

The Ombudsman's 2019-2020 Annual Report is out, highlighting our new areas of jurisdiction and our work in the time of COVID-19.

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In this month's newsletter:

- The Ombudsman reports on 2019-2020 – “A year like no other”
- New in Annual Report 2019-2020: French Language Services, Children & Youth
- New videos for children and youth in care
- Jobs alert: We're hiring for a Bilingual Policy Analyst and more

Ombudsman reports on 2019-2020 – “A year like no other”



Releasing his [Annual Report](#) on June 30, Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé reflected on the stunning and ongoing challenges faced by the province's public sector due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The profound shock to our public infrastructure and systems will provide countless lessons, as well as opportunities to strengthen them in future," writes Mr. Dubé, whose Office handled 26,423 complaints and inquiries about broader public sector services in fiscal 2019-2020. "We stand ready, as always, to help."

Mr. Dubé notes that 2019-2020 was also "a year like no other" for the Ombudsman's office, in that it began with the expansion of his mandate to two brand-new areas – children and youth in care, and French language services – and ended with the coronavirus crisis.

Working from home for the past 15 weeks, like most Ontario public servants, the Ombudsman's team has continued to respond to thousands of complaints and inquiries, including more than 800 related to COVID-19. On June 1, Mr. Dubé launched a systemic investigation into the adequacy of the province's oversight of long-term care homes during the pandemic.

Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, the Ombudsman's office dealt with a record high number of complaints about Ontario correctional facilities (6,000), launched a systemic investigation into delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board (generating some 600 complaints), and issued investigative reports on a municipality and a school board that revealed "a disturbing lack of transparency that undermined public trust." All of Mr. Dubé's recommendations were accepted.

[Read the full press release](#)

NEW in Annual Report 2019-2020: French Language Services, Children & Youth



This Annual Report is the Ombudsman's first since his Office assumed the responsibilities of the French Language Services Commissioner and the investigative function of the former Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth on May 1, 2019.

The new Children and Youth Unit handled 1,775 cases between May 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020, including 1,458 about children's aid societies. The report details several cases where Ombudsman staff helped young people with concerns about their rights, their placements and their treatment in care. In addition, Ombudsman staff raised concerns with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services about gaps in policies and procedures in youth justice centres.

The new French Language Services Unit, headed since January by French Language Services Commissioner and Deputy Ombudsman Kelly Burke, handled 321 complaints and inquiries in the same 11-month period, and prompted constructive change on several fronts. These included Premier Doug Ford acknowledging that public health information about COVID-19 must be provided in French as well as English. Commissioner Burke will issue a separate Annual Report later this fiscal year.

By the Numbers: Cases Received

Total cases, April 1, 2019-March 31, 2020: **26,423**

Correctional facilities: **6,000**

Municipalities: General – **3,014** Closed municipal meetings – **54**

School boards: **732**

Universities: **282**

Learn more about this Annual Report:

[Annual Report – Facts and Highlights](#)

[Read the Ombudsman's remarks](#)

[Watch the Ombudsman's virtual press conference](#)

Contact us here if you have a question or complaint

We're hiring!



Work with us: We continue to recruit and have new open positions. Although our offices remain closed until further notice, we are reviewing applications, testing candidates and conducting interviews remotely.

[Current opportunities](#) include:

- Director, Special Ombudsman Response Team
- Investigator, French Language Services Unit
- Early Resolution Officers
- **Bilingual Policy and Issues Analyst NEW**
- **Articling Student (2021-2022) NEW**

How we can help - Case summaries from the 2019-2020 Annual report

Address unknown

A woman complained to us that she had not received any family support payments in over a year, despite submitting paperwork to the Family Responsibility Office asking that she receive them via direct deposit rather than by mailed cheque. Our inquiries revealed that FRO officials never received her request, and the mailing address they had for her was out of date. This was addressed and she received a payment of **\$7,172**.

Right to safety

An 11-year-old told us she felt unsafe in her group home after another resident threatened her with a knife. The Ombudsman's Children and Youth Unit informed her of her right to have her placement reviewed by the Residential Placement Advisory Committee, and helped her initiate the process with her caseworker. We also ensured that the home had a plan to keep her safe pending the review. As a result of the review, the girl was happy to be moved back to her former foster home.

The road to French services

A motorcyclist who had recently moved to Canada complained to us after he was required to take a road test in order to be licenced in Ontario, and it could not be conducted in French. He was assigned an English-speaking examiner, even though he asked in advance to be tested in French at a designated DriveTest centre. He told us he failed the test because he couldn't understand the directions given by the examiner, and he was worried that he would have to repeat the entire process from the beginning. We discovered that this DriveTest centre had no certified bilingual examiner for motorcycle road tests. As a result of our intervention, the man's road test was rescheduled with a bilingual examiner dispatched from another DriveTest location. The Ministry of Transportation also committed to ensuring there are staff available to handle bilingual road test requests at the designated DriveTest location.

[Read about other cases we've resolved](#)



[File a complaint 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, as well as child protection services and French language services. Ombudsman Paul Dubé began his five-year term on April 1, 2016.

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