

Halton's regional ombudsman investigates zero cases during first year in office

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In its first annual report to Halton Regional Council, the region's Ombudsman's Office said it received just two complaints at the regional level in 2016.

Marshall Schnapp from ADR Chambers, which was contracted to serve as independent ombudsman for the region beginning in January 2016, reported just two complaints brought to its attention relating to the Region throughout all of last year.

The first, according to the report presented to council on Feb. 15, was not followed up by the resident after being sent a formal complaint form to fill out. The second complaint was deferred to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency after being determined it's outside the ombudsman office's purview.

No formal complaints have been opened against the Regional Municipality of Halton in fiscal year 2016. Consequently, no investigations have been conducted, wrote Schnapp in the report.

According to a December 2015 report from *The Hamilton Spectator*, ADR Chambers Inc. was contracted by both The City of Burlington and Halton Region for two years at a cost of \$1,000 per month, plus an hourly rate for conducting investigations.

While seeing little action at the regional level, the firm which is also employed by the Town of Milton did address some cases at the municipal level, including three complaints received regarding Milton's tax policy last May.

In its report the ombudsman's office explained it has a very specific mandate as to what types of complaints it is allowed to address on behalf of complainants to the Region.

Those situations include: Denial of services or the failure to provide a proper quality of service; complaints that the municipality (or region) has made a decision that is not within their legal power to make; complaints that the Municipality has not followed the appropriate procedures in reaching a

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