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IGO Precluded from Auditing City's Grid-Based Garbage Collection System

The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (IGO) recently attempted to evaluate the City's transition from a ward-based to a grid-based garbage collection system, and identify how management would continue to drive efficiency gains in the future.

However, the Commissioner for the City Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS) walked out of a meeting when IGO auditors pressed him for information regarding his plans to monitor operations. He did not respond to a subsequent IGO request to resume the discussion.

The commissioner's refusal to cooperate left the IGO unable to:

- Determine the impact of the transition on the number of trucks and personnel involved in the garbage collection process;
- Review DSS' plans to ensure maximum efficiency of garbage collection under the new system;
- Validate DSS' efforts to correct deficiencies in its ward-based supervisory structure to meet current operational and management needs.

Due to the commissioner's refusal, the IGO recommends that:

- The City substantiate the \$18 million in savings claimed in an April 2013 announcement by publicly releasing the underlying data, calculations, and supporting documents used to estimate the total savings;
- DSS establish and apply specific performance measurements to better understand whether and how the grid-based garbage collection system is improving;
- DSS review the current supervisory structure (developed at the time of the ward-based system) and implement necessary changes to not only address the self-identified operational issues and inefficiencies, but also ensure optimally effective and efficient oversight of the grid-based garbage collection system.

"The Administration's April press release indicated DSS had done significant work in quantifying total savings, and in making plans to ensure continuous programmatic innovation and monitoring," said Inspector General Joe Ferguson. "DSS should share that work with Chicagoans and the IGO. Ignoring official IGO inquiries does not make them go away, and blocking IGO access to City programs sets a remarkably poor example for other City employees.

Such behavior sends a signal to the public about the City’s commitment to transparency and accountability.”

The full audit report can be found online at the IGO website: www.chicagoinspectorgeneral.org. Follow the IGO on Twitter [@ChicagoIGO](https://twitter.com/ChicagoIGO) for the latest information on how the IGO continues to fight waste, fraud, abuse, and inefficiency in Chicago government.

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