

Re: Seguin Township Formal Code Complaints 260226 and 200326

I. SUMMARY

This report sets out the findings of my investigation under the Code of Conduct, Township of Seguin (the “Code”) relating to the conduct of Councillor Ted Collins (the “Respondent”) in connection with two formal complaints received by this Office. Due to the overlapping nature of Complaint 1 and Complaint 2 (together, the “Complaints”), I determined that I would consolidate the matters into a single investigation and report. This Report sets out my findings with respect to the Complaints.

The first complaint (Complaint 1) alleged that during a November 13, 2025 meeting of the District Social Services Administration Board (“DSSAB”), the Respondent engaged in disrespectful, bullying, and intimidating conduct toward a named Township of Seguin Councillor (Councillor 1). In addition, Complaint 1 alleged that on January 14, 2026 at the Log Cabin Restaurant, the Respondent approached Councillor 1, “said hello then promptly slapped me on the backside.”

The second complaint (Complaint 2) alleged that on January 14, 2026, following the Township dinner at the Log Cabin Restaurant, the Respondent verbally berated a second named Township of Seguin Councillor (Councillor 2) in a loud, profane, and aggressive manner.

I find on a balance of probabilities that the Respondent contravened sections 7.1 and 7.2 of the Code in respect of the allegations in both Complaints. In this Report, I discuss my jurisdiction, investigative process, my findings on the allegations in the complaints, my reasons for those findings, and my recommendations with respect to the appropriate sanction.

II. THE INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER’S MANDATE, JURISDICTION, AND APPLICABLE CODE RULES

Under section 223.3 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, the Integrity Commissioner is responsible for applying the Township’s Code, conducting inquiries into alleged breaches of the Code, and reporting findings and recommendations to Council.

In this matter, the applicable provisions of the Code are sections 7.1 and 7.2, which prohibit bullying, intimidation, and the use of indecent, abusive, or insulting words or tone toward other Members, staff, or the public. Those provisions state:

7.1 Every Member has the duty and responsibility to treat members of the public, one another and staff appropriately and without abuse, bullying or intimidation, and to ensure that the municipal work environment is free from discrimination and harassment. The Member shall be familiar with, and comply with, the Municipality’s Workplace Anti-Violence, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy.

7.2 A Member shall not use indecent, abusive or insulting words, tone or expressions toward any other Member, any municipal staff or any member of the public.

The standard of proof is the balance of probabilities.

III. THE COMPLAINT PROCESS

Following a preliminary classification, I determined that both Complaints raised allegations that were within the jurisdiction of the Code and that neither Complaint was frivolous, vexatious, nor made in bad faith.

I further determined that the allegations overlapped, and I made the decision to consolidate the Complaints into a single investigation and report.

The Respondent was provided with Notice of each Complaint and was provided an opportunity to submit a written reply. The Respondent provided a written response to both Complaints.

The full details of the allegations to the Complaint were provided to the Respondent. In this report, however, I have exercised my discretion to disclose only those particulars that I have determined are necessary for the purposes of the Report.

In doing so, I have considered the need for Township Council and the public to understand the factual basis for my findings and my recommendations. I note that the Witnesses confirmed that they understand and accept that if I found a breach, I would make a public report and while I would endeavour to hold their identities confidential under the secrecy provisions of the *Municipal Act*, there may be information in the report that may suggest their identities. I have also considered the countervailing privacy interest of the Witnesses, particularly because the allegations raised in the Complaint involve events that are highly personal. As well, I have recognized the broader interest in publicly disclosing such personal information in reports involving intimidation only to the extent that it is necessary to do so, so as not to deter victims of such conduct from coming forward with their complaints.

As Integrity Commissioner, I am bound by the confidentiality provisions of the *Municipal Act* and in particular subsection 223.5(1):

The Commissioner and every person acting under the instructions of the Commissioner shall preserve secrecy with respect to all matters that come to his or her knowledge in the course of his or her duties under this part”

This duty to preserve secrecy and confidentiality is subject to certain statutory exceptions. Notably, subsection 223.6(2) of the Act provides that “the Commissioner *may disclose* in the report such matters as in the Commissioner’s opinion are necessary for the purposes of the report” [emphasis added]. As Integrity Commissioner, the Act affords me the discretion to decide how much detail to report to Council and the appropriate amount of reported detail will require a context-specific weighing of several factors.

