



Media Release
March 20, 2013

Ombudsman investigates Corporation of Hamilton

Hamilton, Bermuda: Arlene Brock, Ombudsman for Bermuda, announced that she is launching a Systemic Investigation into the Corporation of Hamilton (“CoH”) on her own motion in the public interest. Allegations brought to her office include lack of transparency, inadequate governance and lack of public consultation – generally (e.g. operational decisions made beyond remit of the Board) and particularly (regarding the proposed waterfront development project).

The CoH had promised that for the waterfront project: *“the entire process from early on planning to final construction will be conducted in full transparency and will be inclusive for all to participate at every step of the way”*. However, there are concerns that this promise is not being kept. Ms. Brock stated: *“21st century transparency must demonstrate evidence-based decision-making, adequate disclosure and public consultation on major developments. The continuing controversy and apparent growing loss of confidence in the Corporation, in addition to the centrality of the city of Hamilton’s role in Bermuda give me reasonable grounds to launch a systemic investigation in the public interest. Shedding light on governance at the Corporation can only be of benefit to the city of Hamilton and to Bermuda as a whole.”*

While it can be disconcerting for an authority to be the subject of an Ombudsman’s systemic investigation, Ms. Brock takes note of a statement (by a Canadian Court) that aptly and succinctly sets out the value of Ombudsman investigations: *“the Ombudsman can bring the lamp of scrutiny to otherwise dark places, even over the resistance of those who would draw the blinds. If his scrutiny and observations are well-founded, corrective measures can be taken in due democratic process, if not; no harm can be done in looking at that which is good.”*

Anyone with relevant factual information is invited to deliver a brief written summary (no more than one page) by **5:00 pm Friday 5 April** to info@ombudsman.bm or to 14 Dundonald St., Hamilton. If more information is required, the office will contact persons who make submissions for follow-up interviews. **All submissions are treated in the strictest confidence.**

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Editor’s Notes:

- Section 5(2)(b) of the *Ombudsman Act 2004* provides for the Ombudsman to conduct investigations on her *“own motion, notwithstanding that no complaint has been made to her, where she is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to carry out an investigation in the public interest”*.
- For more information: A. Brock, Office of the Ombudsman, tel: 296-6541

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