A Call for Civility: Addressing Safety and Respect in Public Service

Reports of harassment and threats of violence towards City workers, particularly snow removal crews, 311 operators, and elected officials demand our attention, accountability and action.



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Dear Edmontonians,

I write this message as your Mayor, a role entrusted to me by you, a role that I take great privilege in. As leader, but most importantly, as your neighbour and fellow Edmontonian, I uphold the responsibility of championing Edmonton as a welcomir home for residents to live, work, and thrive each day. Achieving this outcome dema that everyone feels safe and protected in their daily lives, and unfortunately, for son of our City employees and Councillors, these fundamentals are being compromised alleged instances of in person and online abuse and misinformation.

Reports of harassment and threats of violence towards City workers, particularly sn removal crews, 311 operators, and elected officials require our attention, accountability, and action.

Research shows that approximately 63% of local politicians across Canada have experienced some form of harassment during their current term or campaign perio Here is a link to read more information: https://www.cmb-bmc.ca/articles/harassme in-municipal-politics-experiences-of-local-politicians/

This past week there have been incidents of City workers having shovels thrown at their vehicles and reports of toxic verbal harassment towards them and 311 operato

Unfortunately, this harassment disproportionately targets women, racialized individuals, and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. I know this because ma of my colleagues received more hateful comments and harassment in their first mor than I have received in my entire 12 years.

These events impede on the safety and wellbeing of our colleagues, who are also friends, family members, and neighbours. Not only do these actions affect their individual lives, they threaten our community as a whole.

What we are witnessing is not merely a disagreement or passionate political debate is a deliberate attempt to silence specific voices and marginalize them from our

democratic process. The impact is to deter those who seek positions of local leadership.

> *When we allow abuse and harassment to go unchecked, we pay the price.*
>
> *When we allow misinformation to circulate, we undermine trust in public institutions.*
>
> *When we normalize toxicity, we risk allowing an endless loop of abuse to continue as "ju a part of politics."*

We diminish the quality of governance and the health of dialogue and public discourse. We discourage women and underrepresented groups from entering and remaining in public service. We see even the most consistent and passionate voices turn away and choose not to participate.

And while it is understood that politics as it stands is on shaky ground, here in Edmonton, we cannot lose what makes this City special. We must embrace civility a thoughtful debate.

It should go without saying that you can criticize without throwing personal attack threats or degrading language.

It should go without saying to recognize the shared humanity within your neighbou

It should go without saying that we need to be part of the solution and model kindr and thoughtful dialogue.

It should go without saying that we need to hold ourselves and each other accounta for abusive behaviour.

However, it begs repeating. Harassment and abuse are never okay. And yes, that me in politics. That means especially in politics.

> *Our democracy is weakened by fear, intimidation, echo chambers, misinformation and performative outrage. Every voice deserves to be heard. Every person who steps forward serve deserves to do so without fear of harassment or violence.*

To end this blog, I reflect on the wisdom of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and emphas his words: "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Each day, we must actively recommit ourselves to the principles of civil discourse. I because it is easy or comfortable, but because our democratic future relies on it.

Resources

Harassment in Municipal Politics: Experiences of Local Politicians

https://www.cmb-bmc.ca/articles/harassment-in-municipal-politics-experiences-of-local-politicians/

Gender-Based Violence in Canadian Politics in the #MeToo Era

https://utppublishing.com/doi/book/10.3138/9781487540029

Gender-Based Violence Research in Canadian Political Science: A Call to Action

https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-political-science-revu canadienne-de-science-politique/article/genderbased-violence-research-in-canadia political-science-a-call-to-action/BE274D0C98B5B45652AC6F263D90A508

There are more women — and harassment — in Quebec municipal politics, report shows

https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/more-women-more-harassment-quebec-municipal-politics-1.7137743

How gender-based violence in politics undermines our democracy

https://www.torontomu.ca/news-events/news/2024/12/gender-based-violence-in-politics/

Elect Respect Campaign

electrespect.ca

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Cherie T Jan 21

Thank you for using your voice to speak up about this as so many can't.

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The AI Architect Jan 22

The parallel between discouraging public servants through harassment and the larger crisis of civ participation is spot-on. What strikes me is how the perpetrators probably don't realize they're c the exact dysfunction they're complaining about, driving out competent people leaves only thos willing to tolerate abuse or those with no better options. The quote about "an inescapeable netw mutuality" really lands different when you think about snow removal workers being attacked whi literally clearing paths for everyone's safety.

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