Throughout the investigation, I continued to consider whether the complaints were made in bad faith as alleged by the Respondent. Having reviewed the testimony and the evidence, I accept the Complainant's stated explanation for making Complaint 1 and find it believable. I find no credible basis on which to find that Complainant 1 had a motive to lie. I reject the suggestion by the Respondent that the Complainant came forward for any other reason.

I provided the Respondent was a draft report. The Respondent provided comments objecting to several issues, including: (i) not providing witness statements to him¹, (ii) consideration of historical prejudicial allegations that did not form part of the Complaint², (iii) reliance on facts not in evidence to make determinations of credibility and findings, and (iv) findings outside of the expertise of the Integrity Commissioner.³

IV. OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

Complaint 1 related to the Respondent's conduct during a District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board ("DSSAB") meeting held by Zoom on November 13, 2025. The complainant provided a copy of an Incident Report prepared by staff of the DSSAB. The report indicates that the Respondent is interrupted speakers, directed dismissive and inappropriate comments toward Councillor 1, and acted contrary to Board governance expectations.

With respect to the January 14, 2026 Township hosted dinner, Complaint 1 stated that the Respondent "slapped [Councillor 1] on the backside".

Complaint 2 alleged that later that evening, the Respondent became agitated, shouted profanities, repeatedly accused him of being 'the trigger man' for the Mayor, followed him into the parking lot, and shook his fist at Councillor 2's vehicle window.

V. RESPONDENT'S RESPONSE

In his reply, the Respondent accepted that aspects of his conduct on November 13, 2025 were contrary to DSSAB Board protocol and out of order but did not agree that the conduct was abusive.

¹ This issue has been repeatedly considered by the Divisional Court. There is no obligation for an Integrity Commissioner to provide witness statements to the Respondent (see, for example, *Di Biase v. City of Vaughan*, 2016 ONSC 5620).

² To address the concern, I have removed references to any historical conduct which was allegedly prejudicial.

³ The Respondent also suggested that due to these issues, the report demonstrates bias. To the extent that this is a challenge to my impartiality or a request for recusal, I find that I am not biased. The test for bias in relation to Integrity Commissioners is the test applicable to investigators (i.e., the closed mind test – see *Chiarelli v. City of Ottawa*, 2021 ONSC 8256). Nothing that the Respondent states demonstrates that I have or had a closed mind in conducting the investigation and analyzing the evidence. Accordingly, I will not recuse myself from this matter.

In relation to the January 14, 2026 dinner, the Respondent denied having “slapped” Councillor 1 “on the backside”. The Respondent denied that he engaged in an aggressive verbal confrontation with Councillor 2.

In his written reply, the Respondent stated in part:

With respect to Complaint 1

Subsequent to the [DSSAB] meeting I was in fact reminded by the Board Chair that my actions were contrary to Board protocols and as such it is apparent that my statements while not abusive and in response to statements made by the Complainant were out of order and inappropriate and I would offer my apologies for the same.

I did not strike [Councillor 1] on the backside at the Log Cabin meeting rather I simply tapped her on the shoulder to assist her with putting on her coat. As a note I would state that I am surprised by this complaint and its timing insofar as after the now alleged incident I have associated with the Complainant on numerous occasions being;

- i) November 17th 2025 Counsel [sic] Meeting
- ii) December 3rd 2025 Turkey Dinner where I assisted the Complainant⁴ as a volunteer
- iii) December 11 DSSAB meeting
- iv) December 14th Christmas gathering where I discussed the upcoming trip my wife and I were taking to Portugal with [Councillor 1 and their spouse]
- v) general communications as confirmed by the email dated December 23rd 2025
- vi) January 8th 2025 [sic] DSSAB meeting
- vii) January 12th 2025 [sic] Counsel [sic] Meeting

During all these associations and meetings, all interactions with the Complainant were professional and friendly with no animosity displayed either by the Complainant or myself.

