



THE WATCHDOG

Newsletter

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More than numbers

Municipal, university and school board complaints mounting

January has been an exceptionally busy month at the Ombudsman's Office. The Ombudsman gained unprecedented powers on January 1, and is finally able to take complaints about universities and municipalities after 40 years of calling for this oversight.

Since January 1, the Ombudsman has dealt with **414** complaints about **municipalities**, regarding everything from municipal services, to council conduct, to snow clearing. In one case, a man contacted our Office frustrated after trying for years to get the municipality to clear the snow on the sidewalk in front of his house. Other sidewalks in his neighbourhood had been cleared, but the municipality hadn't taken any action on his. Our staff contacted the town and determined that the sidewalk hadn't been cleared because it first required repairs. The municipality promised it would begin clearing his walk right away and add it to the regular service route.

We've had **295 school board** complaints since September 1. Our staff have pointed people in the right direction and helped them resolve complicated problems. In one such case, a teenage boy with autism who was only permitted to attend class for 45 minutes a day due to aggression issues was refusing to return to school because of an incident when police were called. His mother suggested the school board assist with providing home schooling, but the board insisted the boy stay in school. Things were at a standstill when she contacted our Office. We helped the board work with her to develop a special home schooling plan. The teen is now receiving five hours of home schooling a day with an educational assistant, and the school continues to mark his work and write his report cards.

Our **university** complaints are also on the rise, with **37** complaints in the



JANUARY 2016

The Ombudsman investigates public complaints about Ontario government agencies and broader public sector organizations. The office oversees more than 1,000 provincial ministries, agencies, tribunals, boards, commissions and Crown corporations, as well as school boards, municipalities and universities. [Barbara Finlay](#) is the Acting Ombudsman.

[FILE A COMPLAINT ONLINE](#)

Ombudsman Ontario

Bell Trinity Square
483 Bay St., 10th Floor, South Tower
Toronto, ON
M5G 2C9

Phone: 1-800-263-1830

Fax: 416-586-3485

TTY: 1-866-411-4211

Email: info@ombudsman.on.ca



WORK WITH US!

first month. Ombudsman staff continue to track complaint trends and resolve individual issues.

[Check out our brochures](#) to learn more about municipal, university and school board complaints, or [fill out a complaint form here](#).



Have a complaint about a municipality? [Read this first](#)
Have a complaint about a university? [Read this first](#)
Have a complaint about a school board? [Read this first](#)

Acting Ombudsman Barbara Finlay has spoken publicly about our new oversight in several media interviews and presentations recently. She spoke with [CBC Metro Morning](#) in Toronto and [CBC Ottawa](#) about our new jurisdiction over municipalities. She also discussed our oversight of universities with Ryerson's [The Scope radio station](#) and at the national [Canadian University Press](#) conference in Toronto.

We're listening!

In partnership with Canada's Public Policy Forum, the Office of the Ombudsman will be hosting a conference for municipal and school board stakeholders in Toronto on February 25. (A daylong information session was also held for university officials in November.) The conference is the culmination of six roundtable meetings with representatives from municipalities, universities and school boards that were held around the province in fall 2015. Invited participants will hear how Ombudsman oversight works in other provinces as well as Ontario, and discuss how it can help improve transparency and accountability. Watch for a recap of the conference in the spring.

Investigation updates

[Ontario direction to police on de-escalation:](#)

A key issue arising from the recent trial of a police officer in the death of Sammy Yatim is the training police receive in de-escalation and the use of force. In the wake of Mr. Yatim's death, our Special Ombudsman Response Team began a systemic investigation of this issue, reviewing the training police receive provincewide, the response to recommendations from

In the next few months, we'll be growing our team as we expand to oversee municipalities, universities and school boards. The Office received additional funding to hire Early Resolutions Officers, Investigators, Legal Counsel, Communications, and other staff.

We're always accepting resumes. [Read about the types of positions we offer and send us your application!](#)



careers@ombudsman.on.ca



UPCOMING OUTREACH

Are you part of the legal community? Spend the morning [learning about our new mandate](#) at an OBA Institute session on February 5 (in Toronto or via webcast).

Join us at information fairs at the [Ontario University Registrars' Association](#) annual conference on February 11, and at the Ontario Good Roads Association and Rural Ontario Municipal Association's [Combined Conference](#) from February 21-24, 2016 (both in Toronto).

If you're in Etobicoke, come and visit us at the Government Services Fair at Cloverdale Mall on Saturday, February 20 from 11 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

IN THE NEWS

- › [Ombudsman not a concern for Gravenhurst](#)
- › [CAO \(Gravenhurst Banner\)](#)
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inquests in similar deaths over the past two decades, and models used in other jurisdictions. Our report on that investigation is in the process of being finalized. It is being updated to incorporate recent developments and will be released in the coming months.

Adults with developmental disabilities in crisis:

Staff continue to resolve individual cases and take complaints - more than 1,300 to date. The large-scale systemic investigation has been completed and we are in the process of drafting the report.

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[responders who endure trauma when helping us?](#) (The Globe and Mail)

- › [Ombudsman Ontario readies for university complaint oversight](#) (Western News)

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Ombudsman Ontario has **4,073 Facebook fans** and **35,693 Twitter followers!** Please continue to reach out to us on social media, or drop us a line at thewatchdog@ombudsman.on.ca.

And stay connected with our office in both official languages! Follow our French Twitter account: [@Ont_OmbudsmanFR](#).

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

Bell Trinity Square, 483 Bay St., 10th Floor, South Tower

Bell Trinity Square 483, rue Bay 10e étage, Tour Sud, Toronto, Ontario, M5G 2C9, Canada

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