

## Further Evidence of a Cover-Up at Town Hall – CTV News Report September 2<sup>nd</sup>

With the release of CTV News latest coverage of the Fire Chief scandal at City Hall, we now have an much clearer picture of the cover-up at Town Hall.

An ethical and principled municipality government, with a robust HR program, would expect a manager to discuss with his supervisor a relationship with a subordinate prior to it starting. **The Town of Wasaga Beach has this requirement in their policies.** The chief's supervisor should have been aware of this. He should have helped the chief to decide whether or not the relationship was appropriate. This step would have helped to ensure that there was no coercion involved between the Manager and his subordinate. **Was the chief's relationship with a subordinate reviewed with HR or his supervisor?** It's not clear that any of this happened prior to this scandal. The Fire Chief's supervisor is **CAO George Vadeboncoeur!**

### Legal Opinion #1

The female employee asked for help from the HR department. At some point in the process the details of the investigation were reviewed by an **HR lawyer**. He/she provided his/her recommendations regarding the HR complaint. **He/she recommended that both employees' employment should be terminated. CAO Vadeboncoeur sought a second legal opinion at his discretion and our cost. Why?**

### What did we learn from CTV's televised report from September 2?

- The former employee claims the fire chief mistreated and harassed her after their consensual extra-marital relationship ended.
- CTV News obtained a town document containing details related to the complaint including that the subordinate feared reprisal and backlash due to the known **close relationship the chief had with the mayor and CAO.**
- In a follow up CTV story, we learned the fire chief had asked his female staffer to share intimate pornographic images; while he did the same, including pictures of his genitals.
- CTV further reveals that CAO, George Vadeboncoeur sought a second legal opinion following the first HR lawyer's recommendation after reviewing the investigation detail.
- **Legal Opinion #2** - The document disclosed that a second lawyer determined the initial lawyer's recommendations were "excessive," and the fire chief ultimately kept his job.
- Unable to work under fire chief McWilliam, the woman left the town's employ after accepting a financial package, but not before being made to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

Keep this in mind as we continue the story - The 2<sup>nd</sup> lawyer determined that firing McWilliam was excessive, but that severing the Victim was Justified. Council lacked details of the full story.

### **Cover-up #1 - Which Report, and/or What Updates Were Given to Council?**

Because there was a **financial package involved in the severance, Council had to take part in the review of the details and final decision.** So which lawyer's opinion, or what updates did council receive from Vadeboncoeur? The opinion from Lawyer 1 or lawyer 2? According to councillor Belanger's CTV statement, he felt information had been withheld from some members of council. Based on council's decision, it seems that it must have been opinion #2?

**At the very least both opinions should have been offered. Instead, the first was covered-up.**

### **Cover-up #2. 140,000 Images and Emails - Harassment in the Workplace Policy**

**In what possible circumstances given the evidence, could it be determined that fire chief McWilliam was less guilty and should not be fired?**

It was a consensual relationship, both – **GUILTY**. The chief, McWilliam, amassed an enormous number of pornographic images (140,000) on phones and computers. It is believed that this included town equipment and if so, is a serious violation of Harassment in the Workplace policy (THWP). CAO George Vadeboncoeur appears to have circumvented the HWP, as well as the Town's Disciplinary Policy by not sharing this information. **A COVER UP!**

**Based on this information and the HWP the chief should have been fired immediately for these violations and CAO should have tendered his resignation for his role in the COVER UP.**

### **Cover-up #3. The Mayor and Her Role in This Cover-up**

On August 16<sup>th</sup>, on Bifulchi's blog, she stated that she was not aware of the details of the investigation. How could she not be? She runs the town like an autocracy. The CAO must have discussed this with her, given how controversial the decision was. A risk to both, indeed.

