



Connection

Showcasing Ombudsman Ontario

Ombudsman Clare Lewis hosted an open house for members of the public, members of the Legislature, members of the public service and representatives of community organizations at his office at 125 Queens Park. The following is an excerpt from his welcome remarks:

"It is my belief that in a democratic society such as ours, the Ombudsman, through independent and impartial resolution of public complaints, serves to provide on-the-ground, daily transparency and accountability for the delivery of government service and, in that manner, supports the core democratic value of ongoing fairness and justice by government to the public and, when appropriate, enables redress for error or maladministration.

"I was anxious to host this event so that I might say how honoured I am to work with my staff, the public, the Legislative Assembly and the public service in contributing to public support for our democratic process through accessible, inexpensive resolution of public complaint about government service. This office is intended to meet the need for a truly transparent, independent and impartial means of redressing public complaint. I am proud of the dedication of our staff in fulfilling that obligation and grateful for the recognition and support of the need by our Legislative Assembly and our public service and many members of the public."



Ombudsman Clare Lewis (left) welcomes Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and Ross Peebles, Deputy Minister, Centre for Leadership to the Open House held in October. The event provided an opportunity for the Ombudsman and his staff to showcase the work of the office.



Investigators Gerry Carlino (left) and Rosie Dear (right) provide information on the Ombudsman's office to Peter Fonseca, Member of Provincial Parliament and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care at a Legislative information centre set up for the new MPPs.

Community Education



Clare Lewis gave a vote of thanks to Avvy Go, Clinic Director of the Metro Toronto Chinese and South-East Asian Legal Clinic who was a guest speaker at one of Ombudsman Ontario's Community Education Program Lunch and Learn series for staff.



Since its launch in April, the Community Education Program (CEP) team has participated in over 300 events across Ontario including the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Counsellors, the Toronto Teachers of English as a Second Language and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) conferences. In the photo above, CEP staff member Pamela Young answers questions from a member of the public.



The 2003-2004 Ontario Legislative Interns attended an information session in September with the Ombudsman. Two of the interns, Sarah Baker and Michael Acedo, spent a six week placement at Ombudsman Ontario where they assisted in the updating of the organization's environmental scan document and the preparations for the annual staff conference and open house. Shown with Mr. Lewis in the photo above, are from the left, David Miles, Sarah Baker, Michael Acedo, Kate Mulligan, Holly Bondy, Chris Shantz, Melanie Francis and Amanda Mayer.



Ombudsman Clare Lewis welcomes Dr. Lao Mong Hay, head of the Legal Unit of the Center for Social Development in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Dr Lao is a visiting scholar at the Asian Institute, Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto.

Case summaries

Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services

The Family Responsibility Office

Ms R complained that the FRO had delayed over 5 months in registering her case and as a result, she feared she would not receive any monies owing to her from the support payor, who was expecting a major settlement from his employer. An Ombudsman Representative contacted the FRO to discuss the situation. As a result, the FRO issued an Initial Support Deduction Notice. Six weeks later \$39,000 was deposited into the recipient's bank account for arrears owing to her.

Mr. X contacted the Ombudsman after being advised that he did not qualify for a bank loan because of an unsatisfactory credit rating. Mr. X later learned that the FRO had reported to a credit bureau that he was in default of his support obligations. Mr. X maintained that he did not owe support to the FRO and had never had any dealings with the court relating to support payments. The Ombudsman contacted the FRO and provided it with information regarding Mr. X's complaint. After reviewing its files, the FRO confirmed that Mr. X did not have a case registered with it and he had been reported to the consumer reporting agency in error. The FRO had the agency's record relating to Mr. X deleted.

Ministry of Public Safety and Security

Correctional Services

Mr. P, an inmate at Ontario's privatized correctional centre, complained that after he traded his running shoes with another inmate, the facility took the shoes away because they were not documented on his personal property declaration form. Mr. P was left to wear his shower slippers, which did not provide him with any support. After an Ombudsman Representative contacted the facility, it inspected the shoes and returned them to Mr. P.

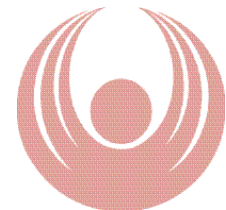
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Ontario Student Assistance Program

Ms R contacted the Ombudsman complaining that she had been trying for two years to resolve an issue involving misapplied Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) loan payments. Ms R said that five of her loan payments had been misapplied or lost. Her file had been registered as being in default and she was reported to a credit bureau and collection agency. Ms R had copies of cancelled cheques confirming her payments. Ombudsman staff contacted the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities with this information. The Ministry immediately reviewed its files, located the payments, purged

the record from the collection agency and notified the credit bureau to delete its record of the debt.

Mr. W complained to the Ombudsman that he was not provided with information concerning the effect his transferring from a University to a Community College would have on his Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) loan. Mr. W claimed that the College advised him that he would be entitled to study grants in the second semester. However, when he went to claim these, he was told that his OSAP loan had been reassessed. He was denied the study grant and informed that his OSAP loan had been overpaid. After he complained, he was told that eligibility levels differ for Colleges and Universities and his transfer to a College had resulted in the overpayment. After an Ombudsman Representative enquired, the Financial Aid Office at the College reviewed Mr. W's case again. It determined that some of his costs had changed and filed an appeal on his behalf. As a result, Mr. W obtained two study grants.



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

Contact information

125 Queens Park

Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C7

1-800-263-1830 - English

1-800-387-2620 - French

1-866-411-4211 - TTY, hard of hearing
and deaf

1-866-863-2560 - Fax

416-586-3300 - Toronto

416-586-3485 - Toronto Fax

Website: www.ombudsman.on.ca

For general information, comments

on this newsletter or mailing

address changes, please call our

Communications Office at

416-586-3353.

If your organization or umbrella group would like to learn more about Ombudsman Ontario, our **Community Education Program** staff would be pleased to facilitate an information session. Using overhead slides or a PowerPoint presentation and encouraging questions throughout, we will explain how we help people resolve their problems with provincial government organizations. Participants

will learn about the philosophy of the Ombudsman, how to complain to us, our most common referrals, as well as the most common types of complaints. We will provide handouts of the presentation and info kits to all participants. For further information or to book an information session, call Judith Klie, **Community Education Program**, 416-586-3357.

Who We Are

Ombudsman Ontario helps people resolve problems by investigating complaints they have with provincial government organizations. 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 generally a place of last resort when other approaches to resolve complaints have been tried. Complaints can be made in writing, by telephone, e-mail, TTY, fax or by cassette recording. Services are free and 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 for the public, the government and the office.



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Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C7

