

COMPLIANCE AUDIT COMMITTEE – AUGUST 9, 2023

COMMUNICATIONS

Distributed August 4, 2023

Item

C1. Irene Ford, dated August 4, 2023.

1

Disclaimer Respecting External Communications

Communications are posted on the City’s website pursuant to Procedure By-law Number 7-2011. The City of Vaughan is not responsible for the validity or accuracy of any facts and/or opinions contained in external Communications listed on printed agendas and/or agendas posted on the City’s website.

Please note there may be further Communications.

C1
Communication
Compliance Audit Committee -
August 9, 2023
Item # 1

From: [Adelina Bellisario](#)
To: [Adelina Bellisario](#)
Subject: FW: [External] Compliance Audit - Aug 9 Meeting
Date: August-04-23 1:32:08 PM

From: IRENE FORD [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, August 04, 2023 11:56 AM
To: Todd Coles <Todd.Coles@vaughan.ca>; Evan Read <Evan.Read@vaughan.ca>
Subject: [External] Compliance Audit - Aug 9 Meeting

Mr Coles,

This is a written statement for consideration by the Committee.

I have submitted this application because I am fundamentally concerned about the role that third party advertisers, advocating for their donors private pecuniary interests that are not aligned with public interests, have on the outcome of elections in Canada at all levels as well as our political discourse and decision making process. Should such large well resourced interests and groups choose to influence our politicians, elections and political decision making process then there should be greater transparency and accountability no matter how minor the infraction.

I have documented that Ontario Proud posted a Facebook advertisement prior to registering as a third party advertiser during the Vaughan 2022 Municipal Election. While the infraction and costs of those ads appears minor the influence that Ontario Proud and other grassroots facebook pages, that appear 'community led', have had on our local political discourse is likely not minor. I doubt that we will ever fully understand the influence that these groups have as it is so subtle, yet profound. I have also documented that Ontario Proud as a registered federal corporation is not up to date on their annual filings or meetings as per the requirements of the Canada Not-For-Profit Corporations Act. To the best of my understanding as a concerned Vaughan voter and resident and according to the information obtained from the Government of Canada's website: [Search for a Federal Corporation - Online Filing Centre - Corporations Canada - Corporations - Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada](#).

Upon further review I have also come across a Facebook Ad run that may also be considered political advertising and an infraction of Section 88.21(1) of the Municipal Elections Act. Vaughan Voices is registered as a community Facebook page but appears to be anything but with connections to Mobilize Media Group whose founder is a Director of Ontario Proud.

It was through a news article by the National Observer that I first came to understand concerns surrounding the Vaughan Voices Facebook page and others across Canada: *"The pages masquerade as community groups, sharing*

lighthearted posts about local issues. In some cases, they also display misleading information and run smear campaigns. While legal, experts warn pages like these can undermine democracy." [Right-wing operatives masquerading as local grassroots groups on Facebook](#)

In 2018 Ontario Proud was a third party advertiser in Vaughan's municipal election. They kept donations below \$10,000 therefore not requiring a third party audit. They listed two development companies as donors who are frequently in the media regarding controversial developments and use of their extensive resource to influence political opinion and decisions that advance their pecuniary development interests. I am unable to find the link to the 2018 financial statement, perhaps the City has archived this page. In 2018 after the Ontario provincial election it became evident that the bulk of Ontario Proud's donations were from development companies and construction firms and were credited with helping Premier Ford's Progressive Conservatives win the provincial election. [Ontario Proud's pro-PC election spending was funded by corporate donors | CBC News](#). Ontario Proud's website describes themselves as 'Holding Politicians Accountable': <https://ontarioproud.ca/>. They are clearly partisan and the depth of their influence and use of social media is impossible to fully know or quantify. Just as Ontario Proud claims to hold politicians to account they too should be held to account. If they truly want accountability in our political systems then they should welcome this audit and have nothing to hide.

While Ontario Proud is allowed to 'self finance' as per the Municipal Elections Act I believe an audit is justified. They did not register as a third party advertiser when they should be well aware of the rules as they've registered in the past with the City of Vaughan combined with the fact that their corporate filing are not up to date.

I look forward to the outcome of the Compliance Audit Committee meeting: <https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=147258> and thank the City of Vaughan for establishing the committee and considering my application.

Sincerely,
Irene Ford

Additional Information on the Vaughan Voice's Facebook Ad Of Concern


Vaughan Voices a community facebook page ran this ad during the municipal campaign period. Information from the advertiser reveals little. The address provided comes up as the Canada Post Office in Maple. The phone number is associated with Canada Proud (refer to below image) and Mobilize Media Group is also listed as being responsible for the Canada Proud Facebook page.


[Ad Library](#)

Ad Library

Inactive ⋮

Jun 2, 2022 - Jun 9, 2022


Platforms 

Categories 

ID: 981639285877762


2 ads use this creative and text

[See summary details](#)

 **Vaughan Voices**
Sponsored · Paid for by Vaughan Voices

This Vaughan Councillor doesn't seem to know what she stands for.

Marilyn Iafrate has no regard for the environment, although she pretends to care. She just supported a motion to destroy provincially significant wetlands in her own ward!





Does she even know what she stands for?


Information from the advertiser

This information was submitted by the advertiser.


Submitted Mar 23, 2022

 Disclaimer
Vaughan Voices

 Agent name
Advertiser did not provide name

 Phone number
+16477993538

 Email
team@vaughanvoices.com

 Website
<https://vaughanvoices.com/>

 Address
9926 KEELE ST W, Maple, Ontario L6A1A0, CA

Visit the [Help Center](#) to learn about what we require from advertisers to run ads about social issues, elections or politics. [Learn more](#)



Canada Proud ✓

October 7, 2019 · 🌐 · 🌐



That's a knockout punch 🥊.

Authorized by Canada Proud, 647-799-3538, CanadaProud.org

ANDREW SCHEER KNOCKS OUT

TURN YOUR VOLUME ON

See more in Video



Watch this video
Canada Proud

19

JUSTIN TRUDEAU FOR CORRUPTION

Share Watch again

[Log into Facebook](#)