With respect to Complaint 2

Contrary to the [Complaint of Complainant 2], my discussions throughout the evening in question were friendly, civil and professional and I at no time did a heated, abusive or belligerent confrontation with [Councillor 2] occur.

I must note at this point that the nature of the complaints made by the [Councillor 2] cause me some overall concern as to their veracity in that the first complaint being the alleged striking on the backside of a party that did not raise the issue in a complaint is puzzling and the second being the complaint alleging a post meeting confrontation which did not occur but rather consisted of a normal conversations also raises general concerns as to motive.

Relevant Context

⁴ The identities of the Complainants were not disclosed to the Respondent.

That I have served the community on various Boards and on Counsel [sic] for many years and as indicated apologize for my breach of protocols at the November meeting, that while inappropriate were simply and expression of a disagreement mutually expressed by myself and the Complainant. I am at a loss as to the overall agenda behind these complaints as after the November 2024 [sic] incident and after the alleged incident at the Log Cabin up to my departure to Portugal with my wife, my interactions with the Complainants been friendly and professional.

It causes further concern that the complaints herein were not made until after my departure with no discussion or indication of the potential of same or concerns by the Complainants prior to my departure.

Acknowledgment of Policy

As indicated above I acknowledge that I breached Meeting protocols at the November 2024 [sic] Board Meeting and apologize for same and have since ensured that all protocols have been respected.

In addition, the Respondent provided with his written reply, a Word document outlining the Findings of the DSSAB Chair regarding the Respondent's breach of protocol, and a copy of an email with the subject line - Affordable travel options for everyone- in which the Respondent advises Councillor 1 that:

Hi [Councillor 1] and Merry Christmaslet [Councillor 1's spouse] know to go through this company to rent a car at Faro Airport to get the best prices. I have for the last 4 years.

And Councillor 1 replied:

Thank you Ted, he will appreciate the information.
Merry Christmas to you and your family.

VI. CREDIBILITY

All findings of fact made in this report are based on the standard of a balance of probabilities. This standard of proof applies to civil cases and to Integrity Commissioners in the Province of Ontario.

The balance of probabilities standard of proof requires me to “scrutinize the relevant evidence with care to determine whether it is more likely than not that an alleged event occurred.” Any findings of fact must be based on evidence that is clear, convincing and cogent.⁵

⁵ *F.H. v. McDougall*, 2008 SCC 53, at paras. 46 and 49.

Where witnesses give conflicting evidence, believing the testimony of one witness and not the other is a matter of judgment.⁶ At all times, I must decide whether a fact occurred on a balance of probabilities.⁷

In *FH v McDougall*, the Supreme Court of Canada explained:

As ... in the context of the criminal standard of proof, where proof is on a balance of probabilities there is likewise no rule as to when inconsistencies in the evidence of a plaintiff will cause a trial judge to conclude that the plaintiff's evidence is not credible or reliable. The trial judge should not consider the plaintiff's evidence in isolation, but must look at the totality of the evidence to assess the impact of the inconsistencies in that evidence on questions of credibility and reliability pertaining to the core issue in the case.

....

...in civil cases in which there is conflicting testimony, the judge is deciding whether a fact occurred on a balance of probabilities. In such cases, provided the judge has not ignored evidence, finding the evidence of one party credible may well be conclusive of the issue because that evidence is inconsistent with that of the other party. In such cases, believing one party will mean explicitly or implicitly that the other party was not believed on the important issue in the case. That may be especially true where a plaintiff makes allegations that are altogether denied by the defendant.⁸

Ultimately, my role as Integrity Commissioner is to make factual findings after an investigation, apply the relevant sections of the Code, and report whether, in my view, a breach has occurred.

VII. WITNESS EVIDENCE

In addition to Councillor 1, Councillor 2 and the Respondent, I received witness statements from three witnesses.

