

Federation of  
Citizens'  
Associations of  
Ottawa-Carleton



Fédération des  
associations  
civiques d'Ottawa-  
Carleton

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FCA calls on Governance Renewal Sub-Committee to reject Lobbyist Registry staff report**

Ottawa, Dec 1 Ottawa City staff have responded to the Mayor's direction to pursue an Accountability Framework, with a proposal to establish a lobbying transparency bylaw and Lobbyist Registry. Today Governance Renewal Sub-Committee will hear from the Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa-Carleton (FCA) that the proposal has been drafted too quickly, without adequate consultation and, as a result, is too flawed to be taken seriously in its present form.

Bob Brocklebank, Chair of the FCA's new Governance Committee, says that it is highly unusual for unpaid volunteers without a pecuniary or proprietary interest to be included in a lobbyist registry. "In Toronto" he says, "volunteer groups are only deemed to be lobbyists if they have an identified pecuniary or proprietary interest in the matter under discussion. This is not the case in the proposed lobbyist registry for Ottawa." In addition, Brocklebank says, "Planning Department activity is to be excluded, yet it is here that developers first begin their lobbying to change those elements that neighbourhoods so often want to protect."

If approved, the current proposal would require unpaid volunteers speaking for non-profit organizations to be registered as lobbyists. Virtually all interaction which touches on policy and any communication which hints at going beyond established practice will be deemed as lobbying. "This is both unique and unacceptable in our opinion", Brocklebank says. "Even at the federal and provincial levels only paid representatives are considered lobbyists."

A well-considered Registry could be a useful tool to level a playing field that is too often skewed in favour of developers and other commercial interests. Including volunteers in such a process, however, would be far too costly and burdensome for the City to administer. It would create unnecessary barriers to citizen engagement and would discourage many community groups from participating in the democratic process at City Hall.

"The City is asking Councillors to make decisions without providing adequate time to make informed and educated decisions" Brocklebank says. "More time is required to consult with the public before any decisions are made if the City wants this Lobbyist Registry to be effective."

The FCA is urging the Governance Renewal Sub-Committee to reject the staff report in its current form and to undertake public consultation to ensure a more logical and balanced approach. The FCA is willing to work with the City to create a more workable model.

The Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa-Carleton (FCA) is a city-wide association and forum for community associations and citizens groups. The FCA comprises urban, suburban and rural community associations from across the amalgamated City of Ottawa. Members share information about issues facing their communities and take joint action on city-wide issues.

- 30 -

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