



**PRESS RELEASE
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**OMBUDSMAN DE MONTRÉAL 2015 ANNUAL REPORT
Taxation – Fairness concerns**

Montréal, June 21st 2016 – In its 13th Annual Report, the **OMBUDSMAN DE MONTRÉAL (OdM)** notes that its office is increasingly solicited in files concerning the municipal tax system. While acknowledging the exclusive jurisdiction of elected officials to decide the nature and parameters of taxation, the Ombudsman can nonetheless intervene to ensure a fair application of these rules by the municipal administration. The Ombudsman’s interventions often lead to the correction of situations where citizens had been adversely affected.

Examples of such complaints resolved in 2015

After the Ombudsman submitted a detailed analysis and substantiated arguments, the City finally reimbursed all the local improvement taxes that had been overcharged to a citizen from 2000 to 2014, with interest, for a total amount close to \$27,000. The City had initially invoked the 3-year time limit provision of the *Civil Code* to only reimburse the previous 3 years.

The Ombudsman also resolved the complaint of a businessman whose defective water meter had registered an excessive consumption since 2012. After replacing the meter in June 2013, the City has readjusted the citizen’s water bill for the first months of 2013 but not for 2012. After analysis of the specific context of this file, the OdM Office found a specific By-law provision which justified the review the 2012 bill as well. This businessman received a refund of \$8,300.

In 2016

The **OMBUDSMAN DE MONTRÉAL** is currently handling complaints from homeowners who were suddenly imposed annual taxes for the occupation of public lands even though the configuration and dimensions of their property has not changed for many years. In another file, the water bills of similar businesses operating in the same Borough, are not calculated in the same manner.

“These situations raise concerns about fairness. We are pursuing our investigations to understand their specific context and to ensure that the amounts billed are fair and just”, stated Johanne Savard.

The 2015 Annual Report and supplementary Schedules are available on the **OMBUDSMAN DE MONTRÉAL** website. It is worth mentioning that in 2015, the **OMBUDSMAN DE MONTRÉAL** handled a record number of files, namely **1 802** including **1 731** new complaints, i.e. **322** more than in 2014.

About the OMBUDSMAN DE MONTRÉAL

Created in 2003, the office of the **OMBUDSMAN DE MONTRÉAL** office operates with a team of 9 people, including the Ombudsman. It intervenes, as a last resort, to ensure that citizens' municipal rights are respected and their files are handled with respect, justice and fairness by all municipal stakeholders. This service, which is completely **free of charge and easily accessible**, contributes to better municipal services, more transparency, and fair and equitable decision-making processes within the City of Montreal.

The Ombudsman also offers the only available recourse to ensure that the *Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities* is complied with by municipal managers and employees as well as by elected officials.

The 2015 Annual Report and those of previous years can be found on the **OMBUDSMAN DE MONTRÉAL** website: <http://ombudsmandemontreal.com>.

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