

Focus on Franco-Ontarian milestones, young people's rights, and municipal matters

[View this email in your browser](#)

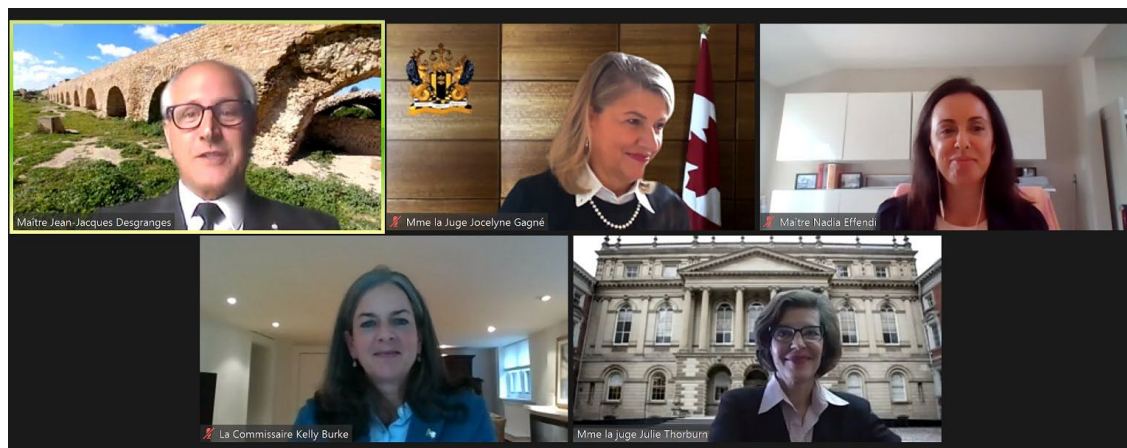
[Forward to a friend](#)



In this month's newsletter:

- [A September 25 to remember: Happy Franco-Ontarian Day!](#)
- [Ombudsman names new Director, Special Ombudsman Response Team](#)
- [New rights resources for youth in care](#)
- [Our latest municipal reports, case summaries and job openings](#)

[Making Franco-Ontarian history: What made this September 25 so special](#)



French Language Services Commissioner and Deputy Ombudsman Kelly Burke celebrated her first Franco-Ontarian Day in the role on September 25 – a day that made news and history in numerous ways.

It was the 45th anniversary of the very first raising of the Franco-Ontarian flag, which was created and flown first in Sudbury, on September 25, 1975. It was also the 10th anniversary of the official proclamation of September 25 as Franco-Ontarian Day. It was the first time that the now-familiar green-and-white flag was raised in “virtual” ceremonies, due to the coronavirus pandemic – AND the first time it was [recognized in law as an official emblem of Ontario](#).

The Ontario government also marked the day by [announcing it would begin adding French accents and special characters to names on driver's licences and photo cards](#) – a longstanding concern of Franco-Ontarians that both [Commissioner Burke and Ombudsman Paul Dubé had raised with the Ministry of Transportation](#).

The virtual flag-raising enabled Commissioner Burke to participate in events in two cities at once, in Toronto and Sudbury. She also spoke at the [French and the Law Symposium 2020](#), co-hosted by Massey College and the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, and earlier in the week was the guest of honour at the online Annual General Assembly of the Centre Francophone du Grand Toronto.

VIDEO: Watch Commissioner Burke's special message for Franco-Ontarian Day, and her [“La Minute de la Commissaire” video series](#). (Topics include how we work, how we handle complaints, our commitment to Ontario's Francophonie, and more.)

AUDIO: Listen to Commissioner Burke's [September 25 interview with Radio-Canada](#), discussing key issues she has dealt with during her term so far.

[Investigation news: Ombudsman names new Director, Special Ombudsman Response Team](#)

Longtime Ombudsman investigator Domonie Pierre took the reins of our Special Ombudsman Response Team (SORT), on September 14. Said Ombudsman Paul Dubé: “With her vast investigative experience and leadership qualities, Ms. Pierre is a most welcomed addition to the Ombudsman's Executive Management Team, and will ensure that SORT continues to produce the exemplary work it is known for around the world, both in terms of quality and impact.”

Ms. Pierre has extensive experience with the Ombudsman's Office, which she joined as an Early Resolution Officer in 2006. She later became an Investigator, working with the Investigations team and SORT under its founding director Gareth Jones.

Ms. Pierre is a lawyer and has been the lead investigator on numerous SORT investigations. These resulted in several special reports involving a wide range of systemic issues, from community engagement on hospital planning ([The LHIN Spin](#), 2010), to policing and correctional issues ([Caught in the Act](#), 2010; [The Code](#), 2013), to school busing ([The Route of the Problem](#), 2017).

