

Statement from Kamloops City Council on Changes to Committee Structure

For use: March 17, 2023, 12:00pm, Kamloops City Hall, press conference

While we, all 8 Kamloops City Councillors, would prefer to be performing the job that we have been elected to do by our citizens, we instead find ourselves again combatting the chaotic and unpredictable behaviour of our Mayor that leads to confusion and misinformation.

This team, mostly strangers only months ago, remains united in our commitment to honest and transparent accountability to the citizens of Kamloops.

Which is why we're here today to collectively address the sudden changes made to our Committee structure and appointments.

Counter to public comments made by Mayor Reid Hamer-Jackson yesterday, no Councillor you see before you has ever expressed a desire to be "relieved" of our workload, no Councillor has ever expressed that they were "kind of overwhelmed", no Chair has shown any "lack of commitment" or has any conflict, no committee has only "2 or 3 meetings for a whole year" scheduled, nor are we making changes to the job description to "relieve the Deputy Mayor of some duties".

These are examples of blatant untruths.

Although we had heard the Mayor was considering adding members of the public to Standing Committees, and had repeatedly requested input about process or at least an overview if this was to happen, no Councillors were consulted before these unilateral changes were made. Additionally, no meetings with the Mayor have taken place where concerns about performance as Chair were discussed.

In fact, no member of this Council has been invited by the Mayor to participate in any meaningful, consultative, team building, or respectful conversation in many months.

While we, as Councillors, have been subjected to repeated disrespect, violations of personal and professional boundaries, belittling, and constantly disruptive behaviour by the Mayor, we have been willing to absorb the impact in service to our community and in an attempt to have City business compromised as little as possible.

But we must draw the line when this erratic behaviour directly obstructs our ability, as your democratically elected representatives, to do our job.

We want to make it clear that our concerns are not a reflection of our views of the individuals that the Mayor has hand-picked to serve on Committees. In addition to disrespecting Council, our great unease is primarily with a lack of an equitable application process, indifference for due diligence and best practise, a disregard for the impact to sensitive community partner requests, an absence of reassurance around confidentiality, and the neglect of unbiased vetting.

This is all in direct opposition to the concept of transparent, accountable, and open governance and gives unfair access to select members of the public that are not available to all.

Therefore, this Council cannot remain silent.

Council will be holding a special meeting on Tuesday March 21st, 2023 to discuss a resolution to this unfortunate disruption of our work on your behalf, and hopes to remedy yesterday's troubling changes to the Committee structure. The nature of that meeting, ie whether it will proceed in Open or Closed format, will depend on legal counsel's advisement for the best interest of the City of Kamloops.

Your elected Councillors stand as diverse individuals united in our purpose to unwaveringly serve you despite the extraordinary challenge that we continue to face.

We remain committed to you, Kamloops.

Thank you.