

In our September newsletter: First National Truth and Reconciliation Day, celebrating Franco-Ontarian Day, vaccine-related questions and much more

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First National Truth and Reconciliation Day

Celebrating Franco-Ontarian Day 2021

Vaccine-related questions

Here, there and (virtually) everywhere

How we helped: Case summaries

Work with us!

OMBUDSMAN MARKS FIRST NATIONAL TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION DAY TO HONOUR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS



In advance of the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé called on Ontarians to reflect on the history and tragic effects of residential schools – and outlined his Office’s commitment to truth and reconciliation.

Since 2013, September 30 has also been known as Orange Shirt Day. The day originated with the story of one former student, Phyllis (Jack) Webstad, who had her new orange shirt taken away from on her first day at the St. Joseph Mission Residential School in British Columbia when she was just six years old. Orange Shirt Day has since opened the door to a global conversation on all aspects of residential schools.

This year was an especially painful reminder of Canada’s residential school system and its dark legacy, in light of the discovery of more than 1,000 unmarked graves on the grounds of former residential schools, [Mr. Dubé said in a statement](#).

To mark this day – and stand in solidarity with all First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples – the Ombudsman announced his Office would close for the day on September 30, 2021, to provide employees with an opportunity to learn about and reflect on the history of residential schools, and attend events or ceremonies to honour the lives of those lost and

the survivors who continue to live with those experiences.

“We must remind ourselves that reconciliation begins with truth-telling – and confronting often difficult and painful truths – to understand our past, and what concrete actions must go into shaping the future,” Mr. Dubé said.

[Read the Ombudsman's full statement.](#)

If you require support, the Indian Residential School Crisis Line is available for 24-hour assistance for former Residential School survivors in need of emotional support or crisis referral. Please contact: 1-866-925-4419

CELEBRATING FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY **2021**



September 25 is the traditional celebration of Franco-Ontarian Day. This day commemorates the first raising of the Franco-Ontarian flag at Laurentian University on September 25, 1975 in Sudbury and is celebrated across the province to recognize the contributions of the Francophone community in Ontario.

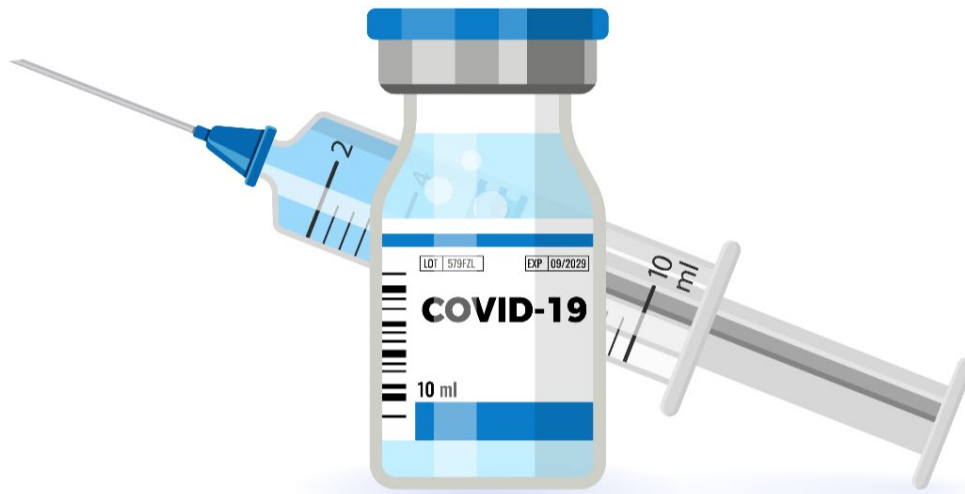
French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke appeared in a short video as part of a virtual flag-raising organized by l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO) on September 24th. The Commissioner also gave a speech in person on the podium roof top at City Hall later that morning, for the flag-raising co-organized with the Francophone community association ACFO-Toronto. The event was livestreamed on [Mayor John Tory's YouTube account](#).

The Commissioner also issued a statement highlighting the importance of protecting language rights and her team's ongoing work, such as the investigation into [cuts at Laurentian University](#) and preparation of her 2020-2021 Annual Report, to be published later this year.

“The protection of Canada's linguistic health is a matter of concern for all its citizens, especially in Ontario,” Ms. Burke said in her statement, noting that the French Language Services Unit has resolved hundreds of cases this year “thanks to the talent of our team and the willingness of the Ontario government to work collaboratively with us.”

