

Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario  
483 Bay Street  
10th floor, South Tower  
Toronto, ON M5G 2C9

Dear Ombudsman,

As Members of Council for the City of Ottawa, we request that your office investigate and report to the public on the procurement, construction, and management of Ottawa's new Light Rail Transit (LRT) project, as well as the procurement process for the LRT Stage II.

Within the first two months, the system had broken down more than 50 times. Since then, there have been many chronic issues, including flat wheels, broken rails, pieces of the electrical power catenary system falling off, door jams, power failures, frozen switches, software problems, and more.

The City has been forced to pull buses from their regular routes to have on standby to move residents whenever the train is not operating at "full" capacity. This has led to major inconveniences among train users and bus users both as we have a transit system that is expensive and unreliable.

As elected representatives, we have been frustrated in our attempts to learn more about the contracts, the technical reports, and the overall management of the system due to contractual obligations to protect the vendors' proprietary information. Elected representatives cannot carry out their duties on behalf of residents if they don't have all of the facts.

CBC reported on January 24, 2020 that one of the contract bidders, a consortium called TransitNEXT, was ruled out of the bidding for LRT II due to a failed technical evaluation. A bid evaluation team subsequently twice overruled the technical evaluation team, putting TransitNEXT back into the bidding. TransitNEXT was eventually awarded the contract for LRT II. Although direct questions made at the February 27, 2019 meeting about the technical scoring and whether any of the proponents failed to meet the technical requirement scores, Ottawa City Council was not informed of these facts at the time Council considered the contract.

We request that you review the circumstances that have led to this situation and that you provide recommendations to help us find solutions and to prevent future problems.