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All bark, no bite

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Some time ago, the province announced the appointment of a new municipal auditor general, saying the watchdog position would ensure more financial accountability at the local government level.

Municipalities bristled, saying it was a bit rich for the province - which has a marked tendency to ignore the findings of its own auditor general - to say it was going to keep watch over them.

Turns out, they needn't have worried. Because the new watchdog's power to keep local governments in check or provide useful information was vastly over-rated.

Most recently, it has been revealed that almost none of the 18 audits being done on municipalities have been completed. Reports originally supposed to be completed this past spring now won't be released until 2015.

The auditor general has said at least part of the reason is it would be "inappropriate" to release any findings prior to the conclusion of local election campaigns.

The statement is reminiscent of former prime minister Kim Campbell's infamous quip that an election is no place to discuss serious issues.

On both counts, we couldn't disagree more.

How money is spent and how those decisions come about is at the heart of all government and all politics.

The auditor general's reports were to have dealt with matters ranging from the mundane to the significant (policing costs for instance). That would have been useful information for citizens to have before they head to the ballot box next month.

What good is it to anyone to release reports on municipal practices after the elections are over and new councils are just beginning a new four-year term?

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