

Toronto Ombudsman

Office of last resort

Speaking Notes

Presentation to Budget Committee

Friday, December 2, 2011

Introduction

We are just completing our second full year of service.

As an independent office of last resort for residents to complain about City services, we are a small but key component of the City's good governance, its drive to deliver excellent service and to be accountable to its residents and taxpayers.

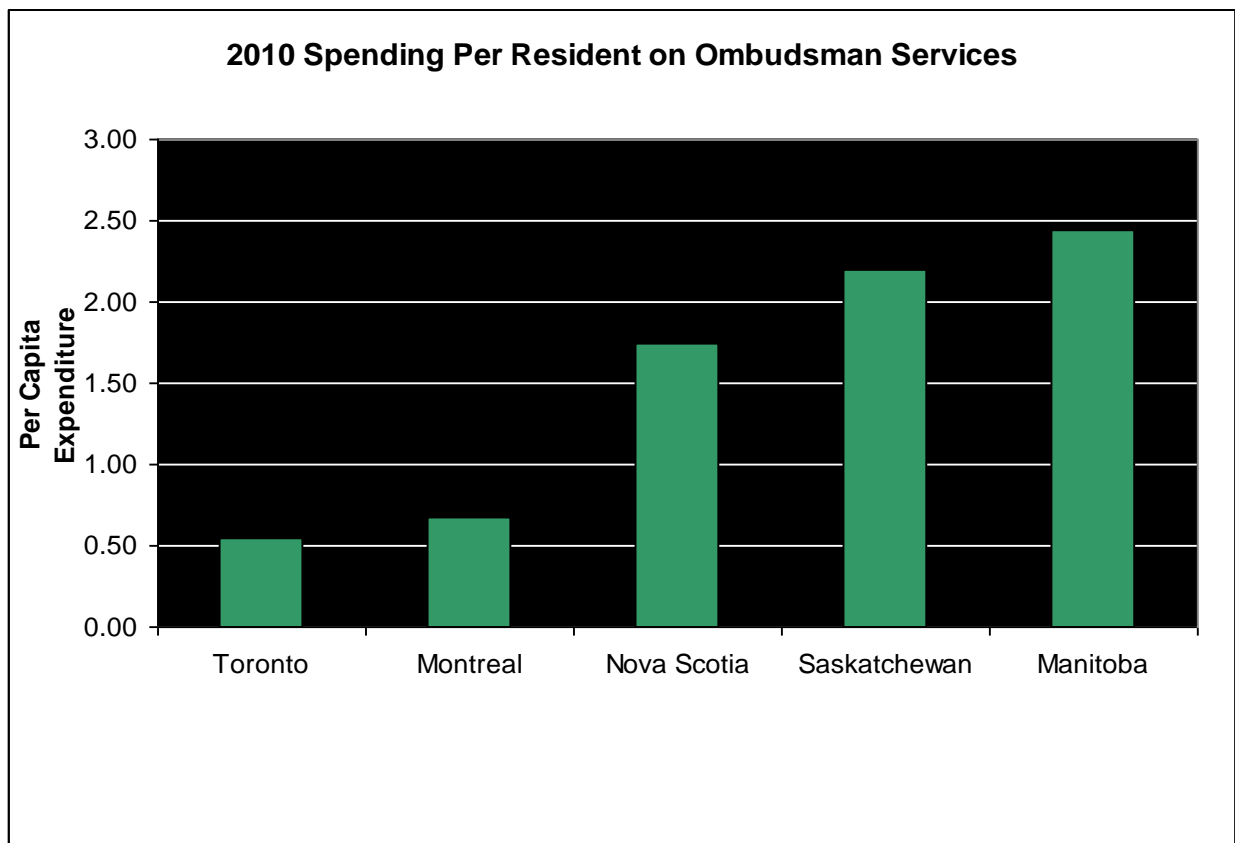
To fulfill my mandate means having sufficient finances.

The assumption was – and is – that the people and their government would ensure that the accountability offices were fed properly in order to properly fulfill their mandates.

The realization of that assumption remains unfulfilled for the Ombudsman's office.

We now know very clearly at this stage of the office's young history that our budget does not meet the needs to serve residents effectively.

In fact the following table points graphically to Toronto's spending per resident on Ombudsman services when related to comparable jurisdictions.



Pop	2.5 M	1.6 M	0.9 M	1 M	1.2 M
\$	1.3 M	1.1 M	1.6 M	2.3 M	3 M

Context for 2012 Budget

- We have now seen the proposed 2012 City budget
- We are all being called upon to serve greater numbers with fewer resources
- All too often serving the public these days is seen as an issue of dollars and cents, the focus being on the bottom line
- Care must be taken to preserve the public's right to independent investigation of complaints
- My caution is merely that as the City restructures and reduces its services, residents' rights of appeal and independent investigation not be lost
- Filing complaints is much more than just a right. It is an opportunity for residents to shape the way government provides services
- It is in fact an important part of accountability and good governance
- With the significant restructuring of services, increased errors and service challenges are inevitable
- This puts my office squarely at a crossroad: the challenge of providing equitable service with less resources
- We fully intend to rise to the challenge but Council must understand that as City services are restructured or downsized, our complaint volume will increase
- We saw this in Ontario in the mid 1990s when the Ombudsman's volume increased enormously as the public service downsized.

What we are doing

- We have focused our resources through 2011 on complaints that come in the door at the expense of reaching out to neighbourhoods in Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke to inform them of their rights and responsibilities
- We will continue to be vigilant for systemic fixes that address impacts on large numbers of residents

Impacts

- We know that residents in Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke neighbourhoods have at least a similar need for our services, to say nothing of the greater volume of marginalized and working class taxpayers but we can't reach them with current resources. Result: inability to provide equitable access for residents outside the downtown core
- Limitations on systemic investigation, particularly with what the City is calling service level adjustments and efficiencies, will result in more unfairness, inefficiencies and resident dissatisfaction.
- That said we recognize the imperatives of the City's fiscal challenges and I have presented a budget that cuts my resources by 2.5%.

2012 Operating Budget

Background

- The 2011 budget request of \$1,494 thousand included one new Intake position and one additional Investigator
- That request was turned down

2012 Ask

- \$1,421.1 thousand
- This includes a reduction of \$35.9 thousand or 2.5% of the 2011 approved budget
- This reduction will be achieved by curtailing direct service delivery capacity by reducing the number of investigations

In \$000s	2011 Approved Budget	2012			2012 Budget Request vs 2011 Approved Budget	
		Base Budget	Reduction	Budget Request	\$	In %
Gross Expenditure	\$1,409.6	\$1,457.0	(\$35.9)	\$1,421.1	\$11.5	0.8%
Revenue	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	N/A
Net Expenditure	\$1,409.6	\$1,457.0	(\$35.9)	\$1,421.1	\$11.5	0.8%

2012-2021 Capital Budget

- At its February 2011 meeting, City Council approved the 2011-2020 Capital Budget which included the Office of the Ombudsman.
- The 2012-2021 Capital Plan is to upgrade the Case Management System in order to maintain its state of good repair.
- The 2012-2021 Capital Budget and Plan for the Office of the Ombudsman reflects a \$0.700 million request for 2021.