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Jul 17 · 47 tweets · [adamadonaldson/status/1680998436659773440](https://twitter.com/adamadonaldson/status/1680998436659773440)

Coming up at 2 pm, live coverage of the Municipal Election Compliance Audit Committee. At issue, the financial statements of Ward 1 candidate Thai Mac. Stand by.



Members of this very rare committee include some well known names. Carl Zehr, Robert Williams, Kristine Fletcher, Rosita Tse, and Tingting Su. City Clerk Stephen O'Brien is also here.

O'Brien calls the meeting to order. First thing on the agenda is electing a chair and vice-chair.

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof? None.

Member Fletcher nominates Member Williams to be chair, and Member Zehr seconds. He's unanimously approved.

Zehr is nominated as vice and that's approved.

Chair Williams takes the helm and begins with some background: The role of this committee is not to reach a decision, but to recommend if an audit is need from an external party. They can however turn down the application.

Williams says that both Amanda Turner, the applicant, and Mac have 10 minutes to speak. Williams calls on Turner to address the committee.

Turner says she has no new information to bring forward at the time, but the grounds in her submission she thinks warrant further investigation. She says that even a small financial investment can have a big impact in a small city like Guelph.

She thanks Mac for his written response, which addressed her concerns about his website. Her main beef now is about advertising, particularly ads in the Caught in Guelph Facebook group that Mac operates.

#### 1.2 Facebook Posts Soliciting Campaign Donations

Throughout his campaign, the candidate posted to a Facebook page called "Thai Mac for Ward One." The earliest post to this page is a cover photo uploaded on May 31, 2022. This page has been renamed to "Ward 1 Guelph" since the election. However, we know from Facebook's Page Transparency tab that "Ward 1 Guelph" and "Thai Mac for Ward 1" are the same page, and posts from the candidate's campaign remain visible by scrolling down the page. A screenshot of the Page Transparency tab of the Ward 1 Guelph page obtained on June 23, 2023 is attached as Addendum B.

At least twice during the campaign (August 1, 2022 and August 29, 2022) the candidate advertised the "Donate to Thai Mac's Ward 1 Councillor Campaign" on his campaign Facebook page and encouraged readers to donate. As of this writing, the relevant posts discussed here are available at the URLs <https://www.facebook.com/Ward1Guelph/posts/pfbid021bnuenHg6aVhVekYetqn129HepeWteZVwiQ2dzjKvYrjF6abWjEugn3aJ8DGqZal> and <https://www.facebook.com/Ward1Guelph/posts/pfbid0iVcpsYXBrgNvcxKcu1XxCorPA84hhfxTKLmBzD3FB0yXHmLepKLc9qqcEXAV2daSl> Screenshots of these posts obtained on June 23, 2023 are attached as Addendum C.

Taking into account the fact that the candidate's website prominently featured a button with the text "DONATE TO THE CAMPAIGN" and a page titled "Donate to Thai Mac's Ward 1 Councillor Campaign" with instructions on how to make a donation, and that the candidate posted links to this web page while encouraging people to donate on at least two occasions, it is not plausible that the candidate received no campaign contributions from individuals other than the candidate and spouse. Therefore, the candidate likely contravened the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* in failing to report campaign contributions as required under s. 88.25 (1).

Turner notes that CiG existed before the election, and had been used as a community hub, and as an advertising platform. Mac sells ads on the page, and the adjoining CiG webpage.

She points to a comment Mac sent to another candidate about ads for other candidates and that opportunities would be coming soon. They never did. Instead, Mac's ads remained.

Turner notes that the regulations around ads on social media are still kind of hazy, so that makes transparency here even more important.

Zehr asks if Turner has any information about other donations received by Mac. Turner says that she has no information beyond the financial disclosures.

Zehr asks if the concern is the lack of donations noted. Turner says that it was clear that donations were solicited, and that Mac had a lot of signs and a lot of online engagement. Turner said it surprised her that there were no contributions given Mac's prominence.

Williams turns things over to Mac for his 10. Mac is appearing virtually btw.