SORT has three major systemic investigations in progress:

[Oversight of long-term care homes during COVID-19](#): Evidence-gathering is under way, and SORT investigators have begun interviewing stakeholders and complainants.

[Delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board](#): SORT investigators are reviewing large volumes of documentary evidence, and conducting interviews.

[Province's handling of ambulance service complaints](#): The Ombudsman's final report is in the process of being drafted.

Anyone with relevant information or questions about these investigations can contact us via our [online complaint form](#) or by emailing info@ombudsman.on.ca.

Children in care have rights - spread the word



Did you know that every child and youth in care has the right to access good quality food and see a doctor and dentist? To participate in cultural activities, play sports and make art? To complain about their placements without consequence?

These specific rights – and many more – are set out in Ontario law, which also requires that all young people in care be informed about them.

To help young people, their families and their service providers learn about these rights and how to exercise them, the Ombudsman's Children and Youth Unit has set out these rights under six broad categories.

As a youth in care, you have the right to: **Good Care**, **Safety**, **Identity** and **Fairness**, as well as to **Get Help** and to access **Your File**. Service providers also have specific obligations to make sure these rights are recognized – and one of them is to inform them of their right to complain to the Ombudsman.

Over the next several weeks, we will share information about all six types of rights on our website and social media channels (Instagram, Facebook and Twitter). We invite anyone interested in youth rights and child protection to follow along and share these messages with the hashtag #RightsInCare, to raise awareness and help ensure these rights are respected.

You can also review all these rights in brief and share them via our [new printable, two-page](#) #RightsInCare poster.

Wear orange in their honour



Today, September 30, is Orange Shirt Day. This day is inspired by the story of Phyllis Jack Webstad, a Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nations elder in Williams Lake, B.C., who, on her first day at residential school, had her orange shirt taken away from her. Her story can be found [here](#).

Wearing an orange shirt on this day is a way to honour the experiences of residential school survivors and their families. As we continue to commit to the process of reconciliation, we stand with and beside all those impacted by this legacy on their healing journey.

[Municipal matters: On our agenda](#)



We recently dealt with complaints that a few different municipalities had illegally closed their doors to the public – but ultimately found that most of these meetings were acceptable under the *Municipal Act*.

West Nipissing's missing connection

With COVID-19 putting a limit on public gatherings, the Municipality of West Nipissing held its first remote closed meetings since the pandemic began on April 20 and May 26, 2020. The Ombudsman reviewed a complaint that the meetings weren't audio/video recorded, but determined this was inadvertent; all meetings since May 26 have been properly recorded.

Meanwhile, in Saugeen Shores...

The Ombudsman found that three closed meetings in the Town of Saugeen Shores' in July and November 2019 to discuss a waterfront development were appropriate under the Municipal Act. He also found that a gathering of councillors during a recess at an open meeting in February 2020 was not illegal, as it did not materially advance council business.

Loyalist Township's questionable vote

At a July 2019 closed meeting, Loyalist Township council improperly voted to enter into an agreement related to a wind turbine project, the Ombudsman found. He also noted there was some confusion amongst councillors about what they were voting for, and cautioned them to be more vigilant in the future.

For more municipal meeting reports, visit our [website](#).

AMCTO's Municipal Clerks Forum

On September 25, General Counsel Laura Pettigrew participated in a virtual forum hosted by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. During her session, Ms. Pettigrew shared findings and recommendations from our investigative report, [Inside Job](#), which examined hiring practices in the Regional Municipality of Niagara.

[How we can help: Case summaries](#)



Education: Opportunity granted

How would you feel if you were deemed ineligible for a \$7,880 education grant because of an error by the Ontario Student Assistance Program? [Read about how we helped a student get their grant.](#)

To be or not to be...in French

A Francophone woman in Thunder Bay went to a local ServiceOntario branch to update her home address on her driver's licence. She checked the website to make sure it offered services in French. When she arrived and found out it did not, she complained to us. [Read what ServiceOntario did after we contacted them.](#)

Vote for fairness

All Canadians over 18 have the right to vote in elections, including those in custody. But one youth facility had no such process in place until a young person there complained to us during the last federal election. [Learn how the case prompted a provincewide change.](#)

Family feud

A 16-year-old living in a group home complained to us that the staff there would not let him speak to members of his family because his mother (his legal guardian) had forbidden it. We reviewed the law and resolved the issue – [find out how.](#)

Work with us: Job openings



We continue to hire new staff. Check out all of our open positions in the Careers section of our website.

- [Legal Counsel](#)
- [Manager, Investigations and Early Resolutions, French Language Services Unit](#)
- [Policy and Issues Analyst \(Bilingual\), French Language Services Unit](#)
- [Early Resolution Officer, Children and Youth Unit](#)

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.

Copyright © 2020 Ontario Ombudsman, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).