

Niagara regional councillor says speaking for Evertrust isn't conflict of interest

Joyce Morocco says she'd declare a conflict of interest if Welland condo collapse raised at regional council



[Bobby Hristova](#) · CBC News · Posted: Mar 04, 2023 6:00 AM EST



Joyce Morocco is the regional councillor of Niagara Falls. (Denis Cahill/Niagara Region)

A Niagara Falls regional councillor says it isn't a conflict of interest to act as a spokesperson for the developer behind a collapsed condo in Welland and a condo with repair issues with Niagara Falls.

Joyce Morocco is the regional councillor for Niagara Falls.

Niagara region is a two-tiered municipality, which means municipalities like Niagara Falls or Welland have their own city councils and the region of Niagara has a separate council with mayors and regional councillors. Regional councillors work part-time and most have a second job.

On top of being a regional councillor, Morocco has also been answering media questions through a public relations team on behalf of Evertrust.

Evertrust is the developer responsible for Upper Vista Welland, which partially collapsed twice in eight days recently. Evertrust is also behind Upper Vista Niagara Falls, which is facing a \$10 million lawsuit from residents over numerous repair and building-related issues. The City of Niagara Falls is also named in the lawsuit.



Upper Vista Welland partially collapsed again on Feb. 26, after previously partially collapsing on Feb. 18. (Joseph Burd/CBC)

"It just so happens that my company offers public relations and consulting and it has been around for a few years, long before I was elected as a regional councillor," Morocco wrote in an e-mail to CBC Hamilton.

"In regards to any conflicts, the only conflict would be if anything related to this issue came up at regional council, which I don't believe it would as all the permits from both the region and City of Welland were dealt with long before I was elected to regional council," she wrote.

- **GTA developer behind collapsed condo in Welland, Ont., facing \$10M lawsuit for issues at other condo**

"Not sure why this Welland development would ever come up at the region but if it did, I would declare a conflict."

Morocco's response didn't mention the Niagara Falls property specifically, but she said she isn't worried about a perceived conflict of interest.

"I can't control peoples perception, but what I can control is facts," she said.

Integrity commissioner won't comment

Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario said it can't comment on the matter and deferred to the municipality.

Michael Maynard, the integrity commissioner for Niagara region, also declined to comment on if it's a conflict of interest or a perceived conflict of interest.

"It is not the practice of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, nor is it within our mandate, to offer comments to the media regarding the conduct of Members of Council," Maynard wrote in a letter to CBC Hamilton.

"My role ... is generally constrained to the provision of ethical training and advice to members of council and local boards, and the investigation/disposition of complaints alleging violations of the code of conduct and/or the municipal conflict of interest act.

- **Luxury condo project in Niagara partially collapses — again**

Niagara regional councillor Jim Bradley also said in an email he wouldn't weigh in on if it's a conflict of interest.

"Generally speaking, I expect that all regional councillors conduct themselves in such a way that their professional duties outside of their public office will not inappropriately influence their conduct or decisions in council chambers," he said.