



Report to Council

From the Office of Councillor Diana Dilworth

Date: September 19, 2020

Subject: Support for a Provincial Code of Conduct for Local Government Elected Officials

Purpose

To seek Council support for a submission to 2021 Local Mainland Local Government Association (LMLGA) and Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) and to the Province of British Columbia asking for the development of a Code of Conduct that is overseen by the province.

Recommendation

WHEREAS there is no current legislation to hold elected officials, across the province, to a consistent set of standards of accountability for their behavior and actions;

AND WHEREAS elected officials should have a right to a respectful and safe workplace;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Province of British Columbia be asked to develop a code of conduct that is overseen by the Province, so that all elected officials have access to a consistent, formal set of standards and process for complaint against other elected officials;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this motion be forwarded to the Lower Mainland Local Government Association and the Union of BC Municipalities for consideration as resolutions for their 2021 events.

Executive Summary

Many, if not most, local governments have developed and implemented a Code of Conduct for their group of elected officials. In fact, the City of Port Moody has quite a comprehensive one. The weakness in such codes is that the review of complaints and decision-making related to any repercussions related to any complaint, are left in the hands of the government body of Council. Given the political nature and dynamics of any individual Council, it may be that a complaint may not be treated fairly or appropriately.

Background

Port Moody's archive of committee and council meetings is filled with videos showcasing blatant disrespect, incidents of misogyny and an environment in which all elected officials' perspectives are not treated equally or fairly. There is regular usage of words that are not only unparliamentary, they are meant to demean and humiliate others. And unfortunately the system put in place by Port Moody's elected colleagues is not one that can be trusted to resolve complaints of misbehavior against a fellow member of Council.

Discussion

Elected councillors are not recognized as staff by any City's policies related to bullying, harassment, or right to a respectful workplace, so Human Resources staff have no authority to intervene. Throughout the province, Council members are afforded the opportunity to bring a complaint through their respective Code of Conduct (if they have one). The complaint process involves a vetting and review by peer members of Council. Given the political nature and dynamics of any given local elected body, there is an uncomfortableness and uncertainty as to where complaints may be treated duly and appropriately, without bias.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has confirmed that there is no provincial legislative structure to hold elected officials accountable for their behavior and their words and to ensure a respectful workplace for all politicians.

Other Option(s)

THAT the report dated September 19, 2020 from Councillor Diana Dilworth regarding Support for a Provincial Code of Conduct for Local Government Elected Officials be received for information.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications to receiving or acting on this report.