

August 13, 2019

Common Council
City of Saint John
8th Floor City Hall
15 Market Square
Saint John, NB
E2L 1E8

Re: Request for reprimand of Councillor David Merrithew

On July 8, 2019, this body unanimously adopted a Code of Conduct for Elected Representatives. Subsequently, I have been informed by the Minister of Local Government that Saint John Common Council must “police itself” when it comes to the behaviour of the Mayor and individual councillors.

Therefore, I am requesting that this body publicly reprimand Councillor David Merrithew for failing to adhere to one of the key values enshrined in the Code of Conduct, which states that: “Members of Council shall treat every person, including other Members of Council, City employees **and the public with dignity and respect.**”

On July 30, 2019, as part of a hateful exchange on the Mayor’s ‘personal’ webpage, Mr. Merrithew posted the following disparaging comment in reference to Mr. Randall Goodwin and the Saint John Citizens Coalition: **“This guy and his small group of cronies are not creditable. They say they will run in the next election. God forbid. Just key board courage.”**

While Mr. Merrithew is entitled to his opinion, he has failed to uphold his promise to treat the public with dignity and respect. Insulting and belittling citizens who may wish to exercise their democratic right to seek public office only serves to discourage people from participating in the democratic process. We need more engagement, not less.

As for Councillor Merrithew’s insulting reference to ‘keyboard courage’, I will remind him and all councillors that passionately written words have changed history. Again, mocking and disparaging citizens because they choose to express their political views and help educate others on matters of public interest through their written commentary, can hardly be described as dignified and respectful conduct.

Mr. Merrithew’s comment violates Article 8.1 of the Code of Conduct, which states that “Members of Council shall use communication tools, such as newsletters, websites **and social media in a responsible and respectful manner.**” Mr. Merrithew also failed to adhere to Article 8.4 which states that “Members of Council are encouraged to identify when views expressed are theirs alone and not official City of Saint John communication”, and Article 8.6 which declares that “Members of Council shall not use communication tools and social media to engage in criticism of other Members of Council, the City staff **or the general public**”.

Consequently, it is my duty as a citizen, to hold Councillor Merrithew and this entire body to account. Any failure to publicly reprimand your colleague for his unwarranted bad behaviour will reflect poorly on your judgement and on your values and will greatly diminish your authority as an elected body.

Yours sincerely;

Douglas James
Citizen and taxpayer

Enc. July 30, 2019 Full Facebook Screenshots Exchange

cc: Hon. Jeff Carr, Minister of Local Government; Andrea Anderson-Mason, Attorney General