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Profile in Public Integrity:

Jacques Duchesneau

Inspector General, Saint-Jérôme, Quebec



Jacques Duchesneau was appointed Inspector General of Saint-Jérôme, Quebec in March 2017. In this position, he leads the newly created Bureau d'intégrité professionnelle et administrative (BIPA), an agency tasked with identifying and combating cases of public corruption, collusion, and fraud. Before becoming Saint-Jérôme's Inspector General, Duchesneau served as the head of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA), and as Chief of the Montréal Police Service.

Before you became the Inspector General of Saint-Jérôme, Quebec in March, you led the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) and the Montréal Police Service. How have these prior experiences influenced your work as Inspector General?

[CATSA](#) was born in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to protect the public by securing critical elements of the Canadian air transportation system through pre-board screening, hold baggage screening, non-passenger screening, and the management of restricted area identification cards. CATSA allocated contracts worth multi-billion dollars in a very short period of time. To ensure proper checks and balances, oversight became a key issue. To help ensure a high level of integrity in its operations, CATSA undertook a series of measures to continually monitor, evaluate, report on, and improve controls in contract management from which I learned valuable lessons in the areas of procurement and contract management.

During my tenure as Chief of police, corruption was not a central issue for most Police Departments. As is the case in many countries, Canadians and Quebecers were under the impression that these crimes only happened in foreign countries. In fact, it was only when I was asked to lead the new Quebec Department of Transport's Anti-Collusion Unit that I was in a position to seize the magnitude of this non-avowed problem. Following an 18-month investigation, our team presented a damaging report shedding light on numerous schemes and crimes and the politics that led to them. Our work also resulted in enormous monetary savings, the creation of the Inquiry Commission (Charbonneau Commission), and the prosecutions of a group of politicians, industry leaders and members of organized crime.

In your position as Inspector General, you are heading a newly established office, Bureau de l'intégrité professionnelle et administrative (BIPA). What are your goals for BIPA?

The Inspector General of the City of Saint-Jérôme is responsible for three specific mandates: (1) **monitor** and **control** all processes and practices to detect any act of collusion, corruption, embezzlement, fraud, and other unlawful and reprehensible conducts with the objective of prosecuting offenders and ensuring fairness, impartiality, and justice to all bidders based on a legal framework that sets standards for public procurement; (2) through various means of investigation and legal mechanisms **recover** any sums stolen from citizens through unlawful acts connected with the awarding and execution of public contracts for a period covering the last 20 years; and (3) **educate** employees and citizens to recognize and report potential violations or suspicious conduct that departs from the City's standards of integrity, ethics and compliance.

What are the major corruption risks in Quebec, and do you think BIPA has the jurisdiction and powers it needs to combat them?

The current major corruption risk in the province of Quebec is apathy. Indeed, too many people are under the impression that the corruption problem is simply drifting away. But it is not. Because it is a lucrative way of doing business, evildoers are simply finding new ways to circumvent anti-corruption efforts. There is no doubt that we are still vulnerable to this kind of threat. However, we cannot forget the fact that it took decades of tireless work from investigative journalists and the denunciations of those who could no longer accept being part of an unlawful system to start cleaning up politics and public contracting. Unfortunately, people learned the hard way that it was not always judicious to blindly trust those who supposedly speak on behalf of the community. It was only after being properly informed that citizens demanded accountability from their representatives and justice against offenders. As a society, we forgot that lenient governmental controls spread over many decades allowed construction companies and engineering firms to freely act like sharks in a pond.

I can offer three recommendations to fix this chronic problem: transparency, whistleblower protection and communications. I am convinced that transparency is still one of the most powerful remedies against corruption because it nurtures cooperation with citizens. We also need better protection for whistleblowers. In theory, public institutions are always quick to encourage denunciations, but, time and again, we have seen an aversion to employees revealing illegal or unethical practices. Furthermore, we have often seen public institutions turn a blind eye to unethical conduct, and we have also seen whistleblowers flushed out and punished for using various pretexts (transfer to another department, confinement to a stultifying job, denial of promotion, etc.). If we want people to believe that evildoers won't be able to operate with impunity anymore, we have to demonstrate that justice for all will always prevail. Finally, thorough communication about the work done by the anti-corruption community is always a beacon of hope for citizens. We have to use this tool more often.

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As for jurisdiction and powers, I have always said that the fight against corruption is a relay race, not a marathon. Consequently, more tools will come to Inspectors General if they succeed in using properly the ones they already have. If not sufficient, it is with the support of our fellow citizens that we will be able to improve them.

What advice would you give to other new Inspectors General?

A new Inspector General has to have adequate perspective and foresight to properly plan the tasks to be accomplished and must possess skills, knowledge and training to serve in this role. Aiming to get off to a good start, a new Inspector General must necessarily carry out a comprehensive assessment of the risks and controls that exist within his organization. This will help him or her design, prioritize and implement an effective anti-corruption program.

The worst scenario occurs when an Inspector General works in an organization where (1) leaders instill a cheery talk culture where everyone speaks positively about each other and avoid debates; (2) risks incurred by the organization are deliberately ignored; or (3) critics are simply dismissed out of hand. In such an idealized work environment, leaders choose to ignore important problems. They tolerate an atmosphere in which certain people generate a climate of terror with impunity and ignore real challenges facing the organization. An Inspector General who slavishly accepts the promises of elected and senior officials in matters of ethics and compliance will eventually face a brutal awakening. In the face of such actions by his superiors, the Inspector General must be able to maintain his course, adhere to his ethical values, and persevere in the performance of his duties.

In the second case only a very small proportion of the population (probably under 5%) is ever requested to pay a bribe, but there are many ways in which outcomes that work to the disadvantage of low-income groups and taxpayers in general are determined by forms of corruption both subtle and unsubtle.

We were fortunate to have you participate in CAPI's Global Cities II conference, which brought together anti-corruption practitioners and scholars from cities across the world. What do you think are the most important discussions members of the anti-corruption world should be having with one another?

CAPI provides an environment in which Inspectors General can share best practices, disseminate norms and offer suggestions on an agency-to-agency level. It is a forum to acquire new knowledge and skills needed to fulfill our mission. By learning from other organizations' successes and failures, it allows practitioners to thrive in a rapidly changing environment. It also offers the possibility to get external view points from international experts in other fields of study, and thereby prevent "tunnel thinking."