



Connection

Excellence in public service

In recognition of outstanding efforts to resolve complaints and provide better service to the public, Ombudsman Clare Lewis awarded five members of the Ontario public service with the 2004 Ombudsman Ontario Public Service Recognition Award at a reception and presentation attended by government officials, colleagues, family and friends and Ombudsman Ontario staff members.

Recipients of the 2004 award are:

Barbara Cooper, Program Analyst, Integrated Services for Children's Unit, Management Support Branch (Ministry of Children's Services); Lucy Costa, Client Service Associate, Family Responsibility Office (Ministry of Community and Social Services); Ms Costa is currently on secondment to the Information and Privacy Commissioner); Rozalia Krepostman, Acting Case Management Coordinator, Driver Improvement Office (Ministry of Transportation); Deputy Superintendent Dwight Goden, Central East Correctional Centre (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services); and R. David Mitchell, Compliance Monitor, Operations Compliance Unit, Central North



Recipients of the annual Ombudsman Ontario Public Service Recognition Award accepted their awards from Ombudsman Clare Lewis at a reception held in their honour. The recipients were (clockwise from the left), Deputy Superintendent Dwight Goden, R. David Mitchell with Ombudsman Clare Lewis, Barbara Cooper and Lucy Costa. Rozalia Krepostman was unable to attend the event.

Correctional Centre (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services).

"I am pleased to recognize these

individuals for their outstanding professionalism and contributions to working cooperatively with the Ombudsman office," said Mr. Lewis. "The Public Service Recognition Award provides my staff and me with the opportunity to recognize those individuals within the public service who not only demonstrate the values of fairness and accountability in cooperation with our office, but who also work hard to ensure the public is being served with respect and integrity."

Initiated in 1998, the award recognizes public servants who consistently find ways to solve problems and provide better service to the public in response to the complaints brought forward by Ombudsman Ontario staff. There have been 34 award recipients to date. A selection committee chaired by the Ombudsman selects recipients from nominations submitted by Ombudsman Ontario staff. Decisions are based on criteria that identify those nominees who demonstrate leadership in informal problem solving and early resolution of complaints; initiate innovative approaches to promote alternative dispute resolution; encourage the application of systemic and system-wide problem solving; and provide exceptional responsiveness and cooperative service during the complaint resolution process.



Commissioner Fbbie Tatti and Public Affairs Liaison Nancy Gardiner with the Office of the Languages Commissioner, Northwest Territories (second and third from the left) met with Ombudsman Ontario's Manager of Investigations Duncan Newport (third from the right) and members of his investigative staff in an information sharing session to discuss investigative processes, independence of the Ombudsman's office and non-jurisdictional issues. Standing from the left are investigators James Nicholas, Kwame Addo and Kathy Penfold.



Ombudsman Clare Lewis (right) listens to Professor Elmira Suleymanova, Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan during a conference for international ombudsman. Mr. Lewis is the current President of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) which is headquartered at the Faculty of Law, University of Alberta in Edmonton. The IOI has over 200 members worldwide. The IOI's VIII International Conference will be held from September 7 to 10, 2004 in Quebec City. For more information on the Conference please visit the website at: www.law.ualberta.ca/centres/ioi

Community Education Program



Laura Spiers (left) of Ombudsman Ontario's Community Education Program (CEP) answers questions from students during a presentation at George Brown College in Toronto.



Peter Allen, Director of Corporate Services, thanks Jennifer Ramsay of the Advocacy Centre for Tenants who was the special guest at a Lunch and Learn session for Ombudsman Ontario staff. Jennifer spoke on "Housing Issues and Trends Across Ontario."

Case summaries

Ministry of Citizenship

Ontario Human Rights Commission

Mr. B began writing to our office in July 1998 about his concerns about the manner in which the Ontario Human Rights Commission handled his case and its decisions. We received more than 60 letters directly. As of January 2002 the OHRC had recorded 27 complaints for Mr. B. Mr. B also filed numerous complaints with the Trustee of Investigations about the conduct of the Commission's staff relating to his initial complaints.

The Ombudsman noted that it appeared no matter the explanation provided or corrective action taken, Mr. B believed that the Commission was intent on depriving him of his human rights. Mr. B rejected information and speculated about the Commission's influence, implicating other organizations and individuals. The Ombudsman was of the view that little would be achieved in examining many of Mr. B's concerns. While there had been some delays, administrative problems and procedural errors, these did not lead the Ombudsman to conclude that the Commission had failed to fulfill its responsibilities to a significant degree. The Ombudsman considered Mr. B's complaints to be vexatious and declined to investigate under s. 17(2)(b) of the *Ombudsman Act*.



Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services

The Family Responsibility Office

Mr. Y is a male support recipient, who has full custody of his two children. He advised our office that for two years the support payments sent in by his former spouse had not been deposited in his account. The FRO had returned \$5,500 to the support payor in error, assuming that as she was female she was the recipient. When the FRO realised its error, it entered into a repayment agreement with the payor. Mr. Y did not find this acceptable and requested that the money be paid to him in a lump sum. The FRO refused stating that it had no money to make such a payment. Following intervention by the Ombudsman, the FRO agreed to pay Mr. Y in full by direct deposit for the money they sent to the payor.

Ontario Disability Support Program

A service agency contacted Ombudsman Ontario on behalf of Ms E, whose Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits had been terminated. The service agency advised that given the condition of Ms E's mental health, she was unable to comprehend the importance of receiving a monthly ODSP allowance. She also did not cooperate with ODSP staff when they set up appointments to meet with her. The service agency

attempted to deal with the Ministry on Ms E's behalf but the Ministry refused to deal with the agency, on the basis that it was a third party. The agency informed our office that it might not be able to provide Ms E with board and lodging if she continued to have no income. Ms E had not paid her bills since her benefits were terminated. Ombudsman Ontario conducted an informal enquiry into this matter on its own motion. Ombudsman Ontario staff enquired into Ms E's case and asked the Ministry whether it had considered appointing a trustee to receive Ms E's ODSP benefits. As a result of our enquiry, the Ministry decided to reinstate Ms E's benefits in the amount of \$11,328 and appointed the service agency as trustee.

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.



The 2003-2004 Ombudsman Ontario Annual Report will be tabled with the Ontario Legislature in June.

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. The three sets of arms come together: one each for the public, the government and our office.



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