[Read the Commissioner's full statement.](#)

VACCINE-RELATED QUESTIONS – HOW WE CAN HELP



More than a week has passed since Ontarians have been required to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination to enter non-essential businesses. The vaccine certificate program took effect on September 22, and Ontarians must be fully vaccinated (two doses plus 14 days) prior to entering places like restaurants, sports facilities, gyms, meeting spaces and concert venues.

Our Office is monitoring the rollout of this new system closely, and continues to address complaints and inquiries about administrative issues related to vaccination (we do not deal with political or broad policy decisions, however). If you have questions, concerns, or aren't sure where to turn, contact us – we can point you in the right direction or help find the information you need.

Here are a few tips and contacts:

- To download your vaccination certificate, go to the [Ontario government's website](#).
- A new app that will replace the certificate with a QR code is expected to be available by October 22.

- To correct or update information on your certificate, contact the public health unit that administered your vaccine – or the Ministry of Health's Vaccine Customer Service Unit, 1-833-943-3900.

[Contact our Office directly](#) if you need information, guidance, run into problems or have any questions about this or any other government-related issue – we're here to help!

HERE, THERE AND (VIRTUALLY) EVERYWHERE!



Helping municipalities manage electronic meetings

On October 5, Ombudsman Paul Dubé will deliver the keynote presentation at the 2021 Municipal Clerks Forum hosted by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO). The Ombudsman will speak about the importance of openness and accountability for municipalities, as well as best practices for holding virtual meetings, which have become the norm during the COVID-19 pandemic as municipal councils shifted from in-person to remote work.

Our Office has investigated many complaints about electronic meetings in the past year. Read these reports [on our website](#) or in our [digital municipal digest](#), or contact us if you have a question or complaint. If you think a meeting in your municipality was closed illegally, [click here to find your closed meeting investigator](#).



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE COMMISSIONERS

Presenting Ontario French language rights to the international community of language commissioners

As part of our Office's participation in the International Association of Language Commissioners (IALC), Commissioner Burke gave a virtual presentation to her fellow members on September 23. She discussed Ontario's francophonie, the *French Language Services Act*, recent language rights case law, and her 2019-2020 Annual Report recommendations.



Easing language barriers for victims of domestic violence

On September 21, French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke met virtually with the Violence against Women Network and the staff of 14 shelters in the Toronto area. The goal was to address the specific needs of Francophone women seeking help and shelter with these organizations. Ms. Burke expressed her support of their strategies to bring down language barriers and improve service delivery and quality assurance to support those who access the shelters, and improve their well-being and feeling of safety and security. If you are interested in a presentation about the *French Language Services Act* and the role of the Commissioner, please contact us at sf-fls@ombudsman.on.ca.

HOW WE HELP – CASE SUMMARIES



[Restraints cause concern](#)

A youth revealed to us that her concerns about being physically restrained at her group home were not being heard. Our staff learned this while following up with the youth about a Death and Serious Bodily Harm report we received that she had been injured by staff who restrained her.

The youth disclosed to us two previous incidents where she said she was unable to breathe while she was restrained. While she said the workers immediately released her when she told them she couldn't breathe, she wanted to meet with her CAS worker to discuss her concerns – but she told us the CAS worker would not meet with her.

Read more about [this case](#) and how we helped – and the importance of why all agencies are required to file reports known as [Death and Serious Bodily Harm notifications](#) with our Office.



Emergency notifications

[Alerting all at once](#)

The French Language Services Unit has received several complaints about the Amber alert system. Complainants have informed us that the delay between the English and French versions of the alert and multiple alerts in a row regarding the same case undermine public confidence in the Amber alert system. As a result of our intervention, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ontario Provincial Police have implemented measures to improve the Amber alert system so that alerts are issued simultaneously in English and French to ensure equal service in both languages.



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An Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipient complained to us that her benefits had been cut off twice without warning. We made inquiries with ODSP officials, who determined that the woman should have received written notice that they were withholding

benefits because they needed information about her living arrangements. But the woman's caseworker, a new employee, had electronically generated letters of notice to her without sending them. They also noted that ODSP was operating with reduced staff due to the pandemic, and workers were dealing with unusually high caseloads.

[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 Resolutions Officer](#)

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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