

# Aurora City Council Issues Formal Apology to Bloggers

by [Christopher di Armani](#) Filed Under: Freedom of Speech, SLAPP Lawsuits

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In a truly astounding gesture, Aurora City Council [formally voted to apologize](#) for its role in the SLAPP lawsuit filed by former Aurora Mayor Phyllis Morris. I've written about this case many times before, so I was thrilled to see this announcement land in my mailbox this week.

- [A Resounding SLAPP in the face for Politicians Wishing to Stifle our Freedom of Speech](#)
- [Former Aurora, ON Mayor Phyllis Morris finally drops her \\$6 million lawsuit against bloggers](#)
- [Court of Public Opinion Renders Verdict in Phyllis Morris case: Guilty of Gross Stupidity](#)
- [Phyllis Morris despises Free Speech, sues everyone she can think of for \\$6 million!](#)

Morris filed a \$6 million lawsuit against Aurora bloggers Bill Hogg, Richard Johnson, and Elizabeth Bishhenden (and even the makers of the blogging platform WordPress) in the leadup to the civic election.

Why? She didn't like them discussing her dismal record as mayor. She wanted to win re-election and for reasons unknown decided shutting up a few bloggers was the best way to accomplish that task.

As the sitting mayor of Aurora Morris was able to convince city council to support her lawsuit against the bloggers, costing the taxpayers of Aurora a lot of money.

“It is about accountability, responsibility and being an agent for change,” Councillor Michael Thompson said, speaking about the lawsuit which Master Thomas Hawkins deemed to be a SLAPP lawsuit, or Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation.

“It is my belief, a belief shared by many residents that the Town should not have gotten involved in this lawsuit. SLAPPs are seen as a serious threat to public engagement and debate and are often launched with the intent to silence, intimidate, or deter people from participating in discussions on public interest and challenge the very freedoms we hold dear: freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and the freedom to actively participate in the democratic process.”

Councillor Michael Thompson’s motion called on Mayor Geoffrey Dawe to issue a formal apology on behalf of Council to the people named in the action, as well as the community at large “stating our commitment to freedom of speech and our regret the Town of Aurora was ever associated with the SLAPP motion.”

He went on to say this:

“There will be some who will say we are not the ones who should apologise because we did not create it, but this Council is now the ones who are responsible and accountable to this Town. Whether we create or inherit an issue, it is our role to act upon, if needed. In this case, I believe in the simple principle when you are wrong, do the right thing, admit it, and make amends where possible.”

It’s amazing to witness a politician at any level acting with the integrity of Councillor Thompson.

Then there are the usual slate of moronic politicians, led in this case by Aurora’s very own Councillor Chris Ballard. He was the lone vote against the motion, showing quite clearly which side of Rights, Freedoms and plain old common decency he sits.

“Noble sentiments, obviously, talking about freedom of speech and regret, but I have one major concern with the amendment and that is, as I do with the motion itself, the continued reference to SLAPP action,” he said. “I have said it before [that] not all the facts are on the table. I look forward to one day all the facts being on the table. I am not convinced it was a SLAPP action.”

Well, with all due deference to the good councillor, all the facts are on the table and Phyllis Morris' lawsuit had a single intention: to shut up her political opponents.

That's the very definition of a SLAPP lawsuit.

Bill Hogg, one of the sued bloggers, spoke in response to the motion.

“I am glad to see some politicians have the courage to also stand up for what is right, especially when they have nothing to gain and it is easier to do nothing. Winning this decision was a costly experience, so I hope it causes future politicians to pause when considering using the courts to bully citizens into silence.”

Confucius said,

“The superior man understands what is right; the inferior man understands what will sell.”

Is there really any doubt about which adjective describes Aurora City Councillor Chris Ballard?