



Connection

Ombudsman awards good public service

Earlier this year, four Ontario government employees received a 2002 Ombudsman Ontario Public Service Recognition Award for providing exceptional service while working to resolve complaints from the public about their organization.

Ombudsman Clare Lewis, Q.C., presented the awards in March at a reception held in honour of the recipients at Ombudsman Ontario's Toronto office. The awards were presented to Russell Jones, Manager of Complaint Services for Legal Aid Ontario (Ministry of the Attorney General), Sharon van Son, Executive Director of the Family Responsibility Office (Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services), James Terry, Deputy Registrar at the Health Professions Appeal and Review Board (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care), and Helena Duncan, Health Care Coordinator at the Millbrook Correctional Centre (Ministry of Public Safety and Security).

Also attending the awards reception were: family members of the recipients; Deputy Ministers Morris Zbar (Ministry of Public Safety and Security) and John Fleming (Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services); Assistant Deputy Minister John Rabeau (Ministry of Public Safety and Security); Acting Assistant



Ontario's Ombudsman, Clare Lewis, Q.C. (centre), presented four awards for outstanding public service to members of the Ontario Public Service. From left to right, Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Safety & Security John Rabeau (who accepted on behalf of Helena Duncan, Health Care Coordinator at the Millbrook Correctional Centre); James Terry, Deputy Registrar, Health Professions Appeal and Review Board; Sharon van Son, Executive Director, Family Responsibility Office, Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services and Russell Jones, Manager, Complaint Services, Legal Aid Ontario.

Deputy Attorney General Elizabeth Patterson; Chair Dennis Condos and Registrar Abby Katz Starr of the Health Professions Appeal and Review Board; and Vice-President of Policy, Planning and External Relations George Biggar, of Legal Aid Ontario.

In his remarks to the audience Mr.

Lewis said, "The purpose of the Ombudsman Ontario Public Service Recognition Award is to give our office the chance to say 'thank you' to those in the Ontario Public Service who work hard in the spirit of cooperation and resolution in situations that are often frustrating and difficult. This is our way of

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showing our appreciation to those individuals who exemplify the true spirit of public service and recognition of the role of the Ombudsman in attempting to resolve public complaints. The outstanding work of each recipient is particularly notable given society's considerable need for the services that they provide."

The recipients were chosen from nominations submitted by Ombudsman Ontario Complaint Services staff. The selection committee, which was chaired by the Ombudsman, made its selection based on specific criteria that included identifying public servants who demonstrated leadership and initiative in informal problem-solving and early resolution of complaints, as well as exceptional responsiveness and co-operation during Ombudsman Ontario's investigative process.

Mission Statement and Values

As part of an internal restructuring, Ombudsman Ontario staff members were asked to participate in the re-evaluation of our organizational values and mission statement.

After a review of 83 slogan entries submitted by staff, a new mission statement was adopted. In the decision process, the five-member selection committee considered which of the anonymous entries best reflected the work of our organization and our purpose.

Working to ensure fair and accountable provincial government service.

International Ombudsman



Members of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) met in Edmonton earlier this year. From left to right, IOI Vice-President Selby Baqwa, Public Protector of South Africa; IOI President Sir Brian Elwood, Chief Ombudsman of New Zealand; IOI Secretary Clare Lewis, Q.C., Ombudsman of Ontario; and IOI Treasurer Lewis Klar, Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Alberta.

Ethiopian representatives



Chair and Vice-chairpersons of selected standing committees of the House of People's Representatives, Parliament of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, visited Ombudsman Ontario and met with Ombudsman Clare Lewis and Legal Counsel Wendy Ray (back row, second and third from the right). The delegation was seeking information on the Ontario Ombudsman's mandate and the services provided to the public as reference material for the possible establishment of Ethiopia's own National Office of the Ombudsman.

Umbrella organization provides forum for all Canadian ombudsman

A new umbrella organization that represents parliamentary, private, public and college and university ombudsman in Canada held its first official Board of Directors meeting last month.

