

A new investigation into two youth justice centre closures, reasons to celebrate Ontario's Francophonie, and much more in our March newsletter

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[Ombudsman investigates two youth justice centre closures](#)

On March 16, Ombudsman Paul Dubé announced a new investigation into complaints related to the government's abrupt closures of two youth justice centres: Creighton Youth Justice Centre in Kenora and J.J. Kelso Youth Centre in Thunder Bay.

"Concerns have been raised about a lack of notice and consideration for the vulnerabilities of the young people who were moved out of these centres – for example, whether their rights were respected and what planning was done for transitioning them to new facilities," Mr. Dubé said.

The investigation will focus on how the closure of these facilities was carried out by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, rather than on the merits of the government's decision to close a total of 26 centres across the province, he noted. "As always, if we find that the planning was adequate and the actions appropriate, we will say so. If not, we will make recommendations for improvement."



[Learn more about this investigation](#)

A month of celebrating Ontario's "essential" Francophonie



Commissioner Kelly Burke made numerous virtual appearances and presentations in recent weeks to celebrate and promote Ontario's Francophones and Francophiles – as well as French language rights in the province.

"Ontario's role in the Francophone environment is essential to our bilingual country," she said in a [statement on International Francophonie Day, March 20](#). "Services in French must be prioritized. They must be equivalent to services in English, and delivered without delay... La Francophonie is everyone's business."

Here are some of the other themes the Commissioner touched on in activities with diverse Francophone communities:

Supporting Francophone women entrepreneurs: Echoing the international Francophonie theme for 2021, "Francophone Women, Resilient Women," Commissioner Burke marked International Women's Day (March 8) at an event co-organized by the Société Économique de l'Ontario and the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub. The event featured a panel of four francophone women of diverse backgrounds from across Ontario. The Commissioner applauded their energy, dynamism, entrepreneurship and resilience in the midst of the pandemic.

Minority language rights in Ontario and Manitoba: On March 10, Commissioner Burke and Teresa Collins, Director of the Manitoba Francophone Affairs Secretariat, participated in an online class with law students at the University of Manitoba. Ms. Burke provided an overview of Ontario's *French Language Services Act* and the recommendations in her recent [Annual Report](#).

Why information in French matters: On March 18, Commissioner Burke was the featured guest on "Info Matters," a [podcast hosted by Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner, Patricia Kosseim](#). The two commissioners discussed how both offices help ensure Franco-Ontarians' rights to services, information and privacy.

It's the law: On March 23, Commissioner Burke was featured alongside University of Ottawa law Professor François Larocque and lawyer Mark Power on the "French Language Services and Language Rights Update" panel, co-organized by the Law Society of Ontario, the Ontario Bar Association and the Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario. A transcript (in French) will be posted on the [Law Society of Ontario's website](#) shortly.

Official languages and Ontario: On March 25, Ms. Burke was asked to appear before the [House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages](#), as part of its ongoing hearings on the federal government's ability to deliver information in both official languages. Ms. Burke discussed her recent recommendations regarding the Ontario government's communications in French during the pandemic.

Spreading the word to young people in care



This month, staff from our [Children and Youth Unit](#) provided virtual presentations to several

community stakeholders who all have an important part to play in informing young people about their rights in care, and supporting them to seek help from our Office.

For example, we provided the **Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton** with an overview of our Office and how we work, and we held an information session on legal supports available for youth for community workers invited by the **Delta Family Resource Centre**.

We also gave online presentations to **Centennial College's** Application of Criminal Justice System class, and students enrolled in **McMaster University's** child welfare class, focusing on what social workers can do to help young people exercise their rights.

In each presentation, we emphasized our role as a legislated safeguard for children and youth in care – the only group of people in Ontario whose rights to know about our Office and contact us without delay are enshrined in law.

Are you a service provider working with youth? [Contact us](#) for a virtual presentation.

Here, there and (virtually) everywhere



We #ChooseToChallenge

On March 8, International Women's Day, our Office took up this year's #ChooseToChallenge theme, which focused on actively challenging and calling out gender bias and inequality. In our virtual group photo, our staff and held their hands high to show support and solidarity in creating a more inclusive world.

Ombudsman 101: Investigation essentials

On March 24, Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay provided training for colleagues attending the "Essentials for Ombuds" course, a collaboration between the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman and Osgoode Hall Law School. She talked about investigative principles and challenges, and our Office's work investigating large-scale systemic issues.

