



Connection

Honouring the children



Ombudsman Clare Lewis (right) discussing the Quilt of Honour with Susan Hess (centre) and Anne Keefer of Parents for Children's Mental Health. The quilt, created by Hess who is also the president of the organization, and Joy Hansen (not shown), honours all children with mental illness - those who are alive and those who have died. The paper-doll chain figures in red represent children who have received help or those who are waiting for help while the white figures are representative of those children who have taken their own lives. Parents for Children's Mental Health works with families, the general public, mental health professionals and agencies, and government to provide education, support and advocacy. Mr. Lewis was a speaker at the Children's Mental Health Ontario's 2003 Conference held in Toronto in May.

Photo by Tony Diniz

Ombudsman's Annual Report cites gaps in services

Ombudsman Clare Lewis Q.C. expressed concern about the consistency and adequacy of services provided to vulnerable individuals at a press conference on the release of his 2002-2003 Annual Report in mid-June. The Ombudsman

identified cases that highlight gaps in services that have significant impact on vulnerable Ontarians.

Ombudsman Ontario received a total of 21,757 complaints and enquiries over the 2002-2003 fiscal year. The largest number of complaints and

enquiries were received about correctional facilities (7,271), the Family Responsibility Office (the FRO) (1,335), Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (790), the Ontario Disability Support Program (601), Workplace Safety and Insurance

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Appeals Tribunal (213), Ontario Student Assistance Program (212), Ontario Human Rights Commission (183), Ministry of Transportation - Driver Licensing (175), Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal (167), Legal Aid Ontario (151) and Hydro One Networks Inc. (133).

"A hallmark of a democratic society is that individuals have a right to complain about the delivery of public services and have their complaints independently reviewed," said Mr. Lewis. He urged government to consider establishing independent complaint resolution mechanisms to assist vulnerable individuals, particularly in the areas of health care and education.

The Annual Report is available on-line at www.ombudsman.on.ca or on CD-ROM by calling the Communications Office at 416-586-3353.



Recipients of the 2003 Annual Ombudsman Ontario Public Service Recognition Award received their awards from the Ombudsman in April in recognition of their outstanding public service in complaints resolution. From left to right, Jim Aspiotis, Ministry of Public Safety and Security, Linda Hoard and Liz Stayer of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Clare Lewis, Q.C., Ombudsman, Voy Stelmaszynski, Ministry of Labour, Jean Rae, Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services and Superintendent Michael Coté, Ministry of Public Safety and Security.

Photo by Casimir Bart



Peggy Edwards, Executive Director of Skills For Change, accepts a certificate from Ombudsman Clare Lewis at the launch of the Community Connection Lunch and Learn Series. Ms Edwards was the inaugural guest speaker at the event hosted by Ombudsman Ontario's Community Education Program. Speakers from various community organizations share information and concerns about the communities they serve with Ombudsman staff.



Quebec Legislative Interns visited Queen's Park in May to gain a greater understanding of Ontario's political structure and government. While in Toronto they attended an information session with the Ombudsman. Mr. Lewis is joined by Ariane Beauregard, Stephanie Yates, Sophie Doucet and Gabriel Jean-Simon.

Case summaries

Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services

The Family Responsibility Office

Ms Z complained to the Ombudsman because she had not received her support payments for two months and despite many attempts, she had been unable to reach the Family Responsibility Office (the FRO) by telephone to find out where her money was. Ombudsman Ontario staff contacted the FRO, which advised that it had tried unsuccessfully to deposit money directly into Ms Z's bank account. No one at the FRO had taken note of the problem and Ms Z's money was being held in suspense. As a result of the Ombudsman's enquiry, Ms Z's case was reviewed further by the FRO and the money was mailed to her the same day.

Ontario Disability Support Program

Ms D's children live with her for one month during the summer. As a result of this arrangement, the Ministry advised her that half of the amount her former spouse was receiving for the Canada Child Tax Benefit would be deducted from her ODSP cheque. Ms D complained to the Ombudsman that this was unfair. An Ombudsman Representative contacted the Ministry and spoke to a supervisor. Consequently, the supervisor reviewed the file again and the money that had been deducted was returned to Ms D.

Ministry of Health and Long-term Care

Ontario Health Insurance Plan

Mr. P complained to the Ombudsman that he was having difficulty replacing his Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) card. Mr. P claimed that the local OHIP office refused to accept his birth certificate as identification, because it was on a piece of paper rather than wallet-sized. He also claimed the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care had refused to accept other identification as proof of his identity. Within minutes of Ombudsman staff contacting the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ministry informed Mr. P that it would make arrangements with the local office for him to receive a new card. An appointment was made for Mr. P to attend the local office the next day for that purpose.

Ministry of Labour

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Mr. O contacted the Ombudsman to complain about the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's (WSIB's) delay in making a decision regarding his claim for compensation.

Mr. O stated that he had been leaving messages for his WSIB adjudicator, who was not returning his calls. Mr. O stated the WSIB had lost several of the documents he had sent, including his doctor's report. He stated he had spoken to a manager who had informed him that his claim was rejected because there was no

employer's report and no doctor's report. Mr. O insisted he had provided the doctor's report and his doctor confirmed that WSIB had already paid for the report.

Mr. O stated he had a \$400 physiotherapy bill that needed to be paid and he required more physiotherapy for his injury to heal properly. Mr. O agreed to provide WSIB with another doctor's report. However, Mr. O subsequently called our office stating that after he submitted a second doctor's report, he was unable to reach his adjudicator to obtain an update on his file. Shortly after Ombudsman staff contacted the adjudicator, Mr. O's claim for physiotherapy as well as one day's pay for lost time was allowed.

Ministry of Public Safety and Security

Correctional Services

Mr. I had been transferred from a provincial to a federal correctional facility. He complained to our office that his property was not transferred with him. Ombudsman staff contacted the facility, which confirmed that the property had remained in Toronto. The facility explained this was caused by the labour disruption, which had ended approximately two months before. As a result of the Ombudsman's intervention, Mr. I's property was returned to him.

These cases are from Ombudsman Ontario's 2002-2003 Annual Report. A complete copy of the Annual Report can be found on our website at: www.ombudsman.on.ca. To have a copy or CD version mailed to you, please call 416-586-3353.

mission

STATEMENT

Working to ensure fair and accountable provincial government service

Our Values

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

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For general information, comments on this newsletter or mailing address changes, please call our Communications Office at **416-586-3353**.

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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, 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.

