

Auditor says city used unqualified building inspectors

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Ottawa's auditor general said the city allowed final building inspections over a three-year period to be carried out by students not qualified under provincial regulations.

In an annual report to city council, Alain Lalonde said a total of 2,510 inspections were carried out from 2006 to 2008 by unqualified interns and summer students, with 512 of these inspections credited to a qualified inspector in the system.

"Further investigation of this matter found that correspondence involving the Manager, Inspections, and the various Program Managers... discussed the potential negative impacts on the City should this practice not be stopped and should it come to light," said the auditor's report.

Deputy city manager Nancy Schepers disputed the significance of the findings of the auditor general during the council meeting, saying the student inspectors were only considered unqualified after a change in provincial legislation in 2006, and that the inspections referred to were over and above provincial requirements.

The city's Chief Building Official, Arlene Gregoire, said the inspections also amounted to just a small percentage of total inspections.

"It is important to clarify that the bulk of these inspections were not mandatory under provincial legislation, were not structural in nature, and amounted to less than 1 per cent of the total number of inspections performed over this period of time," said Gregoire in a statement.

"Safety was never compromised," she said.

The city said the students were hired because of an unprecedented construction boom from 2006 to 2008.

Ottawa's inspector internship program began to produce qualified interns recognized by the Province in 2009.

Read more: <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/ottawa/story/2010/06/23/ottawa-city-auditor-report.html#socialcomments#ixzz15duRsdW8>