

Building fairness from the ground up, upholding children's rights, the French Language Services Commissioner's upcoming annual report and more in our November newsletter.

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FAIRNESS BY DESIGN: **Helping public organizations build fairness from the ground up**



How can public organizations ensure they are delivering programs and services fairly and reasonably? The first step is to build fairness in from the start, by designing systems to support fairness in decision-making and service delivery.

Fairness by Design is a self-assessment guide developed by Canada's provincial and territorial ombudsmen, including our Office, that helps public organizations evaluate the fairness of their procedures, programs or policies.

“By developing this guide, we hope that public bodies take a critical look at systems and policies in place and identify any fairness gaps holding them back from openness and accountability,” said Ombudsman Paul Dubé.

The guide, [available for download on our website](#), highlights the importance of delivering programs and services in a fair manner to help improve accountability, reduce complaints, and enable the resolution of issues more quickly and efficiently.

“A public body that embraces administrative fairness will usually see increased confidence from the citizens it serves,” said Mr. Dubé, “and may even receive fewer complaints about its services.”

Click here to [learn more about the Fairness by Design guide](#).

CHILDREN AND YOUTH: **Recognizing Canada’s – and Ontario’s –** **commitment to upholding children’s rights**



Each year, [National Child Day](#) is celebrated on November 20th, and offers everyone an important opportunity to promote and provide education about young people’s rights.

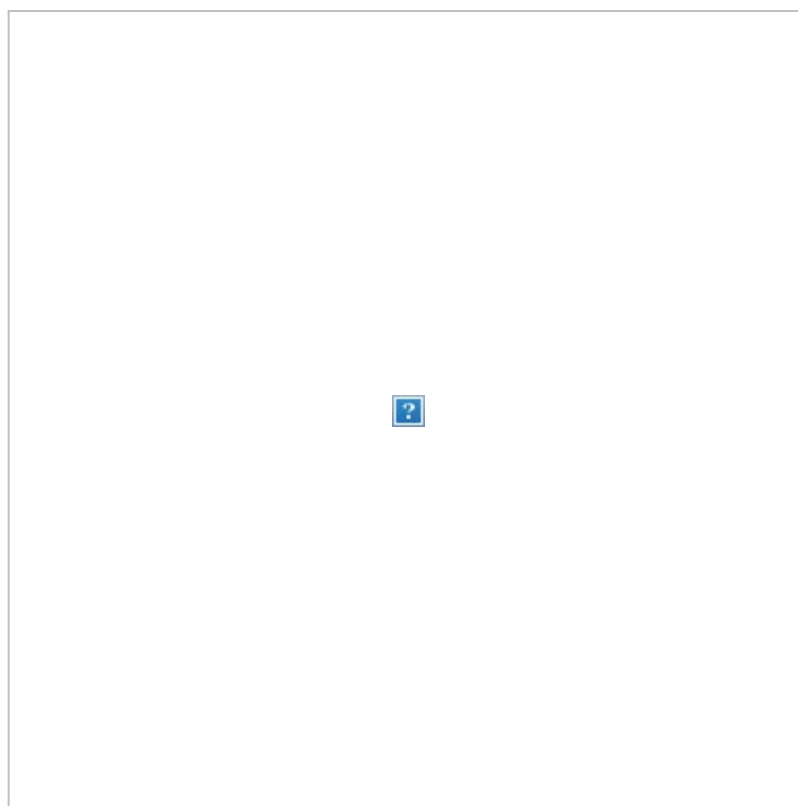
In our work in the children's services sector and with young people in care, we focus on young people's rights to be given a voice, protected from harm, and provided the basic needs and opportunity to reach their full potential.

On this basis, and a few others, we can determine whether youth are treated fairly by those who are in positions to provide care to them, and make decisions that affect their lives.

In Ontario, the rights of young people in care are listed under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*. With our "[Know Your Rights in Care](#)" brochure, we have created an easy-to-digest resource that summarizes these rights. We encourage everyone to use this resource in discussions with young people about why these rights matter.

If you or a young person has questions about their placement or their rights in care, or have concerns about being treated fairly or not, don't hesitate to contact us. We're here to help.

A new video resource tailored to young children



As digital communication use has increased over the last several months, service providers have also increasingly accessed our video resources to help communicate with young people about their rights, and how our Office can help them.

