

REGION SAYS IT HAS UPDATED EMPLOYEE, VENDOR CODES OF CONDUCT

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nearly \$500,000 in total of Sirron invoices to the Receiver General of Canada because the Canada Revenue Agency had obtained a garnishment order against the company.

The report found evidence Norris provided kickbacks to Ohashi that allegedly included cash payments of \$41,000 and \$11,200 (U.S.), as well as travel, electronics and tickets.

According to a text message exchange in April 2011, Norris allegedly hid part of one kickback payment in a washroom stall. "When u get here use washroom - \$\$ are under toilette paper roll on top of garbage can," Norris texted Ohashi.

On other occasions, according to the report, payments were allegedly mailed directly to Ohashi's home.

Included in the report

are several instances where Ohashi allegedly manipulated the tendering process to the advantage of a hand-picked company or helped alter the terms of a contract to provide benefits to a company.

For example, the report suggests Ohashi succeeded in having certain minimum requirements added to the tender for the provision of ozone equipment for the Burloak Water Purification Plant, which disqualified competitors to the company he wanted to obtain the contract.

The report shows the main company that ended up providing the ozone equipment and a second smaller company hired to service the equipment were both represented by the same person, a New Jersey man whose listed business address appears to be his home. The report also alleges there were instances

when the New Jersey man provided kickbacks to Ohashi.

Ironically, the report points out, there was no need for a service contract for the ozone equipment because the company that supplied it was supposed to maintain and repair its own equipment.

In text messages from 2012 with a Halton Region co-op student, Ohashi told her how the New Jersey company rep would fly to Buffalo and stay in Niagara Falls.

"I meet him Friday nights ... then ... And then golf Saturday mornings before he flies back," Ohashi texted. "Ah man, u got me confessing too many secrets... you have (too) much blackmail material now."

When the forensic accountants looked into details of the service invoices from the New Jersey companies for the ozone equip-

ment, they found evidence of suspicious activity.

Each water plant is required to maintain an operations log that notes the presence of external suppliers and contractors.

On 24 occasions between 2005 and 2010, Halton was billed a total of \$248,000 (U.S.) for service calls but there is no record that anyone from the New Jersey companies actually visited the water purification plants based on the logs.

Between 2005 and 2009, one of the New Jersey companies billed Halton \$120,000 (U.S.) for "remote monitoring" of the ozone systems, the report states, but years later the region learned from another high-ranking manager that the ozone systems weren't even set up to be monitored remotely.

The report also found 41 invoices totalling \$91,000 (U.S.) submitted to the region by one of the New Jer-

sey companies for travel expenses, but not one of the travel claims had any supporting documentation or receipts.

In at least one case, Ohashi is alleged to have engaged in what's known as "hard spec'ing" equipment for certain projects. Hard spec'ing refers to the practice of requiring general contractors on a project to use very specific pieces of equipment, which can then benefit the suppliers of that equipment.

In another case, a service contract was to be advertised for tender but Ohashi only contacted one company to bid on it. Then he sent an email to a Halton Region colleague alerting him that only one company ended up submitting a bid.

The investigative report found "numerous instances" where Ohashi would blind copy certain suppliers and contractors on email

messages he was exchanging with other region employees. This would give the suppliers and contractors knowledge of potentially sensitive information about projects and tenders.

In the wake of the Ohashi case, Halton Region states it has "conducted an extensive review of its processes and procedures, updated its employee and vendor codes of conduct and implemented mandatory training to identify and report fraudulent behaviour."

Two companies named in the report are still among the approved companies on Halton Region's most recently published list of pre-qualified suppliers and contractors.

The Spectator has elected to not name the companies because they have not been charged with any criminal offences.

Halton states it has reviewed its list of vendors "and has taken appropriate action and cannot comment any further due to ongoing legal proceedings."

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Notice of Revision - Municipal Cemeteries By-law



Town of Halton Hills has submitted a request for an amendment to Cemetery By-law 2012-0082 (Municipal Cemeteries By-law) to the Bereavement Authority of Ontario. The amendments comply with the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002 that came into effect in July 2012.

The major changes to the municipal by-law include:

- Incorporating Hillcrest Cemetery in Norval into the Town's Cemetery By-law
- Clarifying specifications for Monuments and Markers

In addition, the existing by-law has been updated to reflect current operational practices such as supplemental definitions, interest calculation, refunds within the contract cooling off period, and buying back unused lots from an Interment Rights Holder.

The Town's by-law amendments are not in effect until approved by the Registrar of the Bereavement Authority of Ontario.

Copies of the draft by-law are available at the Halton Hills Town Hall, Recreation and Parks Department (lower level) located at 1 Halton Hills Drive or by visiting the Town's website at haltonhills.ca/cemeteries until January 31, 2020.