Ombudsman as a global concept

On March 30, Ombudsman Paul Dubé joined colleagues from around the world in an international discussion on the concept of the Ombudsman, hosted by the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC). His presentation focused on how Ombudsman

institutions can help government and public sector agencies improve their processes and services, and promote transparency, accountability, fairness, and respect for citizens' rights.

How we've helped: Case Summaries



Payment received

A mother complained to us because she was not receiving any family support payments from her children's father, even though the Family Responsibility Office (FRO) had the ability to garnish his wages. After Ombudsman staff contacted FRO officials, they immediately did so, and the mother received \$9,482 that she was owed.

Better bilingual service for landlords and tenants

While the Ombudsman's systemic investigation into delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) is ongoing, we have resolved many individual complaints, including from landlords and tenants who had difficulty receiving services in French.

Our French Language Services Unit brought these to the board's attention, and it has recently made improvements, including hiring more bilingual staff to respond to telephone inquiries in French more quickly (within 20-30 minutes, rather than up to two hours). In designated regions, bilingual LTB members are now assigned as a priority, and four members have been hired for bilingual emergency hearings.



Staying connected

What did our Children and Youth Unit do when they received a call from a teen in a group home who felt she had no one to talk to? **Watch and share our video story – and follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)** for more real-life stories of how we help young people in care.

[Visit our website for even more case summaries.](#)

HOW TO SUBMIT A COMPLAINT

1. VISIT OUR WEBSITE

Visit the "Who We Oversee" page on our website. If you're still not sure if your complaint is something we can look at, contact us.



2. GATHER INFORMATION

What steps have you already tried to resolve the matter? This information will help with our review.



3. FILE YOUR COMPLAINT

You can submit a complaint by using our online form, sending us an email, or leaving us a voicemail.



4. BE READY TO PROVIDE DETAILS

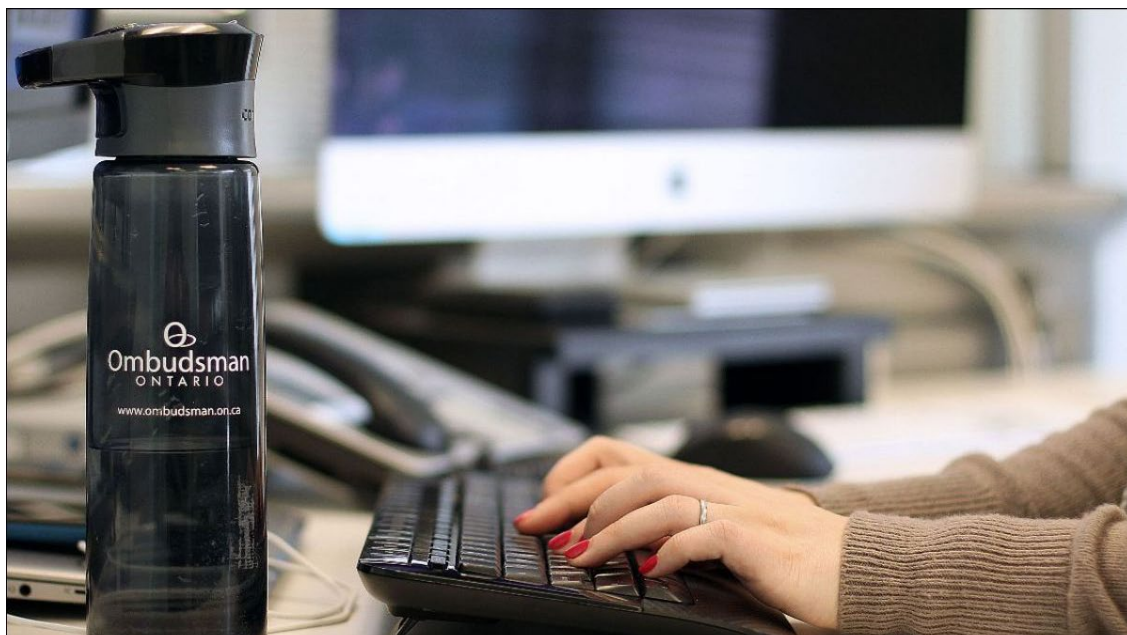
Once you have submitted your complaint, someone from our Early Resolutions team will contact you.



Learn more at www.ombudsman.on.ca

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Work with us: Job openings



Interested in working with us?

We continue to hire new staff. Check out all of our open positions in the [Careers](#) section of our website.

- [Early Resolution Officer](#)
- [Communications Officer - Generalist Unit](#)
- [Investigator \(Bilingual\) - French Language Services 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 was reappointed for a second five-year term, beginning on April 1, 2021.

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