

Voters should consider lawsuits in upcoming election, says reader

(Re: Lawsuits have cost Aurora nearly \$1 million, September 11, 2014)

Without the local investigative journalism provided by The Auroran I hate to think what some people could base their votes on. With regards to the above mentioned news story, I would like to point out that the itemised list of the legal costs did not specifically mention the approximately \$55,000 paid by the town to the former Mayor for her private legal bills stemming from the defamation case that was initially launched with the use of Town funds granted through a Council motion supported by Councillors John Gallo and Wendy Gaertner.

This is the same case that was found by the courts to be ?a strategic lawsuit against public participation? (i.e. a SLAPP litigation), which I think should be at least as much of a concern as the cost of the case to all parties concerned.

As I have said before, the Charter of Rights does not allow governments to sue for defamation given the fundamental importance of political free speech and Council's Code of Conduct states that public office is not to be used for personal gain. In light of both the Charter and the Code, I have to ask (once again) why Councillors Gallo and Gaertner allowed an elected official to use public funds for a private defamation lawsuit targeted at residents speaking about political matters of public importance?

I think this is a reasonable question in light of what their actions have cost me, my family, my fellow defendants and the town. Here is the third or fourth strike (depending on how you count it); regardless of the legal outcome of the Councillor Buck's lawsuit that is currently before the courts, I think that Councillor Gallo's and Councillor Gaertner's willingness to spend the Town's money in order to fight political battles targeted at a fellow Councillor via a newspaper ad (or ads), is not what I feel is in the best interest of the greater public good and in my opinion it hardly reflects a willingness to consider the opinions of fellow councillors in good faith.

Going forward, let's not attack residents and duly elected councillors with the use of public money for the mere offence of people sharing their political opinions, no matter how strongly anyone on council may disagree.

I can only hope that when voters hear comments from candidates in the upcoming election like: ?I'm a team player, I value the input of others, I will protect your tax dollars, I'm a visionary, I have experience? or ?I'm a voice of the people?, that they don't forget that previous actions can and do speak louder than political promises.

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(Editor's Note: Mr. Johnson was a defendant in the lawsuit referred to in the second paragraph of this letter.)