

Memo sparks MissyLeaks uproar; Mississauga councillor calls for searches of homes after offer of birthday-bash tickets becomes public

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Discussion in Mississauga's city council chamber turned Orwellian on Wednesday as councillors upset about a leaked birthday-party memo alluded to WikiLeaks and called for a witch hunt - including searches of councillors' homes, computers, cellphones and offices.

The memo, which was somehow forwarded to media, detailed an offer from the city to pay for \$350 tickets for Mayor Hazel McCallion's 90th birthday bash - at a total cost to taxpayers of \$10,000. Net proceeds from the lavish affair are to go to Sheridan College in support of its new Mississauga campus.

Last Friday's memo from city manager Janice Baker, offering each of the councillors and senior staff a pair of tickets, was not marked confidential. After a public outcry the offer was withdrawn Tuesday.

During Wednesday's council meeting, Councillor Katie Mahoney, a McCallion ally, asked for an investigation into who forwarded the memo. "I would ask IT (information technology) to come do a search of all my equipment in my office and my home," she said.

Mahoney went on to compare the situation to the WikiLeaks affair and suggested all members of council should have their homes and offices searched.

"In my opinion, it's a cowardly act," she said of the leak. "I ask if anyone wants to own up right now, publicly." She then paused. "No one. I'm talking about a search of my staff's equipment as well as my own."

Councillor Ron Starr, who defeated McCallion rival Carolyn Parrish in October, continued the theatrics. "Within minutes, within minutes, the media has copies," he said of Friday's event. "It becomes a toxic environment because we're looking over our shoulders the whole time. I think it's totally unacceptable and we've got to stop this."

Starr suggested the city's new integrity commissioner investigate who sent the memo to the media. He said he would welcome a search of his computer and BlackBerry.

"If it's a staff member, we could do something draconian and I think we would have to fire them," he said, adding later: "Maybe it's time to not talk to the media."

McCallion repeatedly blamed such leaks and a negative attitude by the media for the fractiousness of

council over the past four years, when a so-called "group of seven" challenged her on major issues.

Councillors Jim Tovey and Pat Mullin said they believed forwarding the memo, even though it wasn't marked confidential, constituted a breach of the code of conduct and justified an investigation.

Councillors Eve Adams and Nando Iannicca questioned the unfolding spectacle.

"You'd go this far, to go into elected officials' private houses?" Iannicca asked incredulously.

"To me this seems like a very bizarre discussion," Adams added. "We're not addressing the meat of the issue. I have heard comment after comment (from city residents) that spending tax dollars on a birthday party is unacceptable. If you would like to spend money on parties, please use your own personal dollars."

But her efforts to shed light on the original controversy were met by numerous calls from others to focus on who leaked the ticket offer.

Councillor Pat Saito said she would ask the integrity commissioner to investigate.

Later in the day, **George Rust-D'Eye**, who began a one-year term as Mississauga's first integrity commissioner on Dec. 1, said only that, "I'm looking at the matter now, and the applicability of it under the code of conduct." Rust-D'Eye may only investigate complaints that fall under the new code, by which council members must abide.

Meanwhile, though the ticket offer has been withdrawn, McCallion defended the city manager's intentions. "You will not get me to say that a contribution to Sheridan College is a waste of taxpayer dollars," she said.

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