

**Prepared For:** Mayor Bailey and Members of Council

**Status:** For Information

**Prepared By:** Melinda Munro, Integrity Commissioner

**Date:** March 25, 2025

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## Integrity Commissioner – Annual Report for the period of January 2024 – December 2024

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### Appointment:

I have been the Integrity Commissioner for the County of Brant since September 27, 2016 and I was recently reappointed for another one year term (renewable). This report is a summary of activities during the period from January 2024 – December 2024. My obligations under my contract with the Brant County are:

- Perform the duties as set out in the Code of Conduct for Brant County, including the investigation of complaints against Members of Council and providing advice to Members of Council;
- Provide Code and Ethics training for Council as requested;
- Provide commentary on ethics policy as requested; and
- Provide consultation services and advice.

My appointment concludes on September 30, 2025 with the option of one further, one-year renewals. I have advised the Clerk of my intention to renew my appointment, subject to any objection by Council.

### Advisory and Complaint Activities

I received five formal complaints this year. Of those, one was resolved by mutual agreement between the parties after a mediation meeting with me. Three were dismissed as not meeting the requirement of a prima facie complaint under the Code of Conduct. One required a formal report but was ultimately dismissed.

The complaints were either conflict of interest or general civility issues. As long as the Code of Conduct directs Councillors to be temperate and respectful in their dealings with one another, staff and the public, Integrity Commissioners will receive complaints when Councillor actions are perceived to be near the edge. While contentious issues can cause tempers to flare, the Code of Conduct is intended to provide guidance as to how to behave when having difficult conversations. Public trust in democracy is promoted by vigorous but respectful debate.

As I noted last year, one of the most important roles of an Integrity Commissioner is to head off issues before they arise through serving as a professional advisor to guide the choices of Councillors when

situations may create the appearance or potential of a Code of Conduct violation. I can also provide mediation support where there is an opportunity to build rapport after a difficult meeting or encounter.

### **Advisory Bulletins, Education and Training**

No advisory bulletins were provided this year.

In December 2024, prior to the 2025 Ontario Provincial Election there was a bill tabled by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing which would create some significant changes to both codes of conduct and the role of the Integrity Commissioner. The most serious of those changes related to the ability of an Integrity Commissioner to recommend the removal of a member due to behaviour that results in harm to the health, safety or well-being of persons. These changes arose in the wake of some very serious actions of councillors in other jurisdictions.

The bill also proposed creating standard codes of conduct which could impact the County of Brant Code. Because of the election, the bill has died on the order paper but we can anticipate some version of it coming back in this term. If it is revived, I will provide further guidance to Council.

Council is reminded that I am available to them to provide reports, advisory bulletins, advice or training on matters related to conduct, ethics and conflicts of interest at their request if there are matters of specific interest to them.

### **Municipal Integrity Commissioners of Ontario**

In order to maintain current with changes in the law and practice of ethics officers, I have been a member of MICO since 2017. In addition to MICO, and I continue to teach the Municipal Law course at the University of Windsor Faculty of Law.

All of which is respectfully submitted:

Melinda Munro  
Integrity Commissioner