectives on the club's direction, we stand united against harassment and discrimination directed toward anyone in our tennis community. Such action may help to persuade Central Albertans that they need not be afraid to join our community.

In order to live up to these obligations, I strongly encourage the Board to undertake the following four steps as soon as possible:

1. **Make a public announcement from the Board as a whole condemning the behaviour.** Some public, unified statement (whether in the Red Deer Advocate, Radio, Social Media, a press conference, or other channel as determined appropriate by the Board) is necessary and would send a strong message that the tennis club as a whole rejects this kind of behaviour. Giving this statement in conjunction with Rene (provided he's willing) would demonstrate solidarity with its staff who have been victimized.
2. **Implement some anti-harassment, anti-bigotry, or safe spaces messaging at the club.** Messaging could be based on campaign signs like [this one](#), or perhaps posting our vision and mission statements prominently. The club needs some visible indicators in public spaces that RDTC believes that everyone is welcome and that discrimination will not be tolerated (see the Human Right's Commission's page on [preventing harassment](#) for context).
3. **Create a confidential way for individuals to report harassment at the club.** Our current feedback boxes are not at all secure, and we have only one club email inbox that many people have access to; these options do not invite people to share honestly about sensitive material. Perhaps an email that goes only to the Board Executive could be an option to consider.
4. **Seek legal counsel on your legal liability as a Board, as well as individual Board members.** Be sure you know what is legally expected of you in response to this incident. For example, does the club need to reimburse Rene for lost income while he tries to deal with this attack?? Does RDTC need to afford him some access to mental health resources or facilitate access to victim services?

It is also evident that the club needs some longer term initiatives to prevent these types of incidents from recurring. In addition to the above, I strongly suggest that the Board pursue the following actions:

1. **Develop and implement an anti-harassment policy** that includes clear, meaningful consequences for those who do not follow it. While this also ought to be done in short order, I recognize that drafting a policy like this may take some time. However, be aware that this is a gap currently and ought to be remedied. The law recognizes the presence of such a policy as an important demonstration that organisations are fulfilling their legal obligations to protect their staff.
2. **Work toward building a culture of inclusivity.** Tennis is a global game and Red Deer is multicultural; we should aim to develop a club culture that celebrates the international nature of this sport we love and demonstrates a willingness to combat racism in our community. I have ideas on this front and will be happy to discuss them, and to help implement them, in due course.

I know the club has already taken some significant and positive steps. Thank you to those who contributed to these. I very much appreciate the letter of condemnation from the club on Tuesday, and the willingness to circulate Victoria's letter on Wednesday. I know Ben has also improved the club surveillance capacity by paying for additional video storage; while there are still some technical glitches to be resolved, our baseline is already better. These are good and meaningful steps. Thank you.

I know this is a new Board and formal roles have not yet been assigned; I hope this fact does not stand in the way of taking urgent, timely action. I look forward to seeing your leadership on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Kristin Fast