Bearing in mind that some service providers must communicate with very young children about the things they should know about our Office, we have developed [a video for younger children](#) – with the accessibility needs of those with visual or learning disabilities also in mind.

Are you responsible for telling a child about their rights and our Office? We encourage you to check out [our new video](#) explaining how we can help even the youngest of complainants!

HOW WE HELPED: Keeping watch

A woman worried about the health and safety of a young relative complained to us that the local children's aid society (CAS) had done "nothing" in response to her concerns. [Here's how we](#)

[helped](#).

[Everyone has a duty to report](#). If you have reasonable grounds to suspect a child is being abused or neglected – and is or may be in need of protection – contact your local children's aid society.

[FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES:](#) **[Annual Report coming soon](#)**

French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke's first report, covering the period from May 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020, will be released in the coming weeks. It highlights the work of our French Language Services Unit and includes the Commissioner's recommendations to improve services in French across Ontario. Watch for our announcements on social media to find out how you can be there (virtually) for the unveiling of our report!

Remember that filing a complaint with us is simple: Contact us 1-866-246-5262 - 416-847-1515 or via [our website](#).

HOW WE HELPED: You have the choice

Our French Language Services Unit received two complaints from people who called the general DriveTest phone line to book driving tests and were obligated to listen to a 90-second message in English only. [Read more about how we helped](#).



And the winner is...



Our Office is thrilled to announce that Laura Pettigrew, General Counsel at our Office, is a co-recipient of this year’s Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators (SOAR) medal.

The medal is SOAR’s top honour, awarded to those who have made a significant contribution and demonstrated their commitment to the administrative justice field.

Ms. Pettigrew co-directs the Ombudsman’s Legal Services team and is a member of the executive management team. She has been involved in many of the Special Ombudsman Response Team’s systemic investigations, is active in drafting Ombudsman reports, and has conducted training around the world on topics such as administrative and oversight investigations and report writing.

“Laura’s passion for administrative law is unique and she embodies the principles of fairness and transparency,” said Ombudsman Paul Dubé. “Her knowledge, experience, and contributions to work that has promoted access to justice and enhanced governance in Ontario for decades deserves to be recognized and celebrated.”

Congratulations, Laura!

HERE, THERE AND (VIRTUALLY) EVERYWHERE

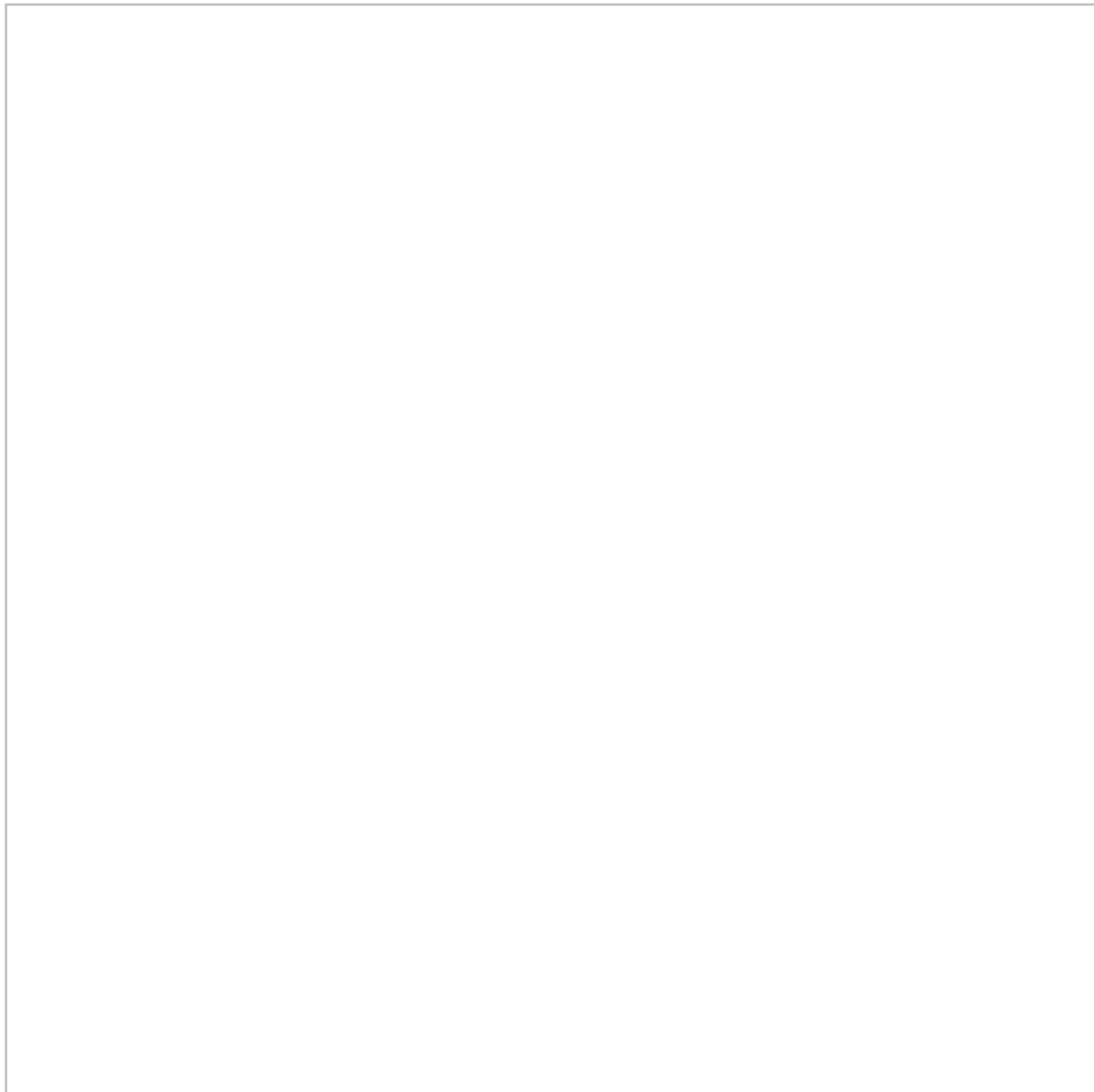
The Ombuds connection: Sharing strategies across the country and around the world

