

In our October newsletter: Strengthening school board governance, Oct 27 as Dress Purple Day, and the latest on municipal meetings

[View this email in your browser](#)

[Forward to a friend](#)



Do you want to follow us on social media?

Subscribe to our [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) channels to keep up with all the latest information from our Office, and learn how we can help you!



School board governance: Ombudsman calls for mandatory codes of conduct and integrity commissioners

Dress Purple Day 2021: A reminder for those in contact with youth in need of protection

Local learning: Our latest outreach, cases and resources on open meetings

Here, there and (virtually) everywhere

How we helped: Case summaries

Work with us!

SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE: OMBUDSMAN CALLS FOR MANDATORY CODES OF CONDUCT AND INTEGRITY COMMISSIONERS



As part of the [Ministry of Education's public consultation on school board governance, which closes November 1](#), Ombudsman Paul Dubé made a submission proposing ways to strengthen accountability.

Since taking on oversight of school boards in September 2015, the Ombudsman has received more than 4,700 complaints and inquiries regarding school boards – including some 200 specifically about boards of trustees. Most of these relate to the conduct of trustees, and concerns about how school boards investigate and impose sanctions regarding breaches of codes of conduct.

For example:

- A trustee complained to us that the board's appointed integrity commissioner launched an investigation into her conduct without first attempting to resolve the matter informally, as set out in the board's code of conduct.

- Candidates running in trustee elections complained to us about incumbents' use of board resources in their re-election campaigns, and noted there was no effective mechanism to enforce rules against such conduct.
- Parents complained that their concerns about public comments made by a trustee that were widely perceived to be discriminatory were inadequately investigated by the school board.
- Community members told us their board's complaint process didn't allow them to make complaints about violations of the board's trustee code of conduct.

In light of these issues, Ombudsman Dubé made 14 proposals for the Ministry, including:

- School boards should be required to develop codes of conduct and hire integrity commissioners
- Codes of conduct should be standardized and consistent across school boards
- School boards should be required to adopt complaint protocols explaining how complaints made under the code of conduct will be reviewed and investigated
- Stakeholders other than trustees should be able to make complaints under the trustee code of conduct, freely and without fear of reprisal
- Codes of conduct should provide for the discretion to decline to investigate complaints that are frivolous, vexatious, or not in good faith

[Read the Ombudsman's full submission](#) and proposals.

Our Office meets frequently with school board officials to provide information about how we work with them to resolve issues. On October 15 and 22, Early Resolutions Manager Paul Sloan participated virtually in sessions of the Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program (SOQP) hosted by public and Catholic school boards. He discussed our Office's focus on administrative fairness, and how we take and resolve complaints about boards, including common issues like busing, special education, trustee conduct, and more. [You can learn more about the types of school board issues we can address in our most recent annual report.](#)

Do you have a concern about a school board or school authority? We can take complaints via [phone](#), [email](#) or on our [website](#).

DRESS PURPLE DAY 2021: A REMINDER FOR THOSE IN CONTACT WITH YOUTH IN NEED OF PROTECTION



Every year, Dress Purple Day (this year on October 27) seeks to raise awareness about young people's right to safety and well-being. It is also an opportunity to speak up about preventing child abuse in its different forms, such as neglect, or physical, psychological, sexual abuse or emotional abuse, such as racism, intolerance, prejudice and discrimination.

The right to safety for children and youth in care is enshrined in law, which is an important safeguard for vulnerable young people. Our Office is available to young people who feel their safety may be in jeopardy – but the safety of children and youth is everyone's responsibility. If you have reasonable grounds to suspect that a young person is being abused and neglected and may be in need of protection, it is your duty to contact your local children's aid society.

Our Office can take complaints from young people, adults and service providers. Contact us via [phone](#), [email](#) or on [our website](#).

LOCAL LEARNING: OUR LATEST OUTREACH, CASES AND RESOURCES ON OPEN MEETINGS



In early October, Ombudsman Paul Dubé delivered the keynote presentation at the 2021 Municipal Clerks Forum hosted by the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO). He highlighted how municipalities have adapted to holding electronic meetings during the pandemic and discussed ways to develop robust internal complaints processes. Later in the month, General Counsel Laura Pettigrew also discussed best practices for electronic meetings at the [Ontario East Municipal Conference](#).

