

In our June newsletter: Celebrating the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, National Indigenous History Month, local and international outreach, and more

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Celebrating the 2SLGBTQIA+ community at Youth Pride Durham

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Spread the word: We're hiring!

CELEBRATING THE 2SLGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY AT YOUTH PRIDE DURHAM



On June 4, staff from the Ombudsman's Office attended Youth Pride Durham – a safe, inclusive and exciting event hosted by the Durham Children's Aid Society and other community organizations in Durham Region to celebrate children, youth and families of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. The bustling event was attended by hundreds of families, allies and community members, and featured food trucks, a DJ and a drag queen show.

Youth Pride Durham invited organizations to attend and provide information about programs and supports they offer to 2SLGBTQIA+ children and youth. At our booth, we shared information about how we can help children and young people in care resolve their concerns with the child welfare system. Some visitors told us that they were pleased we had been able to help them in the past. We also handed out giveaways – our most popular items included Pride buttons and Pride and Trans flags – and resources for young people, teachers, foster parents and social workers.



The Ombudsman's Office stands in solidarity with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Young people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ can often report feeling unsafe, isolated and marginalized in residential care. Our Children and Youth Unit's 2SLGBTQ+ Outreach Team is planning further meetings with service providers and young people, with a focus on how services must take sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression into account.

For more information about our Children and Youth Unit, please visit:

<https://bit.ly/ChildrenAndYouthUnit>.



RECOGNIZING ONGOING ISSUES AFFECTING INDIