



# CITY HALL *News...*

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**GIBERSON PREDICTS COURT CHALLENGES AS COUNCILLORS  
VOTE TO APPROVE SOCIAL SERVICES BYLAW CHANGES**

I BEGAN A SIX-PART SERIES of social media essays in 2020 on the topic of homelessness in the city of Oshawa, and I can tell you that, five years and over 16,000 views later, the issues I wrote about then are still very much the same now. It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience and I made some lasting friendships along the way. It was also a real eye-opener as I went into the camps to see, first hand, much of what being homeless was all about. I interviewed elected officials and those living and working in the downtown, and I also spent time volunteering for a local meal program. All-in-all it was a disturbing scene, but one filled with a sense of community built on the relationship between those living in desperate conditions, and the army of volunteers and agencies who work so hard to offer support. Looking back at all that I did to immerse myself into the world of homelessness, I can recall standing in line at a now-closed charity on Simcoe Street awaiting a meal prepared by a team of volunteers – in absolutely sweltering conditions. I learned much that day by eating and talking with the men and women who actually rely on local charities and other agencies for their day-to-day survival.


Which brings us to the present time, and the debate over changes made to a municipal by-law governing the number and location of social services within the city's limits. In summary, Oshawa councillors recently approved amendments that would require a considerable separation between new and existing agencies and charities that serve the homeless. Other retail entities were also affected, however the focus of public debate has so-far been focused on the affect these new rules may have on services available for those most vulnerable. At a special council meeting held on Thursday morning, several residents were joined by representatives of the AIDS Committee of Durham Region, as well as the John Howard Society, to express their concerns. The underlying message sent to councillors appeared to be one of implied deceit, with several delegations questioning the 'real intent' of the proposed changes.

One resident, currently working towards his Masters of Urban Planning degree, appeared before council to suggest the vote would be based more on 'identity' than on actual land use aspects. Another resident went so far as to accuse councillors of potential discrimination bordering on Human Rights violations. The specter of going against such laws was also brought to the fore by councillor Derek Giberson – who has, himself, been a board member for the Back Door Mission, a collaborative social service and primary health care HUB located at the Simcoe St. United Church. It is well known the Mission has received an extension to allow them time to find a new space, as the church officially closed, having held their last service in April 2024. That means much of what councillor Giberson said was undoubtedly driven by the likelihood of the Mission being shut out of a large geographical area which surrounds the downtown. However, during his questioning of one of the delegations, he seemed to offer up an entirely different scenario, "If a pre-existing organization in a primary location wants to open a satellite location, would they start 'massing up' at their current location...which would go against the intent of these by-law changes?" And that's not all. On one of his social media pages, the Ward 4 councillor took his colleagues to task by way of a few pre-emptive remarks: "If tomorrow's Zoning By-law amendment passes...it will prevent any new social services operated by a non-profit or charity from opening anywhere in the City of Oshawa within an 800 metre radius of an existing social service... Two letter-writers have already identified the serious concern that it may not pass a Human Rights Code test." Added to this was a hint dropped by councillor Giberson in the same social media post, perhaps unwittingly, where he appeared to shed light on a potential relocation of the Back Door Mission: "Also included is 'Dispensing from or receiving at the building clothing and household articles', prohibiting a place of worship that doesn't currently provide this type of assistance from starting up such a service..." Is it possible the Mission may have found another willing host but inadvertently missed the boat on a new location?

Meanwhile, councillor Brian Nicholson who represents Ward 5, itself being inclusive of a portion of the greater downtown area, offered the following comments on his own social media page: "Rather than get into a back and forth with those spreading the false rumours, I would like to express a few simple thoughts. Nothing in the proposed changes impacts the location of existing social services and support groups nor does it limit access to those services... One thing that has been learned from the last decade or so is that locating all social services uses in a confined area leads to many issues for both those in need of services and those resident in the community. It cannot be a one way conversation. Compassion must be offered to both those in need and those living in communities." He went on to add, "The proposed changes being discussed tomorrow are not a hurried response as claimed by opponents, but a well thought out compromise put forward by planning professionals that both protects the services of those in need and protects the safety and integrity of neighbourhoods and residents impacted by these services." So, there were specific comments made during the special council meeting which really caught my attention.

One of the delegations referred to what she called the "social services industry", and suggested any blanket ban on new services would essentially be a "freeze on growth." That aspect was repeated in a question from councillor Giberson: "Some organizations mature and become 'provincial'... Is this a barrier to that growth?" to which the delegation replied, "Yes." Another delegation who represents a newly established social services agency lamented the fact they were unable to locate in the downtown, and suggested, "We're getting bigger and have...federal agencies looking at us now."

Although 'non-conforming uses' as they are known, still retain the ability to expand at their current locations, one got the sense that those representing such agencies are more concerned with opportunities for growth than they are at maintaining a balance between those services and the needs of residents and business who call downtown Oshawa their home. Clare Hewitt, the co-founder of Redemption House of Recovery, told councillors, "800 metres (separation between agencies) will stop people from using services. They will stay where the drugs are... People on the streets need to be navigated." I'll leave my readers to contemplate the meaning of his remarks.



# Lisa Robinson

PICKERING CITY COUNCILLOR

## How is this Legal in Canada? This Isn't Discipline It's Political Retaliation

By Councillor Lisa Robinson

Council just suspended my pay for the fifth time. The public deserves to know the truth behind these attacks - and why they should be deeply concerned.

On Monday night, the City of Pickering Council voted to suspend my pay for another 90 days. That marks the fifth time this punishment has been used against me completing a full year without pay - and once again, it wasn't about breaking any law or putting anyone at risk. It was about power - and silencing a voice that refuses to fall in line.

The process was rigged from the start. I submitted two emails with evidence to the Integrity Commissioner on June 6. Both were ignored. Only after I pressed and said I would provide proof that they suddenly "found" one. And which one did they find? The email that clearly proved my Town Hall sign-in sheet did not violate MFIPPA - the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. It contained no personal information: no phone numbers, no emails, no addresses. It asked only for first names or initials, and it included a disclaimer.

You can comb through MFIPPA line by line and you won't find a single rule I violated. Because there isn't one. What I did was fully lawful and appropriate. But they twisted it anyway.

The second email - still missing. Still unreviewed. Still unaddressed.

That's not due process. That's political targeting.

When I saw the sanctions motion placed on the agenda, I requested formally, that the item be deferred until all the evidence could be reviewed. I asked the CAO. I asked the City Solicitor. I asked the Mayor. I asked every single councillor. Not one of them agreed. Instead they pushed it through anyway.

And let's be honest: this complaint didn't come from the public. It came from one person, the CAO. The same CAO I said, over a year ago, that if I was Mayor, she wouldn't keep her job. And from that moment forward, she's treated me like an enemy.

But what was I actually speaking out about?

I raised uncomfortable truths - the kind most politicians avoid:

- That surveys can be manipulated to support the outcome those in power want
- That millions in taxpayer dollars are being poured into outside consultants while residents struggle to access basic services
- That there are glaring loopholes in the City's gifts and benefits policy - and some councillors aren't properly disclosing what they receive

And when I tried to bring forward a Notice of Motion to close those loopholes - to ban staff and council from accepting gifts outright - no one would even second the motion.

What does that tell you?

It tells you they don't want reform. They want silence.

At Monday night's meeting, I asked the Integrity Commissioner direct questions about how the investigation was conducted. He couldn't answer them. Why? Because he hadn't looked at the full evidence. And just as that became clear, the Mayor stepped in and shut me down. He cut me off mid-questions right as the truth was surfacing.

Then, as he often does, the Mayor resorted to name-calling, calling me a "conspiracy theorist" in front of the entire chamber. When I referenced a nickname staff use for the CAO, he twisted my words and falsely claimed that I had called her that. That's his pattern: twist, lie, manipulate. It's how he covers for the people around him, and tries to discredit anyone who speaks up.

And the clearest example of that came earlier that same night - when Council held a closed-door In Camera meeting at 5:00 PM.

I was shut out completely.

No Teams link. No confidential agenda in my Friday Council package. No access. No explanation.

And one of the items they discussed? The Elexicon shares, a matter I've been publicly vocal about, because I believe the people of Pickering deserve a say before any public assets are sold behind closed doors.

They held that meeting anyway — and they did it without me.

When I asked the Clerk for a debriefing before the public meeting at 7:00 PM, I was told I'd have to "wait for the minutes."

This is how they operate.

They silence, isolate, and punish the one person on Council who won't play along. Let me be absolutely clear: This isn't about ethics. This isn't about conduct. This is about power.

And they are using that power to retaliate against the one councillor who keeps asking questions they don't want answered. They can suspend my pay. They can twist my words. They can shut me out of meetings. But I will not be broken. And I will not back down. I was elected by the people of Pickering - not by City staff or Council members.

I serve my constituents. And I will keep speaking truth - no matter how hard they try to silence me.

Councillor Lisa Robinson

The People's Councillor  
"Strength Does Not Lie In The Absence Of Fear, But In The Courage To Face It Head On And Rise Above It" - Lisa Robinson 2023

Councillor Lisa Robinson "The People's Councillor"

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