

Mississauga News

Leaked memo riles councillors

Wed Jan 12 2011
Page: 1
Section: News
Byline: Chris Clay, cclay@mississauga.net

The City of Mississauga's integrity commissioner will be asked to investigate after an internal memo offering to purchase each councillor a pair of \$350 tickets to Mayor Hazel McCallion's 90th birthday party was leaked to the media.

Ward 9 Councillor Pat Saito told General Committee today that she'll ask **George Rust-D'Eye**, newly appointed to the post, to try to determine who forwarded e-mails to the press.

"This has been a very sad occurrence," said Saito, adding she believes it was a violation of the City's newly-minted code of conduct. "It shows great disrespect for Council and for staff.

"The place to debate (issues) is not in the media, it's at this table and first at this table," continued Saito. "This probably isn't the worst thing that has happened, but once again it's embarrassing our city and embarrassing our Council."

The memo was leaked last Friday. Another e-mail, discussing the leak, was forwarded to the press earlier this week.

City manager and chief administrative officer Janice Baker told The News on Tuesday that in light of the reaction she received this week from councillors, she decided to pull back the offer of tickets. Baker made the initial offer for a number of reasons, but said it was prompted by virtue of it being a rare occasion - the mayor turning 90 - and that the event is in support of Sheridan College. The birthday celebration is to take place Feb. 12 at the Mississauga Convention Centre.

Ward 8 Councillor Katie Mahoney asked her colleagues to support a request to inspect computers, fax machines and printers to find out who forwarded the e-mail. She said she'd draft a motion to present to Council next week, but, in the interim, she asked that appropriate staff search equipment in her office at City Hall and at home.

Mahoney queried City solicitor Mary Ellen Bench about the possible legal ramifications of passing along internal e-mails and memos that were marked confidential.

Bench said there's "no legal violation if that request is not respected," but she did agree with the suggestion to send the matter to the integrity commissioner.

Ward 6 Councillor Ron Starr pulled no punches, saying the offender should be fired.

"If it's a staff member doing it, it's time we do

something very draconian and fire them," he said. "It's as simple as that. In business you would do that."

Other councillors believe the leak isn't the real issue.

"The issue isn't the leaking of the information," said Ward 5 Councillor Eve Adams. "You shouldn't be using property tax dollars for parties. These are property tax dollars (from) the moms and dads and seniors out there paying \$3,000-\$4,000 for their homes. People give us their money to properly manage and to provide them with services - to give them a library, to go and clean the snow off their streets. They're not giving it to us because it's a slush fund for our personal parties or the parties we like around the city, no matter how good the cause may be."

Ward 7 Councillor Nando Iannicca said the average resident would likely view the discussion about who leaked the e-mail as, "the public found out somehow and we don't like a light being shone" on it.

Saito said the information contained in the leaked e-mail is irrelevant.

"It has nothing to do with (the) issue in that e-mail," she said. "It has nothing to do with tickets to any event. It's about professionalism and respect for staff and the rest of Council."

cclay@mississauga.net

© 2011 Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing