Office of the Auditor General
City of Ottawa

Review of Overtime – Highlights



Why we did this review

As a result of several Fraud and Waste Hotline reports and the continued need for diligent use of limited City resources, the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) conducted a review of overtime use across the City.

Managing overtime is important for financial stewardship, operational efficiency and effective management of human resources. This review was conducted to assess whether overtime was being utilized only when operationally required, demonstrated prudent use of funds, as well as to identify potential areas for efficiencies.

What we found

Occasional overtime can help meet short-term demands and is more cost effective in situations where there is unpredictability or seasonality to the work. However, reliance on overtime as the mechanism to manage staff shortages and regular operations is not sustainable in the long run. It often leads to higher costs, burnout, reduced productivity, quality issues, and increased employee turnover.

Our review found that the more significant issues were within OC Transpo, where overtime has become a significant and ongoing part of their operations.

The review noted that there is significant reliance on manual processes, which limits efficiency, increases the risk of error, makes monitoring difficult and can result in additional costs to the City. Greater use of technology and system functionality would help improve decision-making, reduce administrative burden and risk of error, and strengthen controls.

The review also noted opportunities to improve effectiveness of processes that support the administration of overtime. These include improving the documentation to support rationale for overtime and how it was awarded (i.e. based on seniority), as well as implementing processes to proactively identify and manage Hours of Service violations.

We made thirteen recommendations to ensure that:

- Technology is leveraged to improve efficiency and reduce reliance on manual processes.
- The Bus Operator booking process, overtime allocation practices, and the need for Booking Clerks are reviewed in future Collective Agreement negotiations to promote fairness and achieve best value for the City.
- Overtime shifts are monitored to identify potential Hours of Service (HoS) and Collective Agreement violations before awarding a shift.
- A proactive and holistic approach to monitoring overtime to identify trends, and support resource and scheduling related decisions is established.
- Requirements for documenting the rationale and awarding of overtime is clearly established.
- Timesheets are consistently approved.

For more details on this report please visit our website.
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