As part of a monthly webinar series organized through the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman, provincial and territorial ombuds staff meet to discuss key investigations, challenges, and opportunities facing each jurisdiction.

Earlier this month, our Special Ombudsman Response Team (SORT) spoke to more than 150 ombuds staff from across the country, walking them through two of our ongoing investigations.

The first, into backlogs at Ontario's Landlord and Tenant Board, began in January 2020, prior to the Ontario shutdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The second was launched in June 2020 in the wake of grave concerns raised by COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care homes across the province. During the webinar, members of SORT discussed the challenges of working through an investigation in the face of a global emergency. Both investigations are still in the evidence-gathering and interviewing stage.

Ombudsman Paul Dubé also spoke recently at an [international webinar](#) hosted by the International Ombudsman Institute and the Ombudsman of Israel. He discussed the work that our Office has been doing to adjust to the new reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how we continue to help Ontarians with government and public sector complaints.



Raising the bar for services for youth in care

On November 24th, Ombudsman Paul Dubé and Children and Youth Unit Director Diana Cooke met virtually with members of the Ontario Bar Association to discuss the Unit's mandate, approach, and types of complaints received to date.

Highlighting the Unit's goal of improving the services and experiences young people and families have with Ontario's child welfare system by ensuring fair treatment, the two presenters also elaborated on the Ombudsman's "[Fairness by Design](#)" framework.

To learn more about our work with fairness, or to learn more in general about our Office, we encourage service providers to reach out to us directly to request an information session: cy-ej@ombudsman.on.ca

Municipal matters

On November 9, General Counsel Laura Pettigrew participated in a webinar series hosted by the Municipal Internal Auditors Association. During her session, Ms. Pettigrew shared findings and recommendations from two of our investigative reports, [By-law Surprise](#) and [Inside Job](#), which examined the transparency of by-law enforcement in the Township of St. Clair and the County of Lambton, and hiring practices in the Regional Municipality of Niagara, respectively.

