

Mr. Wark,

Thank you again for submitting your November 3rd 2020 complaint with respect to closed meeting practices at the Town of Sackville (“Town”).

Let me start by explaining our role. The role of the Office of the Ombud is to investigate complaints against provincial government departments, local governments, crown corporations, and other authorities regarding matters of administration. In the course of our investigations, we review policies, processes and legislation and the application of same by authorities. Our power is one of recommendation only, where an administrative error is found, or a process improvement may be made. The Office of the Ombud is not an advocate for complainants, but an independent office which uses an objective and impartial approach when exercising its mandate.

During the course of our investigation, we reviewed information which the Town provided, practices with respect to budget proceedings in other local governments as well as relevant legislation. It is our understanding that these annual internal working sessions (“session”) are to allow management staff to discuss priorities for the upcoming budget year. They are organized by the Town Treasurer and Council members are invited to attend.

While our Office has not found specific provisions within the *Local Governance Act* that would prohibit such a session, we have raised the importance of transparency and accountability with the Town, particularly in respect of budget deliberations. Our Office will also be raising this issue with the Department of Local Government and Local Governance Reform.

With that, your file with our Office will now be closed. We thank you for bringing this matter to our attention and please do not hesitate in contacting us in the future should you have any new complaints.