The November 13, 2025 Meeting

The DSSAB Incident Report was created and identifies specific conduct of the Respondent, records direct quotations, and documents remedial action taken by the Chair. The DSSAB Incident Report set out that:

- The Chair issued a formal reminder to the Respondent of the behavioural and governance expectations outlined in the Board Manual.
- The Chair advised that any future incidents of this nature will be formally documented and reported to Seguin Township.
- A friendly reminder of the Board's Governance Manual and its key expectations was emailed to all Board members.
- Administration is working with the Board Chair to implement a mute mechanism for virtual meetings to ensure order can be maintained when a member is out of order.

⁶ *F.H. v. McDougall*, 2008 SCC 53, at para. 76.

⁷ *F.H. v. McDougall*, 2008 SCC 53, at para. 86.

⁸ 2008 SCC 53 (CanLII), [2008] 3 SCR 41, at paragraphs 58 & 86

- A visual signal has been established that the Chair may use to alert the Administration Officer when a mute should be applied, if required.

Witness 1 was present at the DSSAB meeting and their recollection was consistent with the Incident Report and Councillor 1's description of the incident.

The Respondent accepts the description of his conduct but contests whether it amounts to "abusive" under the Code. Accordingly, I find that the conduct described in Complaint 1 and in the Incident Report are accurate and reflect what happened at the meeting.

The Township Dinner

Councillor 1 stated that:

I arrived and I was at the entrance of the Log Cabin Restaurant when the Respondent approached me and said hello and then promptly slapped me on the backside. I didn't want to make a scene as the Chief and other Councillors were there, it was an official function. I purposely sat between the Chief and another Councillor so I didn't have to sit near [the Respondent].

I interviewed Councillor 1 and the Respondent. There is no dispute that the Respondent touched Councillor 1. Two witnesses saw the Respondent touch Councillor 1 but could not tell from their positions where he touched her.

The Respondent denies that he touched Councillor 1 on the backside. Rather, he states that he "simply tapped her on the shoulder to assist her with putting on her coat." The Respondent's explanation made little sense. The incident occurred shortly after Councillor 1 arrived at the restaurant, not as she was leaving. Councillor 1 was not putting her coat on at the time. In addition, Councillor 1 had already left her coat in the coat room when the Respondent touch her, so she was neither taking off her coat nor putting it on. I do not accept the Respondent's evidence.

I was called on to determine whether the Respondent slapped Councillor 1's backside. I received no evidence of prior inconsistent statements. Councillor 1 identified the particulars of where the incident occurred, when it occurred, and what steps she took to remove herself from the situation. Councillor 1 gave logical and plausible evidence and had no known motive to fabricate her evidence. She was sincere in her testimony and clearly explained the impact that her interaction with the Respondent had on her and how she subjectively perceived the Respondent's conduct. I found that Councillor 1 was credible and reliable.

Much of the Respondent's evidence focused on the behaviour of Councillor 1. I find that none of this information makes it more or less likely that the Respondent engaged in the alleged behaviour. The Respondent seemed to believe that his "friendly" relationship with Councillor 1 made the unwelcome physical contact permissible. I disagree.

The Respondent and Councillor 1 had inconsistent accounts of the incident and whether the Respondent's touching Councillor 1 was "sexual" or simply "friendly". Based on an interpretation of the Township Harassment Policy, the intent of the person engaging in the alleged harassment is not relevant to a finding that the conduct was sexual harassment. In these cases, it is not uncommon for victims of the behaviour alleged of the Respondent to tolerate unwanted behaviour longer than it may seem reasonable after the fact. The Ontario Human Rights Commission notes that a person does not have to object to the behaviour at the time it happens for there to be a violation, or for the person to claim a violation of their rights under the Human Rights Code. In a leading case, the Supreme Court emphasized that the intention of the harasser is not the focus of the assessment of whether sexual harassment occurred. Physical acts such as hugging, touching, or other gestures may constitute sexual harassment if they are unwanted and create a hostile or offensive work environment. The harasser's belief that the conduct was innocent or friendly does not absolve them if the conduct was unwelcome and had a negative impact on the victim.⁹

