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A YEAR FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS

OMBUDSMAN'S TOP 10 STORIES OF 2014



When is it *good news* to receive a record-setting number of complaints? When you're the Ombudsman and the complainants are coming to you for help! The year 2014 was marked by precedents, including the highest-ever number of individual complaints helped (**26,999 in fiscal 2013-2014**), the most complaints ever received about a single government body (**Hydro One – almost 9,500 since February**), and the largest number of

DECEMBER 2014

The Ombudsman investigates public complaints about Ontario government agencies. His office oversees more than 500 provincial ministries, agencies, tribunals, boards, commissions and Crown corporations.

[FILE A COMPLAINT ONLINE](#)

Ombudsman Ontario

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LET THE SUN SHINE IN

The Annual Report of our Open Meeting Law Enforcement Team (OMLET), which summarizes the Ombudsman's investigations of

concurrent systemic investigations (**four**). But most importantly, Ontario history was made in 2014 with the introduction and passage of legislation to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to municipalities, universities and school boards – meaning big changes for our office in 2015, our 40th anniversary year.

Here are the Ombudsman's Top 10 stories of 2014, selected with the help of our social media followers:

1. MUSH sector finally opened to scrutiny: It's been almost 40 years since the first Ontario Ombudsman, Arthur Maloney, decried the lack of independent oversight of the broader public sector, also known as the MUSH sector (municipalities, universities, school boards, hospitals and long-term care homes, children's aid societies and police). Ontario lagged behind all other provinces in ombudsman oversight of these areas, and since 2005 alone, our office had to turn away more than 20,000 MUSH complaints. But at long last, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014, will change that. The Act, a.k.a. "Bill 8," gives our office oversight of municipalities, universities and school boards, creates a Patient Ombudsman in the Ministry of Health for hospitals/long-term care issues, and gives the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth the power to investigate CASSs. Although it was passed into law on December 9, these parts of Bill 8 haven't yet been proclaimed in force by the government – so watch for it to be a big story of 2015 as well.

2. An energizing investigation: The Ombudsman's investigation into problems with billing and customer service at Hydro One, launched in February, has drawn the highest number of complaints we've ever seen on one issue, by far. While the Ombudsman's report on the big-picture systemic issues is expected to be released in 2015, our staff have worked with Hydro One to resolve many urgent individual cases – including helping a woman recover \$8,000 that Hydro erroneously took right out of her bank account.

3. Peak performance: Ombudsman staff worked tirelessly to address a precedent-setting 26,999 cases between April 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014. That's a 37% increase over the previous year – and 72% of those were resolved within two weeks.

[READ THE REST](#)

INVESTIGATIONS UPDATE

- [Hydro One billing practices:](#) This investigation is ongoing, with almost 9,500 complaints received so far.
- [Ontario direction to police on de-escalation:](#) Fact-gathering in this investigation is nearing completion, after which the Ombudsman's report and recommendations will be drafted.
- [Adults with developmental disabilities in crisis:](#) As the investigation

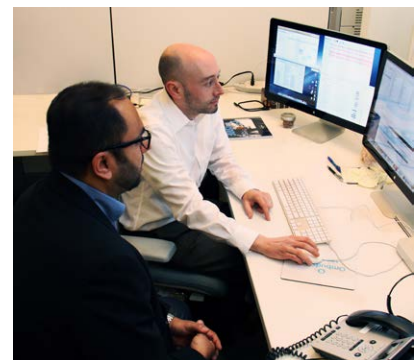
closed municipal meetings, will be released on January 27 at 11 a.m. (In a previous newsletter, it was announced that it would be released on December 16.) It will be webcast live at www.ombudsman.on.ca.

The third edition of the Sunshine Law Handbook, a tip guide created by the Ombudsman's Office to help municipal officials better understand the open meeting rules, will also be released on our website and sent to every municipality in Ontario.

WE'RE HIRING!

Work with us! Apply by January 9.

[Early Resolution Officer](#)
[End User Support \(IT\)](#)



COMMUNITY LIVING TORONTO

Senior Counsel Laura Pettigrew and Early Resolutions Officer Alanna Maloney spoke to Community Living Toronto's Self-Advocate Council about the Ontario Ombudsman's role and function on November 19.

[Read about their presentation in CLT's Connections newsletter.](#)

STAY CONNECTED

The Ombudsman has 3,305 [Facebook fans](#) and 28,004 [Twitter followers](#)! Please continue to reach out to us on

wraps up and the Ombudsman's report is being drafted, we continue to resolve individual cases and take complaints - more than 1,200 to date.

Anyone who has information relevant to our ongoing investigations can contact our office at 1-800-263-1830, file an online complaint or email: info@ombudsman.on.ca.

social media, or drop us a line at thewatchdog@ombudsman.on.ca.

Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario | Bureau de l'Ombudsman de l'Ontario
1-800-263-1830 - Complaints Line | Ligne des plaintes | 1-866-411-4211 - TTY | ATS

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AT A GLANCE

Date: 2014-12-30

When is it good news to receive a record-setting number of complaints? When you're the Ombudsman and the complainants are coming to you for help! The year 2014 was marked by precedents, including the highest-ever number of individual complaints helped (**26,999** in fiscal 2013-2014), the most complaints ever received about a single government body (Hydro One – almost **9,500** since February), and the largest number of concurrent systemic investigations (four). But most importantly, Ontario history was made in 2014 with the introduction and passage of legislation to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to municipalities, universities and school boards – meaning big changes for our office in 2015, our 40th anniversary year.