Mac says that he went into the campaign with an eye on covering election costs without donations, fiscal conservatism was one of his ideals. He says that he's not sure why he didn't get any donations, maybe people thought he didn't need any.

Mac says he was not the only one that didn't include his campaign expenses costs for his website. On FB ads, he says there was agreement with the clerks that this was a grey area, and there was no defined category for the CiG page to make it a third party advertiser.

Mac explained as admin of CiG that he was running for office, but he didn't pressure anyone to vote for him especially and he feels that this not a conflict. He says that he feels the proceeding is unjust and ask for a dismissal.

Member Su asks if Mac has a detailed break down o this campaign expenses. Mac points to page 8 of his submission: <https://pub-guelph.escibemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=38670>

Zehr asks Mac why he solicited donations if we has going to cover all the costs. Mac said that I he received any additional funding, he would have put that to use, but we was prepared to go it alone.

Zehr asks if he got any queries. Mac says he got zero inquires from any of his channels.

Zehrs asks if he returned any donations. Mac says you can't give back what you didn't receive. He also says that all he negative press he got probably stopped people from wanting to donate.

Zehr asks about the other candidate seeking ads on CiG. Mac name drops "Ward 2 resident" Erin Caton (pronouncing it as "Cat-on") and he said he gave her a "democratic" response about potential opportunities later on. He calls it a "polite way" of turning her down.

Williams asks about when Mac paused his campaign. Mac says Turner was concerned about whether he returned any donations during the pause, but he never got anyway. He never communicated with clerks about withdrawal b/c it was after deadline.

Recap:



#### **Mac's Back – For Real – With Lots of Questions**

After flicking his campaign website off and on earlier this week, it seems that Ward 1 council candidate Thai Mac is now all the way back in just two weeks after saying that he was unofficially pul...

<https://guelphpolitico.ca/2022/09/23/mac-back-for-real-with-lots-of-questions/>

Zehr asks about repeated spending of \$113. Mac says that's the threshold for the cost of his Facebook ad. The ad stays up till it gets a certain number of impressions.

Zehr asks about when Mac withdrawal and when he got back in. Mac says it was Sept 7 and Sept 13. "Barley a week." He also says his family received a lot of harassment and threats, which is why he paused.

Su asks about ad expenses between May 2 and June 15, no FB ads? Mac says yes, as he got closer to Election Day it's when he started ramping up his advertising campaign.

No further questions for Mac.

Williams asks Turner for follow-up comments.

Turner says that the negative press Mac mentioned began in Sept, and Mac entered the race in May, which means most of the election no one was avoiding donations due to bad press.

Mac asks if Turner had any assistance creating this application. Williams says he doesn't think that's relevant. Mac wonders if this was a "team effort" in the interest of being vindictive. Williams says that's outside the scope of the committee.

Williams asks the clerk about "no donations". Is it a typical pattern in Guelph that a candidate has no funding except from the candidate and their family.

O'Brien says the Act sees the clerks as a conduit for receiving information as well as validate and verify. They validate the spending limit, which is in the act. The candidate declares that their statements, to their knowledge, are true and correct.

Is it common? O'Brien says that Guelph is growing community so they do see campaigns that are self-funded and campaigns that are funded by a "wide-range" of contributors. Mac adds that his file has a list of 14 candidate who were also self-funded.

Now what? O'Brien says that committee can now deliberate. That can be public, or in closed.

Williams asks for preliminary comments.

Member Tse says that she would like to move into a closed meeting, and Williams says that he's inclined to agree. These are never straightforward & given that this is a new process in ON, they need to make sure they're acting appropriately

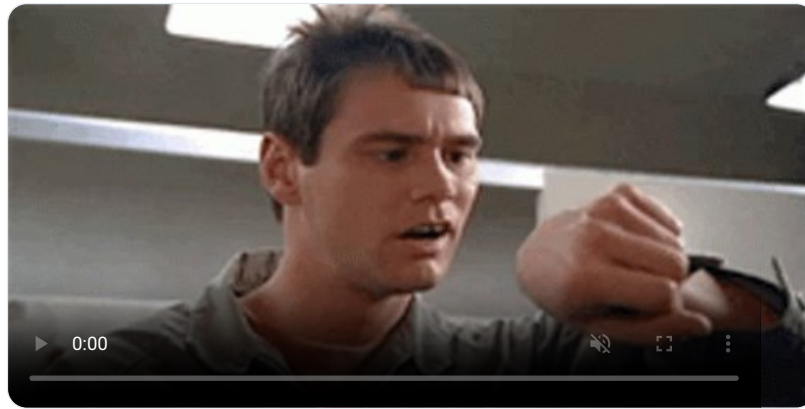
O'Brien adds that there will need to be a motion to move in-camera under section (g) of the Municipal Act.

