

Read the latest about Bill 57, cannabis complaints, another successful investigative training course, and more in our November newsletter.

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UPDATE: OMBUDSMAN REVIEWING 2,200 COMPLAINTS ABOUT ONTARIO CANNABIS STORE

Our office has received more than 2,200 complaints about the Ontario Cannabis Store (OCS) since it opened its doors just over a month ago. Complaints from frustrated customers range from delayed deliveries, to billing problems, to poor customer service, to privacy concerns. We are working to resolve individual cases and escalating serious complaints as needed.

To deal with the sudden influx and volume of complaints, and ensure cases were resolved quickly, Ombudsman Paul Dubé established a dedicated team of staff, who receive regular updates from OCS officials and alert them to urgent cases and complaint trends. More than half of these cases have been resolved informally.

“The OCS is actively making improvements to its processes and has been responsive and co-operative with our office as its staff work to make sure complaints are being addressed,” Ombudsman Dubé said. “We are monitoring ongoing issues, which we will update in more detail in our 2018-2019 annual report.”

IN THE NEWS

- [Ontario ombudsman gets more than 1,000 complaints about cannabis store](#) (CBC News)
- [Provincial ombudsman fielding more than 1,000 complaints about Ontario Cannabis](#)

[Store](#) (Toronto Star)

OMBUDSMAN TO ADDRESS PROPOSED CHANGES TO MANDATE

On November 15, as part of Finance Minister Vic Fedeli's fall economic statement, the government tabled Bill 57, the *Restoring Trust, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2018*, which proposes changes to several pieces of legislation, including the *Ombudsman Act*. Among other things, the bill proposes extending the Ombudsman's mandate to take over matters that are now within the jurisdiction of two other Officers of the Legislature, the French Language Services Commissioner and the Child Advocate.

The Ombudsman will address these changes in a submission to the Finance and Economic Affairs committee, which is holding hearings on Monday, December 3 before the bill is sent for third reading and a final vote in the Legislature. Until the bill is passed and proclaimed in force, all affected offices are continuing their service as usual. With regard to the Child Advocate, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services noted that all requirements remain in place to ensure children are aware of the Advocate and their rights, and that agencies within the child welfare sector co-operate with the Advocate's investigations.

'FACTS ARE UNASSAILABLE': THE IMPORTANCE OF CREDIBLE AND INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT



Former Federal Correctional Investigator Howard Sapers addressing SYT attendees during his keynote speech on November 5, 2018.

At this year's edition of "Sharpening Your Teeth", our annual advanced investigative training for administrative watchdogs, Ombudsman Paul Dubé was honoured to welcome Howard Sapers, the former federal correctional investigator, as keynote speaker on Nov. 5.

Sapers, who served as [Canada's Correctional Investigator](#) from 2004 to 2016, stressed the importance of using facts to support investigative conclusions and maintain credibility: "Before you write a recommendation, before you conclude an investigation, you better be sure you're right."

Mr. Sapers continued: "Pick your battles. There's lots to do and you can get easily overwhelmed. For me, that was about finding out what would lead to a significant change in policy or behaviour."

In his keynote address, Sapers also shared how his experience working with the Correctional Service of Canada taught him how to apply judgement and discretion when faced with tough decisions.

"What's important is that you are unassailable in terms of the facts," Sapers told attendees. "That's far more powerful than just puffing out your chest."

Since 2007, our office has offered “Sharpening Your Teeth” for ombudsmen and professional investigators across Canada and around the world, always on a full cost-recovery basis. This year we welcomed more than 80 participants from as far as Ethiopia, Tonga, Mauritius, the U.S., and Ireland; from ombudsman offices in New Brunswick and Alberta; and from other ombudsman and public sector bodies in Ontario. Sessions included training in conducting systemic investigations, interviewing, report writing, and best practices for media engagement.

OMBUDSMAN OUTREACH



Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé at the National Investigations Symposium in Sydney, Australia on November 13, 2018.

Our exchanges of information with other Ombudsman offices make us better at what we do and enhance our ability to serve the people of Ontario. In mid-November, Ombudsman Paul Dubé was invited to bring advanced investigative training for administrative watchdogs to Sydney, Australia for the National Investigations Symposium (NIS) on November 13, 2018, on a cost-recovery basis. The NIS was attended by investigators, internal auditors, lawyers, public sector managers, police officers and complaint-handlers from all tiers of the public sector.

This half-day workshop covered best practices for crafting feasible and practical

recommendations, preparing a robust report, and communicating findings to the widest possible audience. During the symposium, Mr. Dube also provided a session outlining the challenges and results of his investigation into services for adults with developmental disabilities in crisis.

While in Sydney, Ombudsman Dubé was interviewed by The Mandarin, an online news source for public sector leaders, executives and the many stakeholders interested in their work.

“Our objective is to add value,” he told The Mandarin. “We are here to enhance governance, and we do that through providing transparency, accountability and fairness. And so if our work doesn’t get attention paid to it, if it sits on a shelf somewhere, then we’re not being very effective. Our power is in our voice.”



[Read the entire interview](#)



Because of our highly-regarded expertise in systemic investigations, Ombudsman Dubé - pictured here with Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman Marie Anderson - was also invited to Belfast, Northern Ireland, in November to speak on a panel at a conference about the importance of own-motion investigations. The panel explored how own-motion investigations can improve governance as well as provide benefits for the wider public.

The Ombudsman was joined by Parliamentary & Health Service

Ombudsman Rob Behrens, Garda
Síochána Ombudsman Commissioner
Kieran Fitzgerald and University of Alberta
professor Linda Reif.

OUT AND ABOUT

On November 6, Ombudsman staff presented to both the Ontario School Counsellors' Association and the University and Colleges Collection Conference.

Our presentation to the University and Colleges Collection Conference sought to help post-secondary institutions understand how we work to resolve complaints or refer complaints to existing resolution mechanisms.

Attendees at the Ontario School Counsellors' Association were informed about our role overseeing school boards, and given examples of the different kinds of cases we've helped resolve.

We oversee all of Ontario's school boards and universities and colleges, and almost all complaints are resolved informally through early resolution. Read more about [how we deal with school board issues here](#) and the [types of university problems we resolve here](#).

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: MUNICIPAL TIP CARDS

Our office oversees all municipalities in Ontario and works collaboratively with them to resolve issues quickly and efficiently. We also have great resources for municipal council members - such as wallet-sized municipal tip cards on everything from when to close a meeting to best practices for creating a local complaint process! Print and our municipal tip cards by [clicking here](#).



WORK WITH THE OMBUDSMAN



Are you interested in a career that would help improve the lives of Ontarians? Our Office is looking for analytical, creative problem-solvers. We're currently hiring a Records and Archives Technician, Early Resolution Officers, an Executive Administrative Assistant and Investigators. [Click here to learn more.](#)

File a complaint online or contact us here

The Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Ontario legislature who conducts oversight of provincial government agencies and municipalities, universities and school boards. Ombudsman Paul Dubé began his five-year term on April 1, 2016.

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