

For Immediate Release**NO TIME TO WASTE***Toronto Ombudsman Slams Toronto Water and Technical Services***Toronto – June 28, 2010**

In a sweeping review of the City's handling of a resident's eight-year sewage problem, Toronto's Ombudsman, Fiona Crean found that the City have unreasonably and unjustly delayed finding and implementing a solution for a project they took responsibility for. City staff lacked procedures for addressing what they call 'non-capital' projects, did not communicate either within their units or across divisions, did not keep basic paperwork, and failed to provide project management leadership.

The Toronto resident, who has had no fewer than 17 sewage back ups into her home since 2002, complained to the Ombudsman in Spring 2009.

Since 2007, when Toronto Water formally took responsibility for the issue, they have failed to develop a permanent solution. Crean's investigation focused on the period starting in 2007 when the City put in a temporary holding tank, from which it pumps the sewage, but noted that "the resident's experience with Toronto Water in the preceding five years certainly set the context."

The complainant has spent her own money, moved into a high-risk house insurance bracket and suffered considerable disruption, including vacating the residence on numerous occasions because of the smell and high mould content.

Crean's investigation found unreasonable delay by the City in finding a permanent solution, bureaucratic silos within the public service, poor to no record keeping and a failure to communicate with the resident.

The Ombudsman has recommended two courses of action – one geared to the individual complainant, the other set focusing on systemic fixes to processes, so that a similar problem does not occur in the future.

The Ombudsman recommended that the City both apologize and fix Ms Q's problem immediately.

In terms of the City, Crean recommended that a directive and procedures be developed, implemented and shared with staff, identifying clear lines of authority, decision-making, timelines, record keeping requirements and senior accountability for 'non-standard' projects. Crean called for performance accountability along with consistent communications.

All of the systemic recommendations are to be put in place by October 2010.

Ombudsman Fiona Crean referred back to the Molière quote in her annual report, in describing the City's accountability in this case, "It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable."

"This case points to a bureaucratic malaise that demonstrates indifference, inertia, and a notable absence of leadership." Crean said.

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Backgrounder, chronology of key events and the City players are attached.

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