

EPC to consider motion to publicly release investigation into city inspectors

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A city probe of allegations that some municipal staff wasted hours of their work days on personal chores and extended breaks should produce a public report, a new motion argues.

The motion, which is slated for a vote at next Tuesday's executive policy committee meeting, calls for a council commitment to publicly release the investigation within 30 days of its completion.

Coun. Janice Lukes (Waverley West) said she raised the motion in an attempt to ensure the public and all council members find out whether or not allegations against some property and development inspectors are accurate.

"We need to make as much information as possible open to the public ... People want accountability and they want to see their tax dollars at work," said Lukes.

A group of taxpayers recently sent media a private surveillance report on 17 city inspectors, which included photos. Wilson Investigations said its staff watched the workers over 28 weekdays between January and March. The report claims the staff worked an average of three hours per day, with just one worker completing full shifts.

The city is now investigating the allegations.

Lukes said labour protections and laws may keep confidential some details of the findings, but she hopes the public can be told the number and nature of penalties, if any, that will be applied to staff after the investigation.

"I'd like to have revealed as much as is legally possible," said Lukes.

The motion would require full council approval.

Mayor Brian Bowman was out of town at a Dreams Take Flight event to support special needs children on Wednesday and couldn't be reached for comment. In an email, mayor's office spokesperson Jeremy Davis said the mayor plans to support the motion at EPC.

On Tuesday, the mayor said he believes penalties will be an important component of the city's response, should the allegations prove true.

"I want to see appropriate disciplinary measures taken, including, if it's appropriate, termination of employment. I don't think employees who are engaging in the kinds of activity that's alleged, if true, should be working for the City of Winnipeg," said Bowman.

Coun. Brian Mayes (St. Vital), chair of council's property and development committee and a member of EPC, said he also plans to vote in favour of the public reporting motion.

The city's corporate communications department said the public service hopes to wrap up the investigation "within the coming weeks."

In an email, a city spokesperson said the group that hired the investigators has not yet shared its surveillance report with the city.

"We continue to encourage the owners of the information to release the information to the City of Winnipeg to assist in the investigation," wrote spokesperson Kalen Qually.

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