The Respondent submits that the Complainant's continued friendly interactions, including social communications and shared travel, undermine the credibility or seriousness of the allegations. I do not accept that such evidence is determinative. Human responses to alleged harassment are nuanced and context-dependent. Individuals may continue professional or social interactions for a variety of reasons, including workplace dynamics, normalization of conduct, fear of conflict, reputational concerns, or attempts to preserve civility. The existence of continued contact does not, in and of itself, negate the possibility that unwelcome conduct occurred. The allegations must therefore be assessed on the totality of the evidence rather than on assumptions regarding how a complainant is expected to behave following alleged misconduct.

I prefer the evidence of Councillor 1 to that of the Respondent. The Respondent may have believed that they had the type of relationship in which he could touch Councillor 1 without offending her. He was, at best, mistaken. I find, on a balance of probabilities, the Respondent touched Councillor 1 as Councillor 1 described and that it was physical, uninvited, and unwelcome.

Incident with Councillor 2

Councillor 2 explained that after dinner, he went to the coat room to grab his coat. The Respondent asked Councillor 2 to stay behind as he wanted to discuss something with Councillor 2.

While they were in the lobby the Mayor was leaving, and the Respondent told her he wanted to "have a drink" with Councillor 2 before leaving. The Respondent became agitated when Councillor 2 told him he was not interested in having a drink with the Respondent. By this time the Mayor had left.

⁹ *Janzen v. Platy Enterprises Ltd.*, 1989 CarswellMan 158; [1989] 1 S.C.R.1252

The Respondent started to verbally berate Councillor 2 in a very loud tone and voice, for being the “trigger man” for the Mayor at the previous council meeting on an item he wished Council to support. The Respondent used this phrase repeatedly over the conversation. The Respondent refused to sit down and when Councillor 2 told him he needed to clean up his language and lower his voice, the Respondent continued shouting at Councillor 2 and swearing profusely generally with a word that started with the letter “f”. The Respondent did calm down for a short period but then started to elevate his voice and using profane language again, which attracted the owner or manager of the restaurant. There were numerous tables of diners still eating who could hear the incident. Councillor 2 told the Respondent that he was leaving. The Respondent followed Councillor 2 out to the parking lot where he continued his verbal attack. Councillor 2 again told him to calm down. Councillor 2 got in his vehicle to leave, and the Respondent went over to the side window shaking his fist and wanting Councillor 2 to roll down the window. When it was obvious that Councillor 2 intended to leave, the Respondent went to his own vehicle and Councillor 2 drove away.

The Respondent denies doing so. The Respondent agreed that he spoke to Councillor 2 after the dinner ended. He denies that he raised his voice or that he shouted profanities. The Respondent did not recall following Councillor 2 to his car.

Witness 2 was a staff person at Log Cabin Restaurant. They had limited independent recollection of the January 14, 2026 dinner due to the passage of time. However, Witness 2 recalled that the primary server reported discomfort serving the Respondent additional wine and ultimately refused further service. Witness 2 recalled that staff had noted raised voices, though no staff member recalled the full substance of the interaction. While imprecise, this evidence is consistent with the allegation that the Respondent’s conduct became sufficiently loud and disruptive to be noticeable within the restaurant environment.

Witness 3 did not witness the parking lot interaction nor any interaction after dinner. However, Witness 3 stated that the Respondent had repeatedly indicated throughout the evening that he wanted to have a private discussion with Councillor 2 concerning a contentious Council agenda matter. Witness 3 stated that the Respondent appeared visibly agitated at the dinner, and that they attempted several times to defuse the issue by advising that the Respondent that the matter had already been resolved. I find Witness 3’s evidence significant as it independently corroborates that the Respondent was already visibly agitated during dinner and intended to engage Councillor 2 later that evening.

I found Councillor 2’s account to be detailed and internally consistent. By contrast, the Respondent’s response was imprecise and did not directly address key particulars of the Complaint.