The not-for-profit Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO) which was federally incorporated in the Fall of 2001, will now function as a representative body for Canadian ombudsman.

Until the formation of the FCO, the Canadian Ombudsman Association (COA), which was federally incorporated in 1998, operated as the national body dedicated to the promotion of ombudsman values and the discussion of ombudsmanship. However, while Parliamentary Ombudsman held voting rights within the COA, non-Parliamentary ombudsman were Associate Members without the right to vote. That restriction was eventually recognized as neither useful to any of the parties nor equitable in terms of membership. It was determined that an umbrella association would give equality of membership to each of the disparate groups performing ombudsman or ombudsman-like functions. The COA will continue on an informal basis as the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman with membership limited to those who, pursuant to statute, report to Parliament or a provincial assembly, are independent in function from government and who resolve complaints from the public

about the provision of government service.

Ombudsman Ontario played a vital role in the creation of the FCO, and Ombudsman Clare Lewis, who served as Secretary of the COA, is a member of the new board. An item included for discussion at the April meeting held in Ottawa, was the first Conference for FCO members scheduled for the Spring of 2003.

The FCO, through its diverse membership, provides a broad spectrum of approaches to complaint resolution.

FORUM OF CANADIAN OMBUDSMAN

The six membership sections are:

***Parliamentary Ombudsman and
their staff***

***Public Sector Ombudsman and
their staff***

***College or University Ombudsman
and their staff***

***Private Sector Ombudsman and
their staff***

Members at large

International Members

The FCO welcomes individuals not residing or working in Canada as international members. Membership fees are \$200 for an organization or \$50 for individuals or International Members.

Case story

Eviction threat averted

Mr. A has a disability and attended an intake clinic accompanied by two advocates, a lawyer from a legal clinic and a representative from the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Mr. A and his advocates had made several requests to his income source, the Ontario Disability Support Plan (ODSP), to have his rent paid directly to his landlord, the local housing authority. The complainant's advocates advised that these requests were not completed due to processing problems and as a consequence Mr. A's rent had not been paid. Mr. A was very upset as he was now anticipating an eviction order which would leave him homeless.

An Ombudsman Representative contacted the local Housing Authority which confirmed they had been contacted by the ODSP to implement a "pay direct" for rent. However, the Ontario Housing Authority advised that the account number information had been "rejected" by the computer. The Housing Authority also confirmed that their agency was in the process of evicting the complainant for non-payment of rent.

Further follow-up by the Ombudsman Representative to the ODSP confirmed that the Ministry had brought in a technical person for this file to ensure that the computer problems were corrected in order that the request for "pay direct" payment of rent to the landlord could be put into place. Mr. A's rent was subsequently paid and his eviction order rescinded.

Annual Report

The 2001 - 2002 Ombudsman Ontario Annual Report will be presented in June.

mission

STATEMENT

Working to ensure fair and accountable provincial government service

We Believe

Ombudsman Ontario is guided by the following values in its interactions with its staff, the public and government:

Fairness: treating everyone in a reasonable, equitable, and impartial manner

Accountability: providing quality services, taking responsibility, evaluating and improving through innovation

Integrity: demonstrating transparent, honest and ethical practices

Respect: understanding individual differences and valuing diversity

Contact information

1-800-263-1830 - English

1 800 387-2620 - Français

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Who We Are

Ombudsman Ontario helps people resolve problems by investigating complaints they have with provincial government ministries, agencies, boards, commissions and tribunals. The office cannot deal with matters regarding federal or municipal government, the courts, school boards and the private sector. Ombudsman Ontario is independent of the government and is a place of last resort when other approaches to resolve complaints have been tried. Services provided are confidential.

About our logo

This is the symbol for Ombudsman Ontario. The "O" stands for our name. Inside, three sets of arms come together: one each for the public, the government and our office.



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