

September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Re: Use of Integrity Commissioner to persecute Citizen Volunteers

Dear Fred Eisenberg and Members of Council,

I am writing today to express my absolute disbelief that Hamilton City Council has chosen to stifle dissent by using the Integrity Commissioner to investigate a Hamilton citizen who has given his time to the city as a volunteer.

As per the Hamilton.ca website “The role of the Integrity Commissioner is to help ensure that members of Council perform their functions in accordance with the Code of Conduct and other procedures, rules or policies governing their ethical behaviour.” In no way should this position be used to police citizen volunteers.

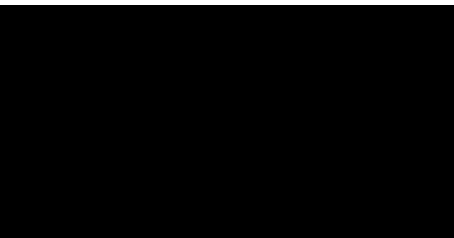
It is frankly impossible to understand how Council could have decided that they need to investigate a citizen volunteer when there are fourteen outstanding complaints against City Councillors. It is also impossible to understand that there is no person behind this decision and that the entire Council has chosen this course of action. Is the Council hoping for safety in numbers? They must realize that citizens across the city would be dismayed by their actions.

This is the first time I have ever heard of an Integrity Commissioner being used in this way, and this action now renders the office useless. No citizen will see the Integrity Commissioner as a person to approach with regards to council, as the position is clearly only an extension of Council's will. After this Council should remove the position as it's clearly of no real purpose and make it clear that they will not be held to any ethical standard.

This decision also tells citizens of Hamilton that they may only join these committees if they are willing to not actually advise Council. They may only agree with Council. It might be best to simply disband all the advisory committees now, to simplify the procedure and save Council bringing out the Integrity Commissioner to threaten anyone who dares to not agree with Council members and to advocate for their community.

This is an abuse of power. Somehow members of this Council came to believe that they are above reproach. But we are in a democracy and no one is above reproach. We elect council members to represent the will of the people. If the members of Council cannot listen to their citizens, and particularly listen to our marginalized groups without lashing out at them, they should step down and take up a career where they are no longer public servants.

Sincerely,



Noelle Allen, Ward 1