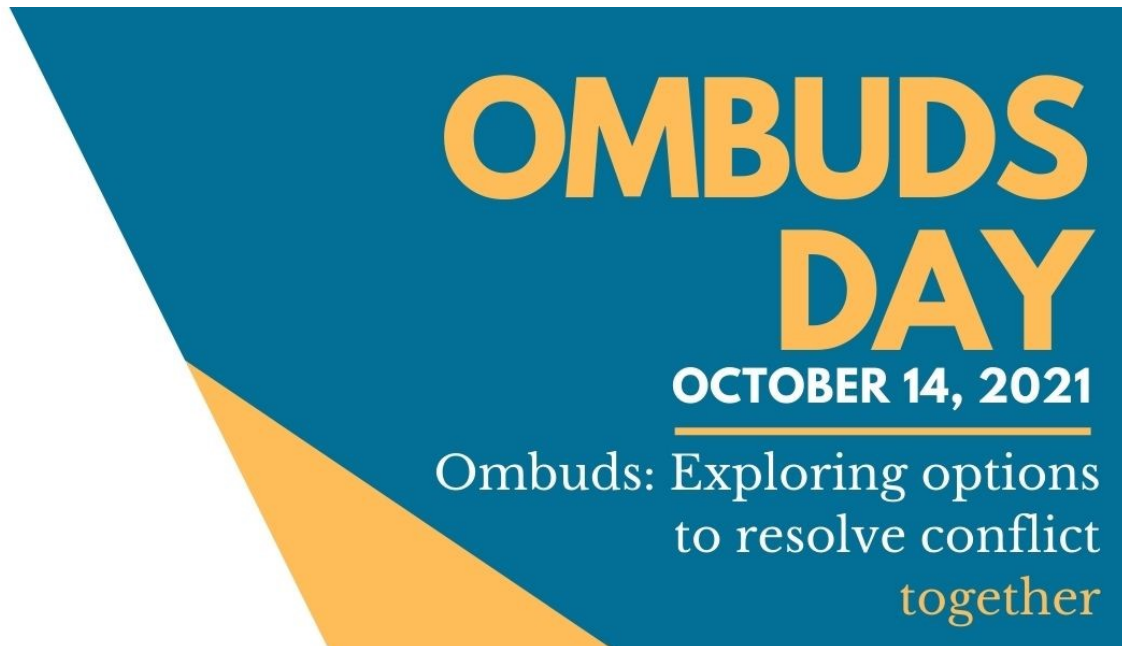
Our Office continues to field questions and investigate complaints about closed municipal meetings (virtual or in person) and work with municipalities to help them follow the open meeting requirements set out in the *Municipal Act*. In several recent cases, the Ombudsman found:

- A closed meeting of the council for the [Town of South Bruce Peninsula](#) was legal, because it concerned information supplied in confidence by a third party.
- Meetings held by the Baconfest Committee in the [Township of Lucan Biddulph](#) contravened the open meeting rules because the committee failed to provide notice of most of them. (At the same time, the Ombudsman commended the Township for dissolving two working groups and replacing one with a formal finance committee to meet the open meeting requirements.)
- The [Township of Brudenell, Lyndoch and Raglan](#) council did not contravene the open meeting rules when it met to discuss a matter that was before an administrative tribunal, but the Ombudsman suggested it keep complete and accurate meeting minutes and audio recordings.

Get our top tips for ensuring virtual municipal meetings are open and accessible! Check out our [latest video on best practices for electronic municipal meetings](#) or find more best practices for open meetings on our [municipalities overview page](#).

If you think a meeting in your municipality was closed improperly, [find your closed meeting investigator](#).

HERE, THERE AND (VIRTUALLY) EVERYWHERE!



Happy Ombuds Day

On October 14, along with ombudsman offices around the world, we celebrated Ombuds Day 2021, a day to share knowledge and resources about how ombuds can help serve citizens, as well as the role and value they provide. This year's theme was "Exploring Options to Resolve Conflict Together." [Learn more about Ombuds Day on the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman's website.](#)



Around the virtual world

On September 28, Ombudsman Paul Dubé presented virtually to staff at the UK Housing Ombudsman Service. He discussed how we help public sector bodies build fairness into services and programs, and answered questions about how we conduct our systemic investigations. As well he suggested “Fairness by Design,” a guide developed by Canada’s provincial and territorial ombudsmen, as a useful tool to help public organizations ensure that their policies and practices are fair and equitable. You can [read more about Fairness by Design on our website](#).

On September 30, Ombudsman Dubé participated in a panel during the South African Military Ombud’s Virtual Conference in collaboration with the University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN) and the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC), discussing how ombudsman institutions around the world help promote and protect democracy. He offered suggestions for ensuring recommendations are accepted and implemented, including reminding stakeholders that a complaint can be a “canary in the coal mine” to highlight a minor issue before it becomes a major problem.

