City Manager's Response to the 2010 Annual Report of the Ombudsman

Date: March 7, 2011
To: Executive Committee
From: City Manager
Wards: All Wards
Reference Number:

SUMMARY

In Decision CC3.7 of February 7, 2011, City Council adopted the 2010 Annual Report of the Ombudsman, dated February 1, 2011 (the "2010 Report"), and directed the City Manager to implement all six recommendations from the Report. Recommendation 3 requires "that the City Manager report to City Council on the status of recommendations 1 and 2 above at its March 2011 meeting." This staff report responds to this recommendation.

Recommendations 1 and 2 call on City staff to complete Divisional complaint protocols and publish existing customer service standards. As detailed below, the City will have completed the implementation of Recommendation 1 by March 15, 2011, and Recommendation 2 by April 1, 2011, in accordance with the Ombudsman's general timeframe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. Executive Committee receive this report for information.
Financial Impact

This report has no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

This report responds to the directive in paragraph 2 of City Council Decision CC 3.7 adopted on February 7, 2011 (the "Directive").
(http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.CC3.7)

City Council Decision CC 3.7 adopted the recommendations in the Covering Report for the 2010 Annual Report of the Ombudsman (the "Covering Report"). The Ombudsman submitted the Covering Report to City Council pursuant to Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 3, section 3-7A.

The recommendations in the Covering Report stem from the 2010 Annual Report of the Ombudsman ("2010 Report") that was submitted to Council along with the Covering Report.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Chapter 3, section 3-7A of the Toronto Municipal Code, the Ombudsman submits an annual report to Council that may include recommendations. The 2010 Report reflects the first full fiscal year of the office's work from January 2, 2010 to December 31, 2010. Among other things, the Report includes six recommendations. Recommendation 3 requires "that the City Manager report to City Council on the status of recommendations 1 and 2 above at its March 2011 meeting." This staff report responds to this recommendation. Recommendations 1 and 2 call on City staff to complete Divisional complaint protocols and publish existing customer service standards. As detailed below, the City will have completed implementing Recommendation 1 by March 15, 2011 and Recommendation 2 by April 1, 2011, in accordance with the Ombudsman's general timeframe.

COMMENTS

The City Manager has been working diligently with City staff to complete and publish existing complaint protocols and customer service standards in a manner that complies with all access, equity, and human rights requirements. The Ombudsman has been provided updates on these developments.
1. **Complaint Protocols (Recommendation 1)**

Prior to the Ombudsman's recommendation in the 2010 Report that City Divisions complete and publish their complaint protocols, the City Manager had made complaint protocols a priority. In response to the Ombudsman’s 2009 recommendation “that every area of the Toronto Public Service that interfaces directly with the public develop and publish internal complaint systems and procedures in 2010,” more than 75% of City Divisions had completed and posted a complaint protocol by November 2010. What follows is a chronology of the development of the corporate-wide Complaint Handling Guidelines and the subsequent updating of those existing Divisional complaint protocols to deliver completed, published Divisional complaint protocols across the corporation by March 15, 2011.

City staff developed the Complaint Handling Guidelines during summer 2010 as part of the City's Customer Service Strategy. The Complaint Handling Guidelines were then revised in fall 2010 to capture the elements of the Ombudsman's complaint protocol framework issued in September 2010. Following the Council transition and 2011 Budget preparations from November 2010 to January 2011, the City Manager and Deputy City Managers adopted the Complaint Handling Guidelines on January 31, 2011.

On February 3, 2011, the City Manager circulated the Complaint Handling Guidelines to all Division Heads, together with a cover memo. The memo directed Division Heads to complete four tasks by March 15, 2011:
- inform the necessary staff about the Complaint Handling Guidelines;
- update Divisional complaint protocols to conform to the Complaint Handling Guidelines;
- have the necessary staff attend information sessions taking place the week of February 22-25, 2011; and
- publish the updated protocols.

On February 9, 2011, the City Manager sent an e-mail message to all staff with similar information.

