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Council declines to dock Kiernan pay after Integrity Commissioner report

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Caledon Council came together on July 28 for the final meeting before a brief break, and one main piece on their agenda was to discuss was a submission from the Integrity Commissioner on a complaint regarding Councillor Lynn Kiernan.

This Integrity Commission Complaint Report was issued on July 8 in response to complaint ICI-2026-001 that was reported on April 9.

Councillor Kiernan was the Council member that the complaint was directed towards, and it centred on Council's Code of Conduct.

This complaint came after Councillor Christina Early created a social media post in a local Facebook group regarding a Council's consideration of a Request to initiate a Caledon Village Bypass Feasibility study and that Council had voted against having a Caledon Village Bypass.

The complainant responded to the post contending the Facebook post was misinforming the public, that Council had not actually voted against a feasibility study as it had been explained by staff that they could not perform one.

While Councillor Early did not respond to these comments, Councillor Kiernan did.

In her complaint, the complainant said Councillor Kiernan's comments were irrelevant to the conversation and Kiernan questioned if her business had received any payment for working on the Mayor's Gala.

Many words were then exchanged between Kiernan and the complainant from their personal accounts within the comment section.

Once the complaint was filed, the Integrity Commissioner was brought in who recommended that Councillor Kiernan's remuneration be suspended for 15 days (one pay period) starting August 21, 2026, and ending September 4.

This recommendation was then passed onto Council to deliberate how to move forward.

Council met to hear from members of the community their thoughts on this investigation and any suggestions that they would like to give to Council.

It was decided by Council that section 18 of the Code of Conduct be waived to allow a motion contrary to the Integrity Commissioner's recommendation.

Many members of the community urged their Council members to not subject Councillor Kiernan to monetary repercussions.

Attendees and Council members got to hear from the Integrity Commissioner, in which he briefly explained his reasoning behind his recommendations, as well as some of the challenges that came with the investigation.

As some of the comments had been taking down, there were many pieces of context that the Integrity Commissioner noted in his findings and was only able to go off the information in screenshots that he was provided, as well as the stories he had been told.

After hearing from the public and registered delegates, many Council members were given the floor to share their thoughts, including Councillor Kiernan who read out a prepared statement.

She thanked all those that had come out to support her, those that sent messages and letters and focused on the fact that the Investigation Commissioner had changed one of his recommendations after concluding that her comments was a fair political comment.

?That demonstrates that additional context and explanation can and does matter,? she said. ?However, it also highlights my central concern. Throughout this investigation, I was asked only three factual questions relating to Facebook screenshots and whether comments had been deleted. I was never asked about the context of the discussion, my intent, or the factual basis for my comments. Yet the report reaches conclusions about my motives, characterises my comments as malicious and rejects my explanation as disingenuous. Those are serious findings about my credibility.?

?While I appreciate that one conclusion was reconsidered, I respectfully do not believe findings about a person's intent or credibility should be made without first giving that person a meaningful opportunity to explain their comments and have that explanation genuinely explored. I am also concerned that the investigation relied only on selected screenshots and picked after the full Facebook discussion had already been removed. The report acknowledges that neither Councillor Early nor I could verify whether those screenshots represented the complete discussion. Context matters. Nevertheless, conclusions were drawn from only part of an exchange.?

?There is one additional point I wish to raise. The report repeatedly refers to the complainant as a private citizen. She was, as we all are, a private citizens. She was, of course, entitled to participate in public debate,? Kiernan continued.

?However, that, too, was not the complete context. The complainant also has a professional relationship with the Town and was subject to the Town's vendor code of conduct. I am not suggesting that a breach has occurred, and I'm not suggesting Council make any findings regarding that. My point is simply that this formed part of the surrounding context and should have been considered when assessing the nature of this political discussion.

?Finally, I'd like Council to reflect on one broader issue: Social media has become one of the primary places where residents and elected officials discuss municipal decisions. Counsellors are elected to make difficult decisions, explain those decisions, participate in vigorous political debate, correct what they reasonably believe to be misinformation, defend their positions, and respond when they are publicly criticized. Those responsibilities are fundamental to representative democracy. The Integrity Commissioner has expressed concern that comments by elected officials may discourage public participation. This is an important concern. but I respectfully suggest there is another concern that deserves equal consideration. If Councillors believe that responding to criticism and defending their decisions or correcting what they reasonably believe to be misinformation may expose them to a [Code of Conduct complaint] and significant penalties, there is a real risk that elected officials will simply stop engaging with the public. Representative democracy depends on dialogue.?

Residents, she said, ?must be free to question their elected representatives, equally, elected representatives must be able to answer those questions, explain their decisions, and participate in robust political debate without uncertainty about where their legitimate political discourse ends and misconduct begins. People choose to serve on Council because they want to give their communities a voice. The Integrity process should never have the unintended consequence of discouraging those same representatives from reasonably using their own voices to support their community's best interests.?

The decision before Council, she contended, was about more than one Facebook discussion; it was about ?the standard of procedural fairness every member of this Council should expect, and the confidence every future Councillor should have that they can serve their community, participate in honest political debate, and receive a fair process when questions arise. I believe being elected to represent your community should give you a voice, not silence you.?

Once all members were heard from, an additional amendment was put forward going against any financial repercussions recommended for Councillor Kiernan but instead called on the Councillor to issue an apology to the complainant.

A five-minute recess was put in place after the second amendment had been put on the floor and interruptions from the attendees were heard.

The final vote was six to one with the final decision from Council being as ?The recommendations outlined in the Integrity Commissioner's report ICI-2026-001 and the addendum to ICI-2026-001 be received; and That no monetary penalty be imposed on Councillor Lynn Kiernan; and that Councillor Lynn Kiernan issues an apology to the complainant.?