



News Release

For Immediate Release

Lack of documentation hampers transparency in government procurement: Procurement Ombudsman calls for urgent implementation of government action plans to remedy situation

OTTAWA, June 15, 2010 – In his 2009-10 Annual Report, tabled today in Parliament by the Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Mr. Shahid Minto, Procurement Ombudsman, while highlighting some examples of good procurement practices in government departments, notes that concerted actions must be taken in order to resolve the long-standing issues of lack of essential procurement documentation and poor communications with suppliers.

“Despite all the legal and operational requirements and the numerous calls for proper documentation of files from internal audits, the Auditor General and others, this problem persists and it is troubling.” said Mr. Minto. “Lack of essential documentation on files raises questions about the integrity of the procurement process. Many of these questions could be avoided or quickly answered with proper documentation.”

“A second long-standing issue in procurement is poor communications. Suppliers have informed the office that poor communications continue to negatively affect relations between the government and its suppliers” added Mr. Minto. “Often the government’s first response to a complaint has been denial of any responsibility for the underlying problem. Unnecessary denial leads to delays and a breakdown of trust between the government and its suppliers. Suppliers are mature partners in the supply management team and they should be treated with respect.”

Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) has prepared a comprehensive action plan with established deadlines in response to the Ombudsman’s concerns in these and other areas. Other government departments need to take similar steps to ensure that transparency in the procurement process is strengthened.

Additionally, the report states that procurement decisions should always take ethical considerations into account. PWGSC has recognized this need and has in place a strong ethics program. The Office encourages other departments and agencies to review the PWGSC experience and adopt a formal ethics program to benefit the federal procurement process.

The report highlights the Office’s accomplishments over the past year and offers comprehensive, concrete recommendations aimed at further increasing fairness, openness and transparency and thereby improving the procurement system. The Ombudsman is encouraged by the results of his Office’s efforts, informal inquiries indicate that suppliers have found the Office’s interventions to be very helpful and significant actions have already been taken on recommendations to departments and agencies. Although there’s been a great deal of progress in the couple years since the establishment of the Office, much still remains to be done.

Established in 2008 as part of the Federal Accountability Act, the Office of the Procurement Ombudsman (OPO) is an independent organization with a government-wide mandate to strengthen the fairness, openness and transparency in federal procurement.

This report, as well as the full versions of the Office's six Procurement Practices Reviews, can be found on OPO's Website at www.opo-boa.gc.ca.

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