Consequently, by March 15, all City Divisions will have published their protocols on the City website and have begun Divisional staff training on the use of the protocols, which meets if not exceeds the request in Recommendation 1. Moreover, the four Divisions that met with the Ombudsman’s staff during 2010 to review their protocols – City Planning, Technical Services, Toronto Buildings, and Transportation Services – have now updated their complaint protocols to reflect input that the Ombudsman’s staff had provided at those meetings. Those Divisions are now in the process of following up with the Ombudsman’s office to confirm that the updated protocols are acceptable. Moreover, as of the date of this report, City Planning, Technical Services, and Transportation Services have published their updated protocols, and Toronto Building intends to publish its updated protocol by or before the March 15 deadline. Finally, in addition to the Complaint Handling Guidelines and Divisional complaint protocols, City staff are developing various tools and templates to assist with the intake and tracking of
complaints, as well as periodic compilation of progress reports and performance measures.

2. **Customer Service Standards (Recommendation 2)**

City staff have been engaged in customer service improvements for the past few years, including the establishment of 311 Toronto and the updating of customer service standards. Such customer service improvements were recently furthered through the development of a final customer service improvement planning initiative at a corporate and divisional level. This initiative has included the publishing of a series of customer service standards immediately following the Ombudsman’s recommendation in the 2010 Report. Moreover, during 2010, the City developed a Customer Service Strategy that led to Customer Service Guidelines. The City Manager and Deputy City Managers subsequently adopted those Customer Service Guidelines on February 28, 2011.

Moreover, City staff across the corporation -- both managerial and non-managerial -- have been engaged in planning sessions aimed at strengthening the City's customer service culture and generating specific short-term and long-term customer service deliverables. Achieving these goals will result in comprehensive implementation of the Customer Service Strategy and Customer Service Guidelines.

Certainly, an important part of the Customer Service Strategy is the publishing of the City's customer service standards. To date, the City has taken the following steps to publish customer service standards, as requested in Recommendation 2:

- published corporate-wide standards concerning acknowledgement of customer requests *(e.g. "All telephone calls (from both internal and external customers) will be returned within one business day or 24 hours where services operate on a 24 hour day cycle.")*

- published service standards for the 37 different types of on-line service requests processed through 311 Toronto *(e.g. The Solid Waste Division will respond within 24 hours to a complaint that it receives about an overflowing public litter bin);* and

- compiling an easy-to-use listing of service standards for many other service request types that are integrated with the 311 Toronto system, so as to begin publishing those standards, on a rolling basis, by April 1, 2011.

In addition, as indicated below, City staff is working toward completing and publishing as many additional customer service standards from larger City programs as possible in 2011, in response to Recommendation 5.
3. Remaining recommendations in the 2010 Report

The following is a high-level summary of the implementation plan for Recommendations 4, 5, and 6.

- Recommendation 4 states "that the Toronto Public Service set standards for record-keeping in every area of its operation by the fall of 2011, and that these standards include guidelines on appropriate levels and type of information, whether written or electronic, regarding all service transactions with the public, elected representatives and other parts of the public service."

It is staff's objective to set record-keeping standards for the larger City programs, including major service transactions, as soon as possible during 2011. Such standards for the balance of City programs will be completed in 2012.

- Recommendation 5 states "that by the fall of 2011, the Toronto Public Service set overall service standards and clearly documented expectations, including timelines, for written and oral communications with residents."

It is staff's objective to complete and publish as many overall service standards as possible for larger City programs in 2011. Such standards for the balance of City programs will be completed in 2012.

- Recommendation 6 states "that the City Manager hold all employees of the Toronto Public Service, both management and non-management, accountable for meeting all service standards."

Following 2011 service reviews per Council direction, staff performance planners will be reviewed and amended to ensure staff accountability to meeting customer service and service standards in 2011-2012, in addition to the other standards for which employees already are accountable through performance planners.
In addition, the City Manager has committed to providing periodic updates to the Ombudsman throughout 2011 on the progress of implementing these revised recommendations.

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SIGNATURE

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