

Friday August 22, 2025

Response to Integrity Commissioner Inquiry Respecting Code of Conduct

Statement

The Integrity Commissioner's (IC) report on an inquiry respecting my conduct on social media substantiates "in part" claims that "on a balance of probabilities [I] contravened the code of conduct" and should be subject to a three-day suspension of pay.

I categorically reject these findings. This is a curtailment of my freedom of speech. I was engaging in legitimate political debate.

Those of you who know me know that I am informal, direct, and above all, factual. I do not shy away from calling people out, nor from saying the quiet part out loud. I use humour and sarcasm, but I am never cruel, and I would never intentionally misrepresent someone. You will find that my comments on social media that are detailed in the IC's report are consistent with how I conduct myself in everyday life. Like most female politicians who use social media, I have been subject to actual harassment and abusive behaviour online. Given what most people see every day in their social media feeds, I believe they would agree my comments are mild in comparison.

My comments on social media that are at issue in the IC's report do not cross any of the lines set out in previous applicable case law, such as *Robinson v. Pickering (City)*. I did not use any profanity in my posts, there were no discriminatory comments, hate speech, violence, or threats. My engagement on social media is completely within the community standards of X and Facebook. My tone was mild compared to what can be typically found on those platforms. I have other issues with the ICs findings, including her assertion that my comments on social media silenced the complainants. This is false. They continued to speak out publicly on the issue, as is their right. You can read a summary of the key issues in my response to the IC's report [here.](#)

Context

In December 2024 I received a complaint from the City of Ottawa's IC concerning my engagement on social media on the topic of the city's proposed Sprung Structure program that would have housed asylum seekers in temporary structures in Kanata and Nepean. These sites were chosen because the city's emergency shelters are and continue to be operating past capacity. Crucially, the Bernard Grandmaître Arena in Vanier was also being used to house asylum seekers and has been unavailable to the community since 2020.

The individuals who made the complaints are affiliated with the former MPP for the potentially impacted area, Barrhaven Residents Against Sprung Structures (BRASS), and the Barrhaven Business Improvement Association (BBIA).

These individuals and groups were voicing their opposition to the Sprung Structures on social media, and I pointed out fallacies in their arguments, as well as connections between the individuals, and their personal and financial vested interests.

The investigator and I met on April 10 alongside my lawyer. I gave detailed responses with timelines and provided proof that my social media posts were factual and researched. Many of you may remember that there was an [Access to Information request](#) on the Barrhaven BIA which shows that there was “...a concerted effort (by the) Barrhaven Business Improvement Area (BIA) to keep the facility out of the community.” I pointed out that one of the complainants had a property next to one of the potential sites that he did not disclose at any point during his “advocacy”.

According to her report, the IC has found me in contravention of the code of conduct based on her assessment of the use of this  emoji - which is [commonly used by other councillors](#) without investigation – and [this meme](#) which she concluded the complainant “felt” offended by it. The IC’s findings suggest that any elected officials who posts on social media could be subject to reprimands based on the reader’s feelings.

I encourage anyone to review the extensive case law, including *Ayotte v Therrien* and *Montforts v Brown*, which demonstrate that courts consistently affirm the principle that ICs should not police political speech.

This complaint was politically motivated. I am working with my lawyer to seek an appeal. I strongly encourage you to read the [full report](#) which lists all of my interactions and posts on social media that are in question.

To the residents of Rideau Vanier: We have a housing crisis, opioid crisis, and a downtown truck problem. We do not have an emoji crisis. This investigation is a waste of valuable taxpayer dollars, city resources and time. I will continue to do the important work of representing you and holding those in positions of power to account — even when it makes them uncomfortable.

Sincerely,



Stéphanie Plante
Councillor - Conseillère
Rideau - Vanier