



OMBUDSMAN REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Office of the Ombudsman - 2014 Operating Budget

Date:	November 27, 2013
To:	Budget Committee
From:	Fiona Crean, Ombudsman
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report details information related to the 2014 operating budget for the Office of the Ombudsman, including a recommended full-year 2013 operating budget of \$ 1,725.0 thousand for approval by Budget Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

The Ombudsman recommends that:

1. Budget Committee approves the attached 2014 full-year operating budget for the Office of the Ombudsman and forward it to the Executive Committee.

Financial Impact

Approval of the Ombudsman's 2014 operating budget request will result in \$ 1,725.0 thousand being part of the City of Toronto's 2014 operating budget.

DECISION HISTORY

This report is submitted to Budget Committee in accordance with Executive Committee Item 31.1 'A Policy Framework for Toronto's Accountability Officers' adopted as amended by City of Toronto Council at its April 2009 session; and Chapter 3, Accountability Officers, Toronto Municipal Code, enacted by City Council October 27, 2009. Chapter 3 provides that the Accountability Officers are independent and accountable to City Council. Section 3-10C requires each Accountability Officer to submit an annual budget request to the Budget Committee for consideration and recommendation to City Council.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Under the *City of Toronto Act*, the Ombudsman has the responsibility to investigate public complaints about decisions, actions or recommendations made or omitted by the Toronto Public Service. It is an office of last resort where residents can complain when they believe they have been treated unfairly by the Toronto Public Service, its agencies, boards, commissions and corporation.

In the 2009 start-up year, the Office of the Ombudsman's budget was \$1, 218.3 thousand. This amount fell significantly short of the Office's actual requirements to serve Toronto's 2.7-million residents. However, the severe fiscal restraints of City government were recognized and the plan was to build capacity incrementally over time.

In 2011, I made a budget request of \$ 1,494 thousand that included one new Intake position and one additional Investigator to enable a sustained focus on broadening capacity for systemic investigations. The goal was to yield greater efficiencies and savings and lessen residents' frustrations because they would experience improved public service. That request was turned down.

In 2013, the Office was given one additional Investigator bringing the staff complement to 10, four of whom are investigators. While this was appreciated, the lack of resources relative to actual workload remains evident, particularly in the area of systemic investigations. It continues to be the case that comparable jurisdictions are far more appropriately resourced and as a consequence are better equipped to serve their citizens. For example, Montreal, with a population of 1.6-million, has a staff complement of seven, five of whom are investigative staff; the Province of Nova Scotia, with a population of 922,000, has an Ombudsman's office of seventeen staff, 13 of whom are investigators.

The Office is doing its best to make its services known to communities, particularly those who often have the most contact with government and are likely to have the least knowledge about Ombudsman services. It is however in the area of systemic investigations that value for money and opportunity for improved public administration become most evident. The return on investment in conducting an investigation into red tape is one example. Improvements in public administration may be evidenced by investigations such as *Housing at Risk*.

One additional investigator is being requested as part of the Ombudsman's 2014 budget submission. This addition is critical to providing greater capacity for systemic investigations which bring broad improvements for many and provide cost-savings in the longer term as evidenced by a number of publicly reported investigations over the past year. Funding for external investigators is maintained in 2014 and will be assessed for the 2015 budget.

COMMENTS

The Office of the Ombudsman 2014 operating budget request of \$ 1,725.0 thousand includes a request for one additional investigator at \$89.2 thousand net for partial year budget requirement of nine months.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

(original signed)

Fiona Crean, Ombudsman

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix I: –Accountability Officers: 2014 Operating Budget Overview