



OMBUDSMAN REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Office of the Ombudsman – 2016 Operating Budget

Date:	December 22, 2015
To:	Budget Committee
From:	Kwame Addo, Interim Ombudsman
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report details information about the 2016 operating budget for the Office of the Ombudsman, including a recommended full-year 2016 operating budget of \$1,975.4 thousand gross and net for approval by City Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ombudsman recommends that:

1. Budget Committee recommends to the Executive Committee that City Council approves the 2016 full-year operating budget for the Office of the Ombudsman of \$1,975.4 thousand gross and net.

Financial Impact

Approval of the Ombudsman's 2016 operating budget request will result in \$1,975.4 thousand being part of the City of Toronto's 2016 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 the 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, 2006*, the function of the Ombudsman is to investigate any decision or recommendation made or any act done or omitted in the course of the administration of the City, and affecting any person or body of persons in his, her, or its personal capacity.

In addition to the role set out above, the office provides governance-related advice and assistance to divisions, also known as preventative Ombudsmanship.

The office opened to the public in 2009, the last of the four accountability officers to do so.

Since it opened, the office has completed 36 investigations, of which 28 were systemic in nature. The Ombudsman has made over 350 recommendations to date, and the City and Council have agreed to all of them. A number of the investigations have brought about significant change to how the City goes about its business.

A Duty to Care: resulted in the creation of a city-wide protocol to provide equitable services to individuals of all abilities including those with diminished capacity.

Housing at Risk: the Ombudsman made 30 recommendations to ensure equitable, consistent, lawful and humane conduct towards Toronto Community Housing's seniors to prevent evictions.

Potholes, Floods and Broken Branches: the office made recommendations to improve the insurance claims process and experience for members of the public when they file a claim against the City

When the office opened, the city's finances were adversely affected by the global financial downturn of 2008. In recognition of this reality, the plan was to build the office incrementally over time and that has been reflected in our previous budget requests

The current level of staffing is short of the Office's requirement to serve Toronto's 2.8 million residents. Comparable jurisdictions at the provincial and municipal level are better resourced than is Toronto. Montreal for example, with a population of 2 million, has a budget of \$1.13M and 8 positions. Saskatchewan with a population of 1.1 million has a budget of \$3.43M and 25 positions. On a spending per capita basis, Toronto at \$0.62 lags behind Montreal at \$ 0.68 and Saskatchewan at \$3.01.

In the spring of 2014, Council expanded the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to include all city –owned corporations such as Toronto Hydro and Build Toronto.

An additional investigator was approved during the 2015 budget process. While the new position added some investigative capacity, the 2016 request, will further strengthen the ability of the office to conduct systemic investigations, which from a value for money standpoint, is the best

use of our resources. The office has struggled to manage a complaint volume of increasing complexity. Without additional resources or staffing, the time required to conduct investigations will likely increase and the ability of the office to take on multiple systemic investigations will be adversely affected as well. Investigations require a significant investment in staff resources and without an increase in complement, staff morale and well-being are also being impacted.

A second administrative assistant will support the Director, Investigations & Conflict Resolution, who is currently without one and also relieve the administrative burden facing investigators so that they can devote greater time to their core responsibilities.

That said, the office recognizes the financial difficulty facing the City and understands that the decision will rest with Council to decide how those resources are allocated.

COMMENTS

The Office of the Ombudsman 2016 operating budget request of \$1,975.4 thousand includes a request for 2 new staff at \$160.8 thousand net for partial year budget requirement of 6 months.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

(Original signed)

Kwame Addo
Interim Ombudsman

ATTACHMENT

Accountability Officers: 2016 Operating Budget Overview