

In our December newsletter: A new tool to assess French language services in Ontario, looking back on 2021, and promoting the rights of young people in care

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French Language Services Commissioner recommends assessment tool to aid government in protecting Ontario's "linguistic health"

Looking back on 2021

How we protect and promote young people's rights in care

How we helped: Case summaries

Work with us! Openings for Early Resolutions Officers and more

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES COMMISSIONER RECOMMENDS ASSESSMENT TOOL TO AID GOVERNMENT IN PROTECTING ONTARIO'S "LINGUISTIC HEALTH"



In her second Annual Report, released on Dec. 7, 2021, French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke called on the province to ensure its services for Franco-Ontarians are truly equivalent to those in English, and provided without delay.

In her report, the Commissioner:

- Provides details on the **351** cases received by the French Language Services Unit within the Ombudsman's Office (the FLS Unit) between October 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021 – a 15% increase over the previous year; and
- Reiterates the **importance of planning** to deliver quality services in French, equivalent to those in English and without delay.



In this report, the Commissioner recommends an assessment tool to support the government in measuring the success of these plans. Called the French Language Services Commissioner's Compass (FLSC Compass), the tool measures the effectiveness of services in French using four criteria – Fairness, Logistics, Satisfaction and Communication.

“Assessment is a crucial step to ensure good planning and to make it an evolving exercise, suited to the specific needs of Francophones,” Commissioner Burke states in the report. “When we evaluate French language services, we look at both the legal obligations under the *French Language Services Act* and the moral obligations we all have to protect our Francophone cultural heritage for future generations.

“This is how we can ensure good linguistic health: By working both preventively and continuously, and by devoting extra attention to the issues that require it.”

[Read the full report](#)

[Read the Commissioner's report highlights](#)

[Read the Commissioner's remarks](#)

In the News

- [Language Commissioner proposes tool to assess availability, quality of French services](#)

LOOKING BACK ON 2021



In his latest Message from the Ombudsman, Ombudsman Dubé reflects on the past year, the challenges and accomplishments of his Office, and what will come in 2022.

“It’s difficult to believe that nearly two years have passed since our organization was forced to leave our physical office space and transition to serving Ontarians remotely. Over this extremely challenging time, I am tremendously proud of the resilience my team has shown and the way we’ve adapted to the many drastic changes to the way we work.

“In late June, I released my Annual Report, the second one we have produced during the pandemic. It highlighted the 20,015 cases we received about services across the public sector. For example, we helped inmates in provincial jails receive timely health care and phone access despite pandemic-related lockdowns, nudged the Ministry of Transportation to deal with the massive backlog of driving tests, and raised concerns about children’s aid societies resorting to call police to deal with young people in their care.

“At present, we have several investigations in progress. Among them, our Special Ombudsman Response Team is making headway in its complex, systemic investigations of ministerial oversight of long-term care and delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board. The team has interviewed dozens of witnesses remotely and reviewed hundreds of thousands of documents in the course of these investigations.

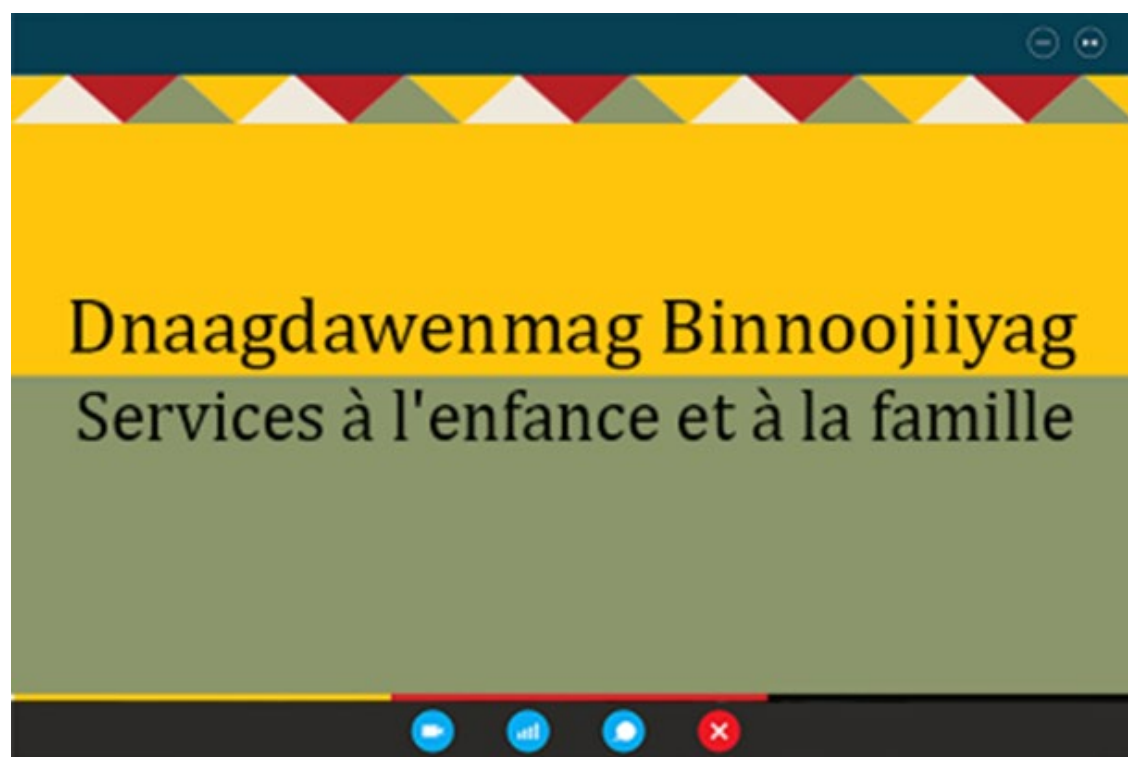
"My team and I have continued to participate enthusiastically in outreach activities with all of our stakeholder groups, as well as with colleagues in other ombuds offices, albeit remotely. I have also been pleased to be invited to share our methods and strategies for success on an international (virtual) stage.

