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## Statement from Burlington Mayor Meed Ward on Travel and Accountability During Province-wide Shutdown

Burlington, Ont. – Jan. 8, 2021

For full transparency and accountability, I have not travelled outside the country or province in more than a year and have not left the City of Burlington since before the Provincial shutdown.

I am just as troubled and frustrated as the community about continued news of travel outside the country or province by elected representatives, health officials or community leaders. This erodes public trust at a time we need to work with the community to defeat COVID-19.

I immediately spoke to Halton Regional Police Services (HRPS) Chief Stephen Tanner, when I learned today (from the media) that he had travelled outside the country to attend to a property, with the permission of the Chair of the HRPS Board, Oakville Mayor Rob Burton. I expressed my concern about the travel. I appreciate that Chief Tanner has now apologized and said it was a poor decision and one he deeply regrets.

I encourage those with properties outside the province to consider local property management companies and continue to avoid non-essential travel. I have heard from constituents who also have properties outside the province who are not travelling to those properties, and they expect the same from their community leaders.

Clearly, as community leaders, we need to hold ourselves not only to the same standards we expect from the public, but a higher standard of accountability, transparency and behaviour. We are in a public health emergency when all non-essential travel is being discouraged by our public health officials and provincial and federal governments.

Accountability starts in our own backyard. My expectations are that no senior City staff or Council members will be travelling outside the province for non-essential trips during the shutdown. I can confirm that no senior staff at Burlington City Hall has travelled outside the province since the province-wide shutdown. I also asked and have received confirmation from all City Council members that none of them have travelled outside of the province since the shutdown.

As a new measure during virtual City of Burlington Committee and Council meetings, and other public meetings, I will be voluntarily disclosing where I am calling in from. I have asked all of my City Council colleagues to do the same.

Additionally, I have put on the agenda of our upcoming Emergency Control Group a discussion of what further measures are warranted to ensure our staff and council walk the talk, lead by example and hold ourselves to the same and higher standard than we expect of the community.

We are in the worst of this pandemic. It is all hands on deck. We need to trust each other and work together. To do that, we all need to make the same commitments and sacrifices to beat this deadly virus.

We need to work to restore trust when it has been broken, as it has recently with many announcements of travel by health, elected and community leaders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marianne Meed Ward". The signature is stylized with loops and flourishes.

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward  
City of Burlington

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