

March 25, 2011

David Nickle
President, Toronto City Hall Press Gallery
100 Queen Street East
Toronto, Ontario

Paul Ainslie
Chair, Government Management Committee

Re: GM2.12 Councillor Protection at City Properties – Update
Government Management Committee meeting, March 29, 2011

I am writing to you as President of the Toronto City Hall Press Gallery on behalf of our membership, to raise concerns about possible directions the committee may be considering, to limit accredited city hall journalists' access to councillors' second floor offices at City Hall.

If this is the intent of the committee, we in the Toronto City Hall Press Gallery are gravely concerned.

Since amalgamation, members of the media who rent office space at city hall have been able to move freely through the councillors' office area, using our access cards to enter during regular business hours. That freedom has been crucial to our ability to cover and understand the intricacies of Toronto's municipal government.

As working journalists, we need to be able to meet with members of council at short notice and often discreetly. The sign-in process that is currently in place for members of the public would make that cumbersome, and at times impossible.

In 2010, the press gallery executive met with staff from Strategic Communications and Corporate Security, to negotiate continued access to councillors' city hall offices. Following discussions, we agreed that working, accredited members of the media posed no security risk to councillors. Accredited media maintained access to councillors' offices with small limitations.

Nothing has changed since then, save and except the election of a new council and a new mayor. Members of the media with card access are accredited through the Toronto City Hall Press Gallery. Cards are only issued to journalists whose employers rent office space at City Hall. No security issues with regard to gallery members' behaviour have been brought to the gallery's attention.

At times we have been made aware that members of council have complained of journalists waiting outside their offices hoping for a comment on a breaking story. It is

the gallery's view that those journalists have been fulfilling their proper professional roles in doing so, seeking clarification on matters of public interest. And councillors are of course free to enter and leave their offices without comment, should they choose to do so.

If there are other security concerns regarding the Toronto City Hall Press Gallery's membership at City Hall, we would be happy to discuss the matter and put in place measures that would deal with those concerns, without limiting gallery members' free and unfettered access to Toronto's elected representatives.

Please feel free to contact myself, David Nickle, President of the Toronto City Hall Press Gallery, and/or Press Gallery Vice President David Rider, to discuss this matter further.

Thank you,

David Nickle
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