I accept and find credible Councillor 2’s evidence regarding the impact that the interaction with the Respondent had on them and how they subjectively perceived the Respondent’s conduct.

While neither Witness 2 nor Witness 3 saw the interaction between Councillor 2 and the Respondent, both provided evidence that corroborated important details of Councillor 2's testimony including (i) the Respondent intended to confront Councillor 2 about a contentious issue and (ii) there were raised voices noticed by staff in the restaurant consistent with Councillor 2's description of the incident.

I conclude on a balance of probabilities that on January 14, 2026, the Respondent shouted at Councillor 2, followed him into the parking lot, and continued his aggressive conduct at Councillor 2's vehicle window.

VIII. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

I find that the Respondent contravened sections 7.1 and 7.2 of the Code during the November 13, 2025 DSSAB meeting.

Telling another elected official that she "does not know what she is talking about" and to "shut up" is plainly disrespectful and demeaning. It is the use of insulting words and tone prohibited by section 7.2 of the Code. I find that this conduct also violated section 7.1 as it was intimidating and inappropriate conduct in respect of another councillor. While there was no complaint about further verbal misconduct, a few months later, the Respondent slapped Councillor 1 on the backside. This is also disrespectful and was unwelcome physical conduct contrary to section 7.1 of the Code. Additionally, repeated verbal and physical misconduct directed at the same individual further constitutes bullying and harassment under section 7.1.

During the course of this investigation, I received additional background information concerning alleged prior conduct of the Respondent. I have not relied on that information in making my findings, as it was not put to the Respondent for response. My findings are based solely on the evidence concerning the events that form the subject matter of this Complaint, including the evidence of Councillor 1, the Respondent's response, and the circumstances therein.

As set out above, I accept the account of Councillor 1. I find Councillor 1's account to be consistent, responsive to the specific events under review, and consistent with the circumstances of the encounter. I also find that the Respondent's account did not adequately address or explain the material aspects of the Complaint relating to the incident with Councillor 1 at the restaurant. On a balance of probabilities, I accept Councillor 1's account with respect to the events that form the basis of that part of Complaint 1.

I also find that the Respondent contravened sections 7.1 and 7.2 of the Code on January 14, 2026 in relation to his interaction with Councillor 2. Even accepting that the exchange began as a disagreement over political or governance matters, the Respondent's conduct escalated into a sustained personal confrontation marked by shouting and physically intimidating behaviour. I find on a balance of probabilities that the Respondent's conduct, viewed in its totality, amounts to conduct that a reasonable person would find intimidating. Councillor 2 confirmed that he did, in fact, find the conduct intimidating. There is no suggestion here that the Respondent acted

accidentally or unintentionally. This incident disclosed an escalating hostility directed toward Councillor 2 during a disagreement.

I find, on a balance of probabilities, that the Respondent contravened sections 7.1 and 7.2 of the Code of with respect to the Complaints.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to section 223.4.1 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, I recommend that Council:

1. Issue a Formal Reprimand to Councillor Collins;
2. Suspend the remuneration of Councillor Collins for a period of 15 days;
3. Direct Councillor Collins to **complete** training respecting respectful communications and treating Council Members (and all others) without bullying or intimidation and to ensure that the municipal work environment is free from intimidation and harassment within six (6) weeks of the decision of Council;
- That the training be delivered by a profession as determined by the Municipality and at the cost of the Respondent.

In reaching these recommendations, I have considered many factors including: (i) the Respondent has no previous Code findings against him and (ii) with respect to the verbal misconduct against Councillor 1, the Respondent has concurred with the Incident Report and accepted that his behaviour was not appropriate.

With the above recommendations, I recognize the serious nature of non-consensual touching and intimidation. However, given the relationship between the parties, which was acknowledged by Councillor 1 and the Respondent, I do not believe that there was any intended harm, although he should have considered that his conduct was unwanted and harmful.

These measures are proportionate to the misconduct and reinforce the importance of maintaining respectful and accurate public discourse and behaviour in municipal governance.

Respectfully submitted,



Suzanne Craig

Integrity Commissioner