

Magnifico, Rose

Subject:

Special Committee of the Whole, Tuesday May 23, 2017 10:00 a.m. Item 1, Report No. 20

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COMMUNICATION
SP. CW - <u>May 23/17</u>
ITEM - <u>1</u>

From: Richard Lorello <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Friday, May 19, 2017 4:20 PM

To: Bevilacqua, Maurizio; Iafrate, Marilyn; Carella, Tony; DeFrancesca, Rosanna; Racco, Sandra; Shelman, Alan; Ferri, Mario; Rosati, Gino

Reply To: Richard Lorello

Cc: Kostopoulos, Daniel; Craig, Suzanne; McEwan, Barbara; Noor Javed; Adam MartinRobbins; Furio Liberatore; Ken Schwenger; Robert Kenedy; Tony Alati; Maria Verna; Eddy Aceti; kara@kara-inc.ca

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Good Day Ms. McEwan

I am not able to attend the Special Committee of the Whole meeting next week. Please accept and post this communications in advance of the Special Committee of the Whole on Tuesday May 23, 2017 10:00 a.m. regarding Item 1, Report No. 20

Good afternoon Mayor and Members of Council

I have copied some of Vaughan's ratepayers associations on this matter to encourage communication.

The revelations brought forward by the Integrity Commissioner in her Code of Conduct Complaint #011717(f) Final Investigation Report in Respect of Former Deputy Mayor Michael Di Biase are both shocking and disturbing.

http://www.vaughan.ca/council/minutes_agendas/AgendaItems/SPCW0523_17_1.pdf

I feel very badly for the city employee who was subjected to a working environment in which she had to endure such repugnant behavior. I wish to commend her, for her courage in coming forward and in providing the details of her experience to the Integrity Commissioner. I would like to suggest that she no longer be referred to as the "Complainant". She should be properly referred to as the "Victim". She is a victim of the most heinous conduct that could ever be experienced by a woman in the workplace. My hope is that she will find strength from this experience and turn this page in her life.

I have read the Integrity Commissioner's report in full and I trust in her findings and conclusions where she states;

"I find that the actions of the Respondent (Michael Di Biase) constitute sexual harassment and a breach of Rule 14 of the Code, which prohibits such harassment."

I have come to find from past experience that the Integrity Commissioner is very fair, thorough and thoughtful in coming to her conclusions. I would ask all Members of Council to adopt her recommendations without hesitation or delay.

There are however some unanswered questions from the Integrity Commissioner's investigation that Council must pursue. I have grave concerns with a section Victim's statement where she states:

"To those who have collaborated with Councillor Di Biase throughout these investigations: Please know that when you blame the victim, you are colluding with and supporting abuse. Sexual harassment is not about whether a victim "enticed" a powerful man. Sexual harassment is not about temptation. Sexual harassment about the abuse of power and about powerful men's feelings of entitlement to do whatever they want, whenever they want. If you have daughters please hug them tightly and pray they never have to go through what I went through."

Council must pursue who and why these individuals collaborated with Michael Di Biase. Were any of these individuals Members of Council? I find it deeply disturbing that there are individuals within the city who would "blame the victim" for the purpose of protecting a high ranking elected official. As part of Council's action plan on this matter, Council must find out who these individuals are and address their role and conduct in this matter and take appropriate action.

The victim's quoted statement above, is very accurate in this regard and is supported by experts in the field. Time and time again reports of sexual harassment in political circles have made headlines. In a recent article on sexual harassment in politics, a section of the article states;

"Experts in employment law and advocates of women's rights say there are particular reasons that harassment can flourish in politics. At its core, sexual harassment is about power, and politics is the ultimate power profession. It draws in young people who are eager to advance and reluctant to make waves. And political organizations rise and fall around the fortunes of one central figure, a hierarchy that discourages reporting of harassment, because if the boss gets in trouble, everyone's job is at risk."

While sexual harassment is a serious offence regardless of profession, the excerpt above would suggest that perhaps there must be particular attention and specific actions devoted to sexual harassment within a political workplace environment. In this light, I would suggest that Council consider strongly that staff undertake to have an independent assessment by those who have dealt with sexual harassment within a political workplace environment, for the purpose of providing recommendations that would foster a safer workplace environment at the City of Vaughan.

Michael Di Biase has resigned. Council's actions on this matter will be the focus of attention and scrutiny in the coming days. I am respectfully submitting these and likely further suggestions to Council as a way of moving forward.

Sincerely
Richard T. Lorello