

# The Brantford Expositor

## Councillors raise concerns about complaints process; CODE OF CONDUCT;

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A report by an interim integrity commissioner clearing Coun. Mark Littell of any wrongdoing in a code of conduct complaint by a city employee, was received and endorsed Monday at a special meeting of city council.

"I am pleased the commissioner (George Rust-D'Eye) has dismissed the code of conduct complaint," Littell said in a brief statement.

"I was always confident that an independent reviewer of the facts would come to that conclusion."

Rust D'Eye dismissed a complaint by employee Christina Chambers that Littell had verbally abused and harassed her in a telephone call.

However, the report did raise some questions around the council table, concerning the process.

Coun. Richard Carpenter decried the fact that the process, which is mandated by the provincial government, apparently allows any "frivolous" complaint to be brought forward against a member of council.

"What's very wrong about it is anybody can launch a complaint," Carpenter said, whether there is any basis in fact for the complaint or not.

Councillors, in such cases, are "guilty until they're proven innocent," he suggested.

Before the code of conduct complaint was filed, Littell had himself complained about Chambers using city e-mail services to send critical letters about the councillor to The Expositor. But he contacted the employee first, before taking his complaint to the city manager.

In that respect, Rust-D'Eye said, the councillor could have handled things differently, saying he "should not have made the telephone call prior to filing his complaint, and that at the very least he should have identified himself to Ms. Chambers at the outset of the conversation."

Littell concurred with that assessment in his statement to council.

"In hindsight," he said, "I agree that the appropriate step was to have contacted senior city administration. Not having dealt with this situation before, it was unclear to me at the time what the appropriate procedure was."

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