

For Immediate Release

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Big changes coming to City Hall – are Ottawa residents ready?

Citizens' group makes City's "governance review" more accessible with launch of popular summary

OTTAWA – Big changes could be coming to the way City Hall operates and residents should get ready to make their voices heard, says People for a Better Ottawa, a citizens' group that is monitoring Ottawa's Governance Review and launching its own "popular summary" of the City's White Papers today.

"There could be big changes coming to City Hall and it will be crucial that Ottawa residents understand what these changes could mean," said Jenny Gullen, a member of the steering committee of People for a Better Ottawa (PBO). "Our summary of the City's White Papers will help residents navigate the process, understand the proposed changes and make their voices heard."

One option put to Council is the creation of a Finance and Audit or Finance and Oversight Committee. This new Standing Committee, if established, could be tasked with developing the annual budget, leaving citizen input uncertain.

"Would opportunities for meaningful public input be ensured in a new budget process?" asked Gullen. "How would the issues and expertise of other Standing Committees inform the process? Would the budget process begin from the point of view of financial constraints, or would it begin with the priority needs and issues of Ottawa residents?"

Questions like these make the Governance Review vitally important to groups and individuals who want to shape City policy and keep Ottawa inclusive and healthy. PBO has produced a popular version of the City's White Papers to make them more accessible for residents.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for those who are interested in engaging in the processes that will affect their community for years to come," said Will Murray, of the Coalition for a Sustainable Ottawa. "Not only is this an effort to make the system work better, it can also be seen as a means for people to find out how they can participate in a meaningful way."

The recently amended Municipal Act gave Ontario municipalities greater powers to change the way they do things, making it vitally important that citizen groups like People for a Better Ottawa monitor the governance review process.

"We will be working over the coming weeks to get residents involved in the Governance Review," Gullen said. "We want to make sure the changes that come out of it move us toward greater accountability, transparency democracy and resident engagement."

Visit www.betterottawa.ca for PBO's summary of the City's Governance Review White Papers.

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