

Women's Eyes on City Decision Making Les femmes ont la prise de décision municipale à l'œil



**Call or e-mail your Councillor before Wed,
December 3rd**

City Council has called a special meeting for **December 3rd to vote on the 2014-2018 City Governance Review** which will affect the extent to which residents can give input into Council's decision making. With new Council only being sworn in December 1st, this gives the public very little time to consider the report and contact their Councillor.

Consider these potential impacts on your ability to give input into city decision making, then contact your Councillor by phone or e-mail before Wednesday. Remember you can leave a message on their answering machine.

Follow this link to find the contact information for your City Councillor:

<http://ottawa.ca/en/city-council>

For the full report – Governance Renewal 2014-2018, released on November 26th, visit City web-site or see pdf attached.

Proposed: Three Standing Committees will reduce the number of regularly scheduled meetings from 12 to 8 a year (Transit Commission, Environment ,and Community and Protective Services). These are opportunities for the public to present their concerns to Council, as they cannot do at Council meetings.

Risk: The public has less opportunity for input. The Transit Commission has an average of 15 meetings a year between 2010 and 2014, with only one cancellation. The public has many concerns about making buses and future light rail accessible, safe and affordable for residents. The Community and Protective Services Committee oversees most of the social services provided by the city, and met an average of 10 times a year, with one cancellation. The Environment Committee met 9 times a year on average.

Proposed: Eliminate the Community Services Advisory Committee. In June 2012, the number of citizen advisory committees were reduced from 12 to 5. Council is now to vote on reducing them to four. The Governance Review report notes that residents are engaging more effectively through city-led and community-led working groups or committees, listing CAWI among them.

Risk: While working groups can be effective in engaging with city staff , there are limited avenues for residents to provide direct advise to City Council. An Advisory Committee is in a position to be better informed of Council priorities and issues emerging that members of working group or community-led committees might miss, such as this Governance Review Report. With the reduction of of advisory committees, **the Community Services Advisory Committee has the responsibilities of informing Council on equity and diversity, poverty, and social services. The community expertise I on these critical issues could be lost.**

Proposed: Fixed funding envelopes. The Governance Review outlines the budget process with a recommendation that “Each Standing Committee will work within the budgetary funding envelope allocated to the City departments under their mandate and any increases to the budget will be funded by offsetting reductions.”

Risk: Such restrictions are not conducive to a full and democratic discussion as to how our City is to prioritize shifting needs that will emerge during this term of Council. Having these “fixed funding envelopes” in the last term of Council resulted in less opportunity for resident input, as there was no movement on priorities. The result was that citizen input had very limited impact.

Apologies: CAWI apologizes for not having this announcement in French. Given the short time frame between the release of the Governance Renewal Report and the vote on Wednesday, it was not possible to provide translation.