25e édition Franco-Foire
ACFOMI

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES UNIT

Problems accessing services in French? Contact us. We can help.
www.ombudsman.on.ca • 1-866-246-5262 • sf-fls@ombudsman.on.ca

What we do:

- Protect French language rights in Ontario
- Oversee the application of the French Language Services Act
- Receive and investigate complaints about public services in French
- Proactively flag issues to public officials to improve the offer of services in French
- Make recommendations and monitor progress made by public bodies
- As part of the Ombudsman's Office, ensure the oversight of provincial and broader public sector bodies includes a "Francophone lens"
- Engage with Ontario Francophones and Francophiles in celebrating our Francophonie

Notifying complaints about French language services provided by certain hospitals, long-term care homes and other designated bodies involves the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario.

Why file a complaint with us?

- When we resolve complaints, we help improve French language services for all
- We can point you in the right direction if the matter is not in our jurisdiction
- Our services are confidential and convenient: Call, email or use our online form

COMMON TYPES OF COMPLAINTS

- In-person services
- Online services
- Social media
- Written communications
- Signage
- Telephone services
- Other

The Ombudsman is an impartial officer of the legislature who also hears complaints about municipalities, school boards, colleges and universities, post-secondary and youth services.

Independent Impartial Confidential Free

sf-Fls_Ombudsman and sf-Fls_OmbudsmanFR @OntarioOmbudsman Ontario Ombudsman OntOmbuds

Kingston's fall Franco-Foire

On October 16, the French Language Services Unit participated for the first time in the "[Franco-Foire](#)", an annual virtual fair featuring French services and service providers in the Kingston region. With exhibitors from government, health, education, immigration, and the private sector, and organized by l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario and the Conseil régional des Mille-Îles (ACFOMI), the event offered the opportunity to virtually introduce our Office and the work we do to visitors, including providing the information they need to file a complaint with us.

ROBARTS
 CENTRE FOR CANADIAN STUDIES

CANADIAN LANGUAGE MUSEUM
MUSÉE CANADIEN DES LANGUES
CRLCC

 Commissariat
 aux langues
 officielles

 Office of the
 Commissioner of
 Official Languages

The language commissioners speak

On October 22, French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke, along with Official Languages Commissioner Raymond Th  berge, gave a presentation on language rights to students of the Glendon School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA). The event was supported by the Centre for Research in Language and Culture Contact (CRLCC), the Canadian Language Museum and the Research Group on the Canadian Francophonie of the Robarts Centre of Canadian Studies.

Commissioner Burke provided a high-level overview of the *French Language Services Act* and recommendations to government to planning to improve French services in Ontario.



Contributing to Franco-Ontarian vitality

French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke appeared in a short video as part of l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario's virtual annual meeting, held October 25-30.

As Commissioner Burke noted: "The theme of this assembly, "Franco-Ontarian Vitality", got me thinking: What does "vitality" truly mean? For me, it's being able to live and thrive in French in Ontario. As French Language Services Commissioner, I contribute to the achievement of this goal by monitoring the government's application of the *French Language Services Act* so that all those who wish to use services in French in the province can do so easily and have a positive experience."

HOW WE HELP – CASE SUMMARIES



Clinical error

A Francophone woman complained to us that a dermatology clinic at an eastern Ontario hospital did not provide services in French when she booked her appointment on the phone, at reception or during the medical examination. She only received results in French after the examination.

After conducting an internal investigation, the hospital issued a reminder to clinic staff about its procedures and committed to organizing an awareness campaign on the importance of actively offering services in French across all clinics.

The patient told us she was satisfied and touched by the measures taken by the hospital in the wake of her complaint.

Click here to learn more about how we helped improve services offered in French



Online schooling okayed

A 14-year-old in care told us her worker was insisting that she go to school in person, even though her preference was to continue to attend school online. The youth had mental health issues, including anxiety, and felt more comfortable with virtual schooling. We followed up with her worker, who said that the children's aid society (CAS) had indicated that all children should participate in school in person unless there were extenuating circumstances. She agreed to meet with the youth to discuss her situation. The CAS ultimately agreed to the youth's online learning request, and she was very happy with the outcome.

Click here to learn more about how we helped young people in care with their problems



[Long-term loan](#)

After moving into a long-term care facility, a man with ALS – a neurodegenerative disease – contacted our Office for help to keep the ventilator he had been provided through the province's Ventilator Equipment Pool program. He complained that he had become ineligible for the device. Our staff confirmed with the Ministry of Health and program officials that they would not remove the ventilator until the man was ready to return it. He told our Office this gave him "great comfort."

[Click here to learn more about how we helped Ontarians with their problems](#)

[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.

Copyright © 2021 Ontario Ombudsman, All rights reserved.

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