



BY EMAIL

April 8, 2026

Council for the Township of Frontenac Islands
c/o Judy Greenwood Speers, Mayor
1191 County Road 96
Wolfe Island, ON K0H 2Y0

Dear Members of Council for the Township of Frontenac Islands:

Re: Closed meeting complaint

My Office received a complaint alleging that a quorum of council for the Township of Frontenac Islands (the “Township”) held an illegal meeting after a formal council meeting on August 2, 2023. The complainant told my Office that they believed that four members of council, along with the Clerk and then-CAO, left council chambers together to meet with Ontario government officials.

My review did not find evidence that a quorum of council met after the August 2, 2023 council meeting. Accordingly, I have determined that council for the Township did not contravene the open meeting requirements in the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

Ombudsman’s role and authority

The *Municipal Act, 2001* (the “Act”)¹ gives anyone the right to request an investigation into whether a municipality has complied with the Act in closing a meeting to the public. Municipalities may appoint their own investigator, but the Act designates the Ombudsman as the default investigator for municipalities that have not appointed their own. My Office is the closed meeting investigator for the Township of Frontenac Islands.

My Office has investigated hundreds of closed meetings. To assist municipal councils, staff, and the public, we have developed an online digest of open meeting cases. This searchable repository was created to provide easy access to the Ombudsman’s decisions on, and interpretations of, the open meeting rules. Council members and staff can consult the digest to inform their discussions and decisions on whether certain matters can or should be discussed in closed session, as well as issues related to open

¹ SO 2001, c 25.

meeting procedures. Summaries of the Ombudsman’s previous decisions can be found in the digest: www.ombudsman.on.ca/en/info-public-bodies-and-officials/municipal-government/municipal-meeting-digest.

The Ontario Ombudsman also has the authority to conduct impartial reviews and investigations of hundreds of public sector bodies. This includes municipalities, local boards, and municipally-controlled corporations, as well as provincial government organizations, publicly funded universities, and school boards. In addition, the Ombudsman’s mandate includes reviewing complaints about the services provided by children’s aid societies and residential licensees, and the provision of French language services under the *French Language Services Act*. Read more about the bodies within our jurisdiction here: www.ombudsman.on.ca/en/make-complaint/what-we-can-help-you/organizations-you-can-complain-about.

Review

My Office spoke with the Township’s Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Clerk, and the individual who was the CAO at the time of the alleged gathering. All e-mail correspondence and documents submitted to our Office as part of our review were also considered.

Council met for a special meeting at 9:05 a.m. on August 2, 2023. We were told that the Deputy Mayor and three members of council were present in council chambers, and the Mayor joined virtually. The complainant alleged that, following this meeting, the council members present in chambers left as a group, along with the Clerk and then-CAO, to attend an in-person meeting with provincial government officials. The Deputy Mayor, Clerk, and then-CAO all told my Office they had no recollection of participating in any such meeting.

The Deputy Mayor and then-CAO explained that they recall meeting with provincial officials in early August 2023, but that no other members of council participated.

Subsection 239(1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* requires all meetings of a council, local board, or committee of either, to be open to the public, subject to the listed exceptions. In order for a gathering to be considered a “meeting” under the open meeting rules:

- i. A quorum of a council, of a local board or of a committee of either must be present; and
- ii. The discussions must materially advance the business or decision-making of the council, local board, or committee.²

² *Casselman (Village of) (Re)*, 2018 ONOMBUD 11, online: <<https://canlii.ca/t/hvmtk>>.

The Township's council is composed of five members, such that three members constitute quorum. In this case, there is no evidence that a quorum of council gathered after the August 2, 2023 council meeting to meet with provincial government officials.

Conclusion

My review has determined that Council for the Township of Frontenac Islands did not contravene the *Municipal Act, 2001*. I would like to thank the Township for its co-operation during my review. The Clerk has confirmed that this letter will be included as correspondence at an upcoming council meeting.

Sincerely,



Barbara Finlay
Acting Ombudsman of Ontario

Cc: Vanessa Latimer, CAO/Clerk, Township of Frontenac Islands

Cette lettre est aussi disponible en français