

## Council advocating 'Orwellian' measures; Probe launched into leaks of internal emails

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Mississauga councillors allied with Mayor Hazel McCallion are calling for a full investigation into the source of leaked internal memos, which fuelled public outrage about the city's use of taxpayer dollars after the National Post exclusively revealed their contents this week.

The hyperbole was cranked into full gear at Wednesday's meeting of general committee, where Councillor Katie Mahoney drew a parallel to the high-profile WikiLeaks scandal and urged all members to submit to electronic searches of their home and office computers -- a concept one councillor decried as "Orwellian."

The city's integrity commissioner, **George Rust D'Eye**, has been tasked with investigating.

"The harm that has been done in my view is incredible, and it is enough, so let's get to the bottom of it," Councillor Pat Mullin said.

Councillor Ron Starr called for a "draconian" response, including firing those involved.

"I find it very distressing that we're finding within minutes the media has copies of our internal documents.... This is not a joke anymore," Mr. Starr said, suggesting a possible ban on media communications to combat the "toxic environment."

The first memo, sent Friday, detailed the city's offer to spend upwards of \$10,000 to send councillors and select city staffers to a lavish birthday gala for the Mayor in February; in a follow-up this week, city manager Janice Baker retracted the offer, citing the media furor that had ensued.

Councillors allied with the Mayor moved to stifle debate on the tickets issue during Wednesday's meeting, instead speaking at length about how to root out and censure those responsible for passing information to the media.

While there is no legal recourse for the leaks, city solicitor Mary Ellen Bench said, Mr. Rust D'Eye's probe may determine whether there has been a violation of code of conduct confidentiality provisions.

"This has been a very sad occurrence and it shows great disrespect for [city staff]," Councillor Pat Saito noted.

Ms. McCallion pleaded for a restoration of council

unity, launching into a series of thinly veiled criticisms of former councillor Carolyn Parrish and her five allies who remain on council. This rebel faction, which has challenged the Mayor on vital votes in recent years, was the driving force behind the city's judicial inquiry into suspect business dealings.

"We went through a number of years of this mistrust, et cetera, and staff have experienced things that I never dreamed that would ever have occurred in this city," Ms. McCallion lamented. "I had hoped that after this last election that things would change, but this even got worse... Folks, we never had this prior to the last four years. We never had that in the city. There was trust of the staff. Let's restore it."

Ms. McCallion, saying Mississauga's reputation is getting "as bad as Toronto," called on those responsible for leaking the documents to consider resigning.

Though several councillors invited searches of their home and office computers to help pinpoint the leak source, members of the opposition faction bristled at the prospect of such an intrusion, with Councillor Nando Iannicca citing poor optics.

David Fraser, a Halifax-based lawyer with expertise in privacy issues, says there appears little justification for such a sweeping search, considering the memos were a matter of public interest.

"Any sort of security backlash or heavy-handed investigation really does appear to be, at least on its face, an overreaction that could perhaps.... be motivated simply by a desire to chill these sorts of things," Mr. Fraser said.

Councillor Eve Adams suggested the lengthy discussion on rooting out the leak source was merely a diversion from more substantial matters, such as the contents of Ms. Baker's memos.

"I heard comment after comment [from residents] saying that spending tax dollars on a birthday party is unacceptable. When do we actually talk about the meat of the issue?" she asked.

Ms. McCallion, meanwhile, attempted to extricate her birthday celebration from the gala's fund-raising goal, noting "this is not a party bash for the Mayor." Indeed, funds raised at the February event will support Sheridan College, but an online invitation puts the focus squarely on the Mayor's 90th birthday,

citing a chance to "pay tribute to Her Worship's unparalleled achievements."

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