On August 23<sup>rd</sup> Joe went to the public and wrote the following, ***At our Aug. 18th Council Meeting the mayor made reference to my last video, indicating that I went on and on about the serious nature of the Ministry of Labour orders. Clearly, she has watched my video and heard information that was withheld from the rest of council related to the Fire Dept. harassment investigation, including the fact that 140,000 images had been reviewed on phones and computers.***

On the mayor's blog entry of August 16, and in Council on August the 18<sup>th</sup> she **raised no concerns about these images and emails, nor did she call for a review of the investigation.** Rather she posted this...

***"I believe Joe (Belanger) has gained access to an internal document that the rest of council was not privy to. What Joe doesn't realize is that every time he opened his mouth, he gave away his source bit by bit. I am confident that the confidential breach will be reviewed and properly dealt with."***

Well mayor bifolchi, thanks for opening your mouth. You can't claim innocence any more.

**#1 - Your words revealed the existence of and prior knowledge of the internal document.**

**#2 - Your attack on CTV, an ordained minister and councillor Belanger, calling them all liars, reveals that you knew what the document contained.**

**#3 - You also said – “*the rest of council was not privy to*”, and this indicates that you, as mayor were, but you didn't deem it necessary to share with council.**

Information within the document **related to the investigation had never been communicated to the rest of council.** Therefore, Council's decision in this matter was **based on deliberately withheld information.**

**This is a blockbuster admission, because council made a decision that kept the chief employed, without knowing the details about the 140,000 inappropriate images and explicit pornographic emails.**

Without CTV's diligence and Councillor Joe Belanger making public this abhorrent violation of Resident's trust, they might have escaped without consequence. But that's not the case now.

In summary, CAO George Vadeboncoeur chose to hire a second, perhaps more compliant lawyer, and one, or both ignored or dismissed the existence of pornographic images and emails. How does CAO's agreement with the second lawyer's opinion not make George guilty of conspiring to help out his friend and a very close friend of the mayor. With his actions, he subverted the Town's Workplace and Harassment Policy and the Town's Disciplinary Policy.

**He should be fired. The mayor admits that information was withheld. She should be fired.**

The mayor publicly admitted that Councillor Belanger had gained access to an internal document that had been shared with some members of council. So once again, did the CAO share the investigative report with council and what legal opinion was shared with council. Can there be any doubt that they made their decision based on the 2<sup>nd</sup> lawyer's recommendation?

After the first CTV new story was release, the CAO's comments and the mayor's video rant accused everyone of lying. After Councillor Belanger revealed the existence of 140,000 inappropriate images the CAO and the mayor doubled down and stood by their original comments. After the second CTV news story revealing explicit pornographic emails, town hall has been engulfed within a shroud of silence. Clearly the mayor and CAO are caught in their web of lies and deceit and are no longer able to deny the existence of the COVER UP!

**Council – Engulfed In a Shroud of Silence:**

While this travesty of injustice was breaking in the news, where were the mayor's compliant and obedient councillors? **Bray, Watson, Wells, Foster and Kinney** seem to have been hiding with their heads in the sand, hoping this would all blow over. Do they believe that CTV would

expose themselves to legal liability by disclosing the existence of explicit pornographic email without proof! **How can a former OPP officer not speak out and call for a full review!**

The silence from these 6 Town councillors speaks volumes to us all. They should have been outraged that they hadn't been provided with the information they needed to see, in order to make a fair judgement. As soon as the details on the 140,000 pornographic images and emails came out, there was no sign that they were outraged? Instead, they have become willfully **SILENT, heads in the sand!**

**Only Councillor Joe Belanger stood tall and told the truth.**

**CAO Vadeboncoeur and Mayor Bifulchi should do the right thing and make a public apology to CTV, the ordained minister, councillor Belanger and the WASAGA Beach Residents, accompanied by their letters of resignation!** What was done was wrong, it was immoral and unethical, and in violation of our HR and Town's Workplace and Harassment Policy.

For those of you that doubt CTV's honesty, CTV News is an ethical organization, with Editorial Standards and Policies. Here is a link to their Ethics Policy: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/editorial-standards-and-policies>

Note that our Town's Workplace and Harassment Policy, as determined by the Ministry of Labour and reported by CTV News, has not been updated in 9 years.