

Ancaster News

Mayor hopes integrity commissioner becomes lonely

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Hamilton mayor Fred Eisenberger wants the city's newly appointed integrity commissioner to become the city's very own "Maytag repair man."

After six councillors have been involved in some form of controversy during this council tenure, Eisenberger, who campaigned on a platform of accountability and transparency, would like nothing more than the city's integrity commissioner to concentrate on educating politicians about the dos and don'ts of their office responsibilities and have no investigations to deal with.

"I hope he is the Maytag repair man," said Eisenberger.

City councillors last week confirmed the appointment of Windsor's integrity commissioner, Earl Basse, to fill the same role in Hamilton.

Basse, a former inspector with the RCMP in the commercial crime division, was tapped out of almost 70 applications to become the city's first integrity commissioner.

Toronto lawyer George Rust D'Eye served as the interim commissioner last summer when he investigated Stoney Creek councillor Brad Clark for his involvement in releasing a tape of a conversation Eisenberger had with a member of the media.

Basse is expected to take the position in January 2010, subjected to the city finalizing a two-year contract.

Eisenberger said the position will be part-time, with Basse responding to complaints and, if needed, will conduct any investigations. It's a situation that Eisenberger said worked well in Windsor.

"I am very pleased with the selection," said Eisenberger. "He brings a lot of experience. We are setting the bar as high as it can be set."

The mayor cautioned that the cost will "pleasantly surprise" residents, after the \$60,000 bill Rust D'Eye submitted to the city after his investigation into Clark's complaint. Eisenberger said Basse will be placed on a city retainer. If there is an investigation, there will be a separate cost attached, he said.

"It will be very reasonable," he said.

The newly installed integrity commissioner, which was created in the spring of 2008, will have his hands full once Basse takes over after council last week referred a complaint made against Ward 8 Mountain councillor Terry Whitehead for a report.

Basse is a licensed forensic accountant in Ontario, able to conduct investigations. He served as the vice-president of KMPG's forensic division in Vancouver, and was the manager of investigations for the Vancouver Stock Exchange. He had also been the mayor for the District of Sechelt, B. C.

He operates Basse and Associates in Waterloo, Ont.

He was appointed Windsor's integrity commissioner in 2008, and conducted such high profile investigations as looking into phone calls made by a Windsor councillor to a union official during a contentious 101-day strike, and investigating a complaint made against the city's mayor Eddie Francis, that his meeting with then Detroit mayor Kwame Kilpatrick in July, 2008, violated the city's Municipal Act. The act prohibits meetings with some one facing felony allegations. Eisenberger estimated there were about 14 complaints made to Windsor's commissioner, of which four "amounted to anything."

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