"We remain committed to helping Ontarians by proactively sharing information and identifying gaps in services and processes with the public sector agencies we oversee. 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.

"I would like to wish you all a very happy holiday season – and all the best for a brighter 2022."

[Read the full message](#)

HOW WE PROTECT AND PROMOTE YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHTS IN CARE



On December 2, 2021, Children and Youth Unit Director Diana Cooke met virtually with 120 staff at Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiiyag Child and Family Services, a multi-service Indigenous child well-being agency that covers an area from Toronto north to Parry Sound and east to Belleville. They discussed how our Office helps young people and families who have issues with the child welfare system.

The presentation provided an overview of the Ombudsman's Office and the

specialized approach of the Children and Youth Unit as a legislated safeguard for young people in care. This work includes:

- Handling complaints from young people, families and professionals (including whistleblowers);
- Conducting investigations;
- Monitoring Death and Serious Bodily Harm reports received by our Office;
- Meeting with young people to inform them of their rights;
- Providing presentations to service providers;
- Developing communication materials;
- Involving specialized teams (Indigenous Circle and Black Children, Youth, and Families Table) who provide guidance and outreach as appropriate; and
- Providing advice and recommendation to government.

For more information about the Children and Youth Unit and young people's rights in care, please visit our [Children and Youth Unit page](#). If you wish to schedule a presentation for your organization, please contact us at cy-ej@ombudsman.on.ca or call us at 416-325-5669 or toll-free at 1-800-263-2841.

HOW WE HELPED – CASE SUMMARIES



Improvements on track

We were contacted by a Francophone woman after she tried to call Metrolinx. Although she chose the French phone line, she said the agent who took the call could only speak English. The agent asked if she was able to continue the conversation in English, which she declined to do. The agent then offered to use a translation service. The woman told us she found it unacceptable that an equivalent service was not offered in French at all times when calling an Ontario government agency.

We raised the issue with Metrolinx, which has begun the process of hiring six to eight bilingual agents to fill the bilingual staffing gap and has reminded its agents of the protocol for responding to Francophone clients. To date, Metrolinx is on track to meet this goal.

[Click here to learn more about how we helped with issues or problems concerning French language services](#)



[Double time](#)

A man complained to us about long delays in getting ServiceOntario and the Registrar General to correct a name error on his mother's death certificate. Our inquiries revealed that the Registrar General routinely processed a person's Statement of Death form separately from their Medical Certificate of Death, and this contributed to delays in amending both forms. Because of our inquiries, the man not only received the corrected death certificate, but ServiceOntario and the Registrar General changed the process so both forms will be corrected at the same time in future.

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

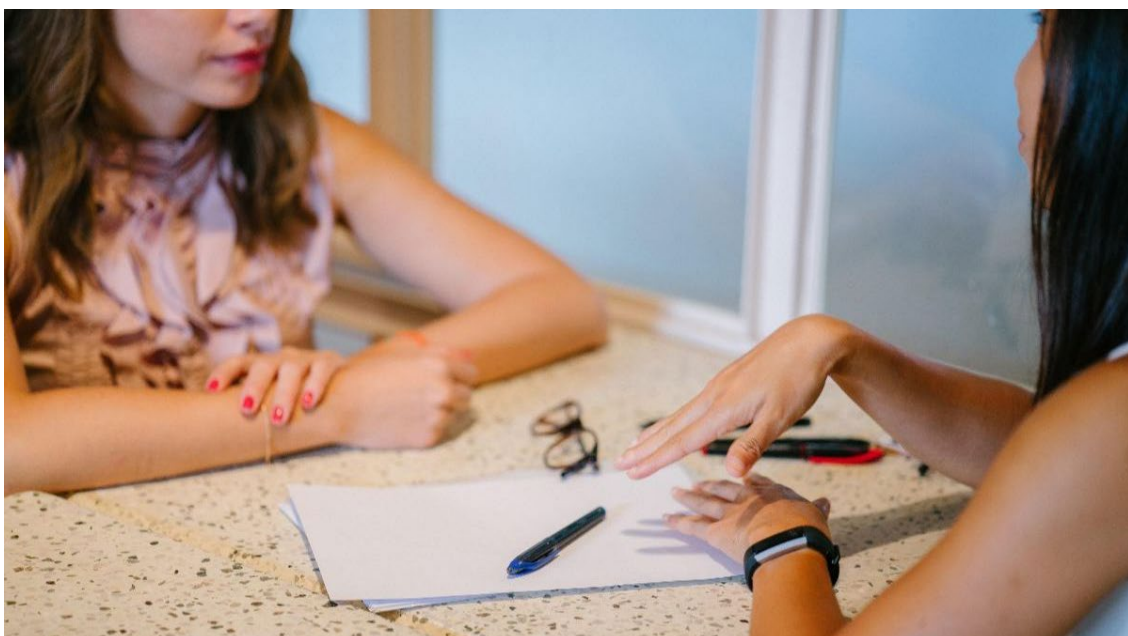


[Online schooling okayed](#)

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 with issues or problems concerning children and youth](#)

[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.

- [Early Resolutions Officer](#)
- [Early Resolutions Officer \(French Language Services Unit\)](#)
- [Early Resolutions Officer \(Children and Youth Unit\)](#)
- [Investigator \(Children and Youth Unit\)](#)

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 was reappointed for a second five-year term, beginning on April 1, 2021.

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