



PRESS RELEASE

GATINEAU'S AUDITOR GENERAL TABLES HER REPORT ON THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN'S COMPLIANCE AUDIT ENGAGEMENT

Gatineau, April 10, 2018 – Mrs. Johanne Beausoleil, Gatineau's auditor general, presented her Office of the Ombudsman compliance report before the municipal council.

The auditor general concludes that Gatineau's Office of the Ombudsman complies with all significant aspects of the criteria defined in the *Cities and Towns Act* and in the constituent resolution of Gatineau's Office of the Ombudsman. However, several significant non-compliances with the policies and procedures implemented by the Office and with the recognized attributes of an ombudsman's duty have been identified.

"The 2016 annual report of Gatineau's Office of the Ombudsman gave rise to strong reactions from city management and the municipal council regarding the Office of the Ombudsman's intervention process and the responsibility of each party in this process," explains the auditor general.

It is thus in a difficult context that the auditor general undertook the compliance audit mandate, and from the outset, the Office of the Ombudsman proved very reluctant to cooperate, which had the effect of delaying the audit by several weeks. Therefore, the auditor general had to question the ability of Gatineau's Office of the Ombudsman to display a courteous attitude promoting the resolution of problems and to serve residents well.

Mandate clarity

"Our conclusion is that the mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman is clear and the confusion surrounding it stems from the Office's interpretation through the years. Indeed, the Office contributed to creating confusion by describing its mandate differently in the various documents published and tools developed over time. This same confusion is also found in the description of the services offered by Gatineau's Office of the Ombudsman," explains Mrs. Beausoleil.

More highlights

- The Office of the Ombudsman does not report on the outcomes of its interventions to city management;
- The annual expenditure allowances given to commissioners are not in line with the constituent resolution;
- Relationships between the Office of the Ombudsman and the municipal council are not maintained optimally;
- Relationships are strained between the Office of the Ombudsman and city management;
- The Office of the Ombudsman statistics reflect a high resolution rate within acceptable timeframes;

- The Secretary General’s absences do not allow the Office to fulfill its role and responsibilities and have a negative impact on its statistics;
- The Office of the Ombudsman has minimal requirements in terms of the skills sought for its commissioners, and little training is provided to prepare them for their role.

Furthermore, the generalizations expressed in the 2016 annual report, which were not supported by facts, the omission of certain facts and the tone of the reports depicting an unfavourable picture of the municipal administration have been of little help to the Office of the Ombudsman in 2016. These actions undermined the ability to hold fruitful discussions leading to concrete results for Gatineau residents.

“The problems mentioned in our report indicate that currently, the Office of the Ombudsman is not appropriately fulfilling its role for residents, especially in terms of availability, objectivity and credibility. To do so, the Office must thoroughly review its operating rules and promote an environment conducive to problem resolution, while remaining independent, which in our view is not incompatible,” concludes the auditor general.

It should be noted that the audit includes a review of the activities conducted by Gatineau’s Office of the Ombudsman, an assessment of its management practices, processes, policies and procedures that guide its role, operation and relationships with the municipal council, city management and municipal administration as a whole.

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