

Audit slams Pickering councillor's spending

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Pickering Councillor Doug Dickerson

Pickering councillor Doug Dickerson is under fire for \$14,594 he spent on alcohol and \$11,050 he gave to his campaign manager and spouse as salary.

Two councillors now want him to vacate his positions as acting mayor and Pickering's hydro board chairman.

"Certainly, buying \$15,000 worth of booze and putting it in your basement is something that lacks credibility," councillor Bill McLean said. "And this is why I want him to step down from both until due process takes its place, and its confidence instilled back into the position of the deputy mayor and the chair of Veridian."

Councillor Jennifer O'Connell says she tried to bring the motion forward at a council meeting on May 22 but was cut off by mayor Dave Ryan.

"Basically there was an attempt to not deal with anything with regards to Doug Dickerson and the audit," she said. "So that's why I said fine, I'll just give notice, and bring it in June."

A spokesperson for the mayor confirmed that the matter is in the hands of the Compliance Audit Committee, which meets on June 6.

"It's independent of city council and staff," says Mark Guinto.

The auditor's report concludes that Dickerson's campaign exceeded the \$19,154 spending limit by \$15,015. His surplus was \$12,830. A Municipal Elections Act rule was changed shortly before the 2010 election so that any post-election surplus has to go into city coffers.

Three separate people were surprised by Dickerson's financial statements posted after the 2010 election, including Ian Cumming, a runner-up in the same ward. All three applied to have an audit conducted.

"He paid his wife \$11,000 and apparently, according to the report, all she did was make a note of where the signs were," Cumming said. If Dickerson loses his seat, there will either be a by-election or runner-up Cumming will be appointed.

Numerous attempts to contact Dickerson met with no response. City clerk Debbie Shields says the CAC decides on the matter of prosecution.

"That's the CAC's decision," she said. "If they accept the report and do nothing, then each complainant has the option to prosecute."

Complainant David Steele points out that nothing would have happened if they had not spoken up.

“We don’t have lawyers sitting on the seats waiting to serve us,” he said. “We don’t have the protection councillors have. Even though they knew all the amounts, nothing would have happened.”

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