



THE WATCHDOG

Newsletter

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Welcome Paul Dubé!

Ontario appoints seventh Ombudsman; Paul Dubé begins April 1

[Mr. J. Paul Dubé](#) of Ottawa has been appointed as Ontario's seventh Ombudsman for a five-year term, to begin April 1, 2016. His appointment by an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly was announced and approved by unanimous vote in the Legislature on February 16.

Prior to his appointment as Ontario Ombudsman, Mr. Dubé served within the federal government as Canada's first Taxpayers' Ombudsman, from 2008 to 2014. "I am honoured by this appointment, and I look forward to serving the people of Ontario," Mr. Dubé said. "It's a privilege to join the Ontario Ombudsman's office, whose work I have admired and respected for many years."



Mr. Dubé will be relocating to Toronto. [Ms. Barbara Finlay](#) remains the Acting Ombudsman until his term begins.

[Read Mr. Dubé's biography](#)

By the numbers: Complaints about municipalities, universities, and school boards

Complaints within the Ombudsman's new jurisdiction of municipalities, universities and school boards topped 1,000 in February.


FEBRUARY 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 until March 31, 2016, when Paul Dubé begins his term as Ontario's seventh Ombudsman.

[FILE A COMPLAINT ONLINE](#)

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UPCOMING WEBINARS

In the next few months, the Ontario

Since January 1, our Office has received **722** complaints about **municipalities**, regarding everything from municipal services, to council conduct, to snow clearing. In one example, we received complaints of alleged violations of the councillor code of conduct in a township. While reviewing the complaints, we determined that the code of conduct wasn't readily available to the public, and there was no clear mechanism for making a complaint. Immediately following our inquiries, the township posted this information on its website along with a printable complaint form, and clarified the process for dealing with complaints, which includes referring them to council who can arrange for an investigation.

We've had **348 school board** complaints since September 1. Our staff have pointed people in the right direction and helped them resolve complicated problems. We received a complaint that several students in the same neighbourhood were deemed ineligible for busing despite believing they lived within the school's distance requirements policy, and that the board would not provide the walk distance calculation to the complainant or other parents. We made inquiries and confirmed that the students did live within the walk distance, but recommended the board be more transparent with its information and provide parents with the distance calculation upon request.

Our **university** complaints are also on the rise, with **61** complaints in the first two months. Ombudsman staff continue to track complaint trends and resolve individual issues. A distance education student contacted us to complain he was asked to pay fees for various services only available on campus, such as printing and student lifestyle fees. We referred him to information on the university's website about compulsory and non-compulsory fees, and provided information about how to raise his complaint with the university and request a refund of any non-compulsory fees he had already paid.

[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](#)

Speaking of our new jurisdiction...

Ombudsman staff have been busy meeting with stakeholders in the past few weeks, including the Toronto District School Board; Ontario University Registrars' Association; York Region District School Board; Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. The largest recent event was the annual joint conference in Toronto of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Ontario Good Roads Association, where Acting Ombudsman Barbara Finlay [delivered a keynote address](#) about our new oversight of municipalities.

Ombudsman is planning informational and interactive webinars for municipal and school board staff. For more details about how to participate, contact thewatchdog@ombudsman.on.ca.

WORK WITH US!

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!](#)



OMLET

In a recent report on a closed meeting in the City of London, the Acting Ombudsman found a June 10, 2015 council meeting had been closed contrary to Municipal Act, despite council's best intentions. The city failed to ensure doors to city hall were unlocked during an open council meeting. [Read it here](#).

Read other recent reports about closed municipal meetings:

- › [Township of Russell](#)
- › [Town of Fort Erie](#)



Acting Ombudsman Barbara Finlay addressing municipal delegates at #OGRAROMA.

In partnership with Canada's Public Policy Forum, the Office of the Ombudsman hosted a conference for invited municipal and school board stakeholders in Toronto on February 25. Steve Orsini, Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Ontario Public Service, kicked off the conference, noting the "vital service" ombudsmen play in Ontario and across the country, and that "ensuring a more open, transparent, accountable system...it's a function we need to embrace."



Other watchdogs and oversight experts, including New Brunswick Ombudsman Charles Murray, Quebec Protectrice du citoyen Raymonde Saint-Germain, retired Toronto District School Board counsel Tony Brown, and Ottawa City Clerk and Solicitor Rick O'Connor, joined Acting Ombudsman Barbara Finlay and senior Ontario Ombudsman staff to provide a cross-sector perspective of the value of independent oversight and encourage discussion from stakeholders about how to improve accountability at the school board and municipal level.



- › [Municipality of St.-Charles](#)
- › [Village of Casselman](#)

INVESTIGATION UPDATES

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

The investigation is completed and the preliminary report is in the process of being finalized and updated.

[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.

STAY CONNECTED

Ombudsman Ontario has **4,159 [Facebook fans](#)** and **36,067 [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](https://twitter.com/Ont_OmbudsmanFR).

Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario | Bureau de l'Ombudsman de l'Ontario

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