Find investigations and reports by topic:

Education & Training

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“Ontario is lucky to have Ombudsman Andre Marin, who keeps the powerful honest. It’s a good thing for some that he doesn’t have the authority to lay criminal charges.”

– Joe Warmington,
Toronto Sun, December
29, 2012



@Ont_Ombudsman

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More Tweets



areas, and since 2005 alone, our office had to turn away more than 20,000 MUSH complaints. But at long last, the *Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014*, will change that. The Act, a.k.a. "Bill 8," gives our office oversight of municipalities, universities and school boards, creates a Patient Ombudsman in the Ministry of Health for hospitals/long-term care issues, and gives the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth the power to investigate CASs. Although it was passed into law

on December 9, these parts of Bill 8 haven't yet been proclaimed in force by the government – so watch for it to be a big story of 2015 as well.

[Push for MUSH](#)

[Extend jurisdiction of Ombudsman. Maloney urges](#)

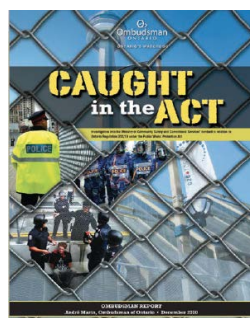
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[Hydro One investigation](#)

[Going through withdrawal](#)

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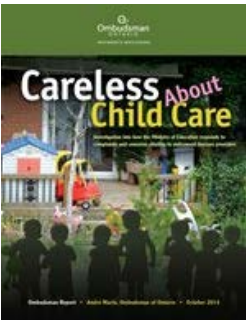
[Banner year](#)



4. Cleaning up the Act: In December, exactly four years after the Ombudsman released his report exposing how the obscure World-War-II-era *Public Works Protection Act* was used to enable police to do mass arrests during the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto, the province finally passed a new law (Bill 35) to repeal and replace it. In his report *Caught in the Act*, the Ombudsman recommended the PWP be scrapped, as it "gave police powers that are unfamiliar in a free and democratic society."

5. Who's watching the kids? In October, just over a year after two-year-old Eva Ravikovich died in an illegal home daycare in Vaughan, the Ombudsman released *Careless About Child Care*, an exhaustive report exposing serious systemic problems in how the province monitors unlicensed daycares. All of the Ombudsman's 113 recommendations calling for stricter, clearer rules and

stronger enforcement were accepted by the government, which also replaced the antiquated Day Nurseries Act with new legislation, the Child Care Modernization Act.



6. Driving home road safety: In April, the Ombudsman reported on his investigation into how the Ministry of Transportation monitors drivers whose medical conditions could make it unsafe for them to drive. The report, *Better Safe Than Sorry*, details the case of a driver with uncontrolled hypoglycemia who caused a crash that killed three people in Hamilton – yet his driver’s license wasn’t suspended for many months. The province accepted all of the Ombudsman’s 19 recommendations for improving road safety through enhanced monitoring and education of drivers.

7. Municipalities let the sunshine in: For six years, the public has been able to complain to the Ombudsman (or their municipality’s appointed investigator) about municipal council meetings held behind closed doors. The Ombudsman and our office’s Open Meeting Law Enforcement Team (OMLET) have handled hundreds of these cases, and many apparently hit home with citizens, judging by the 2014 municipal election results. In cities like London and Sudbury, several municipal officials critical of the open meeting rules and the Ombudsman’s reports were defeated. More municipalities accepted the Ombudsman’s recommendation to make digital recordings of their closed meetings. And throughout the campaign, would-be council members across the province pledged support for the full Ombudsman oversight of municipalities coming soon under Bill 8. Many mayors, including Sudbury’s Brian Bigger, Sarnia’s Mike Bradley and Brampton’s Linda Jeffrey, began their new terms on this positive note.

[Municipal Meetings](#)



8. Leading legal eagle: Ombudsman André Marin’s contributions to the practice of law in Canada were recognized once again in 2014 when he was chosen as one of the country’s top 25 lawyers for the second year in a row. In its annual ranking, based in part on votes from lawyers and the public, Canadian Lawyer magazine praised the Ombudsman as “a tenacious advocate for Ontarians.”

9. Expanding the dog’s watch: History was also made in the Northwest Territories in 2014 when its legislature put forth a motion asking government to draft legislation to give the territory its first Ombudsman. A committee of the legislature invited André Marin from Ontario to explain what an Ombudsman does at a town-hall-style information session in Yellowknife just prior to the vote.

[Ontario ombudsman urges N.W.T. to set up watchdog agency](#)

10. **Reaching out:** Not only did our office hear from a record number of complainants, we also engaged with an ever-growing number of people across the province and around the world, thanks to social media, our website, speaking engagements and training courses for investigative agencies. Most remarkably, the Ombudsman's [Twitter](#) following increased by more than 10,000 in 2014, to almost 29,000. Mr. Marin and members of his senior team spoke at several universities and to various visiting delegations of ombudsmen, from China to the Ivory Coast. In May, our office also hosted Mr. Marin's counterparts from across Canada at the annual meeting of the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman.



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