Retirees wanting to learn more

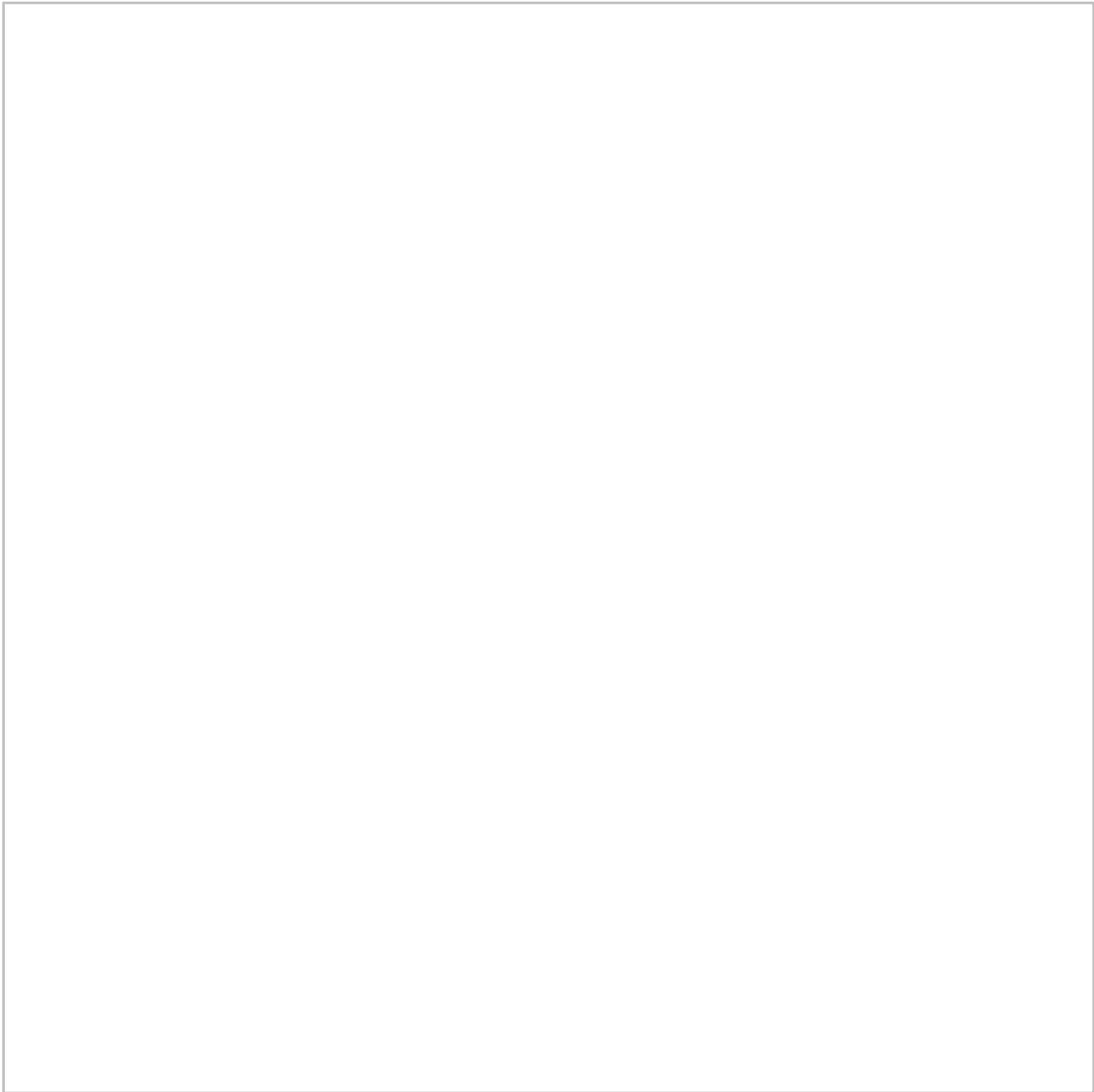
French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke virtually presented on our Office and our work to the members of an association of retirees based in Ottawa, [Retraite en Action](#), on November 26. The Q&A session was an opportunity for the Commissioner to explain what our Office can do for seniors if they have trouble accessing services in French in their daily lives.

HOW WE HELPED: At your service

A small business owner reached out to us after he was unable to update the information attached to his business licence through ServiceOntario, despite several attempts. [Read more about how we helped.](#)

Complaints? Questions? Contact us by phone at 1-800-263-1830 or via [our website](#).

[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](#)
- [Early Resolution Officer](#)
- [Early Resolution Officer, Children and Youth Unit](#)
- [Legal Summer Student](#)

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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