

## Council mothballs Code of Conduct

By Brock Weir

Aurora's controversial Code of Conduct has been formally rescinded.

Councillors voted to formally strike the Code of Conduct last week after an earlier decision to roll some of its key points together with Council's existent Code of Ethics into a new, combined Code of Ethics.

The move came at the recommendation of Town Clerk John Leach who brought forward a report ahead of the new combined document. Mr. Leach was due to actually present a shortlist of possible Integrity Commissioners for Council to appoint to review a Code of Conduct complaint launched last month hours before Council decided to do away with the Code of Conduct. This complaint, however, was withdrawn the following week and rescinding it in the meantime would prevent similar situations from cropping up while the new Code is drawn up.

‘As long as the current Code of Conduct remains in effect, a complaint may be filed and Council would be obligated to appoint an Integrity Commissioner to conduct an investigation,’ said Mr. Leach in his report, which was put on last Tuesday's agenda as an additional item.

The fact that this was put on the agenda after the bulk of it was made public on Friday raised some questions for some Councillors, however.

‘The public didn't know it was on the agenda for tonight, they haven't been informed, they haven't been able to come forward and make a presentation if they wanted to, and I would suggest we leave this until staff have come back with a report on how they propose to combine [the Codes],’ said Councillor Chris Ballard. ‘In my mind, that would be an appropriate time to see it added to this agenda.’

This view was shared by Councillors Wendy Gaertner and John Gallo, who also voted against the recommendation being put on the agenda, the latter of whom questioned the urgency.

‘I don't have an issue with debating this item,’ he said. ‘I think we can all agree it is relatively significant. I just have an issue with it not being on the regular cycle of the agenda.’

The majority of Council, however, did not feel the same way. Councillor Paul Pirri said the comments that the public were not aware this would be on the agenda were ‘alarmist’ while Councillor Evelyn Buck said the motion was a long-time coming and should have surfaced when the Town and David Tsubouchi, the last holder of the Integrity Commissioner Office, parted ways in the early weeks of this Council. Mr. Tsubouchi resigned from the position shortly before Council was set to do the same.

‘I certainly believe there is enough urgency in this matter,’ said Councillor Buck on the amount of money it would cost to retain a Commissioner to deal with the latest complaint had it not been withdrawn. ‘It is almost three years overdue.’

Councillor John Abel agreed with this assessment.

‘Our residents have known that we aren't going forward with a Code of Conduct for quite some time,’ he said. ‘This is long overdue and has my support.’

Mr. Leach's new Code of Ethics is expected to come before Council for review and approval before Council breaks for summer recess in late June.