Zehr wants to emphasise that the committee is compelled to give a written report and it has to be in a form that's acceptable to legislation.

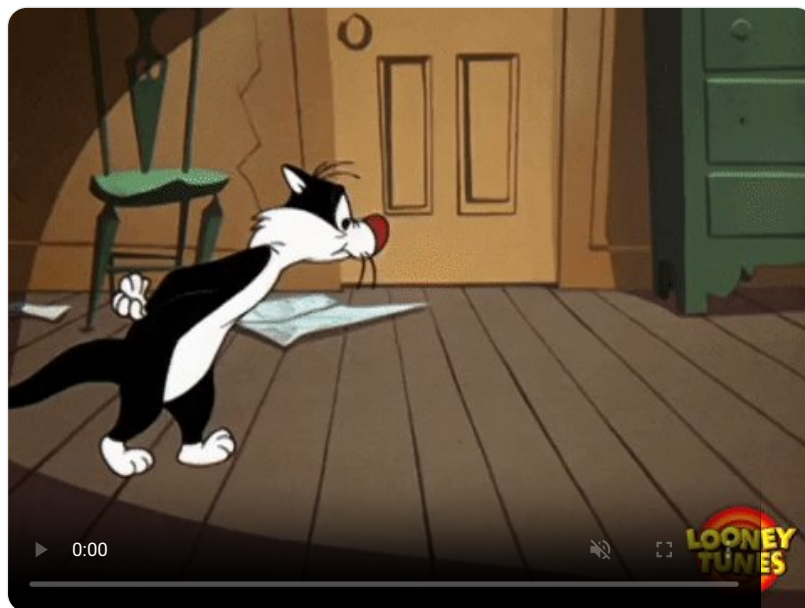
Fletcher/Tse move to go into closed session and it passes unanimously.



The committee is still meeting in closed. It's been nearly 30 minutes.



Did you miss the decision? Nope. We're still waiting for the committee's closed session to end.



Spoke too soon! Committee has stated to emerge back into the council chamber. Stand by for a decision.

Williams calls the meeting to order again.

The decision: Request for compliance audit review of Mac's statement is reject. Committee has not been presented with reasonably ground to request audit.



Motion passed unanimously.

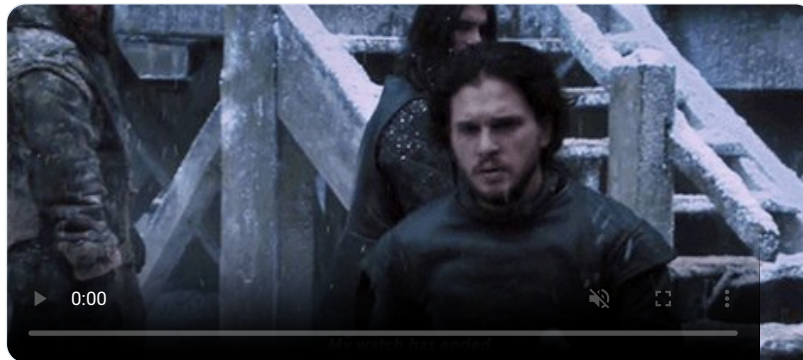
**Application requesting a compliance audit  
under Section 88.33 of the  
*Municipal Elections Act***



That the request for a Compliance Audit review of Thai Mac's 2022 Election Financial Statement, be rejected.

The written decision with comments from committee will be released with the minutes of this meeting on July 25, 2023.

This meeting is adjourned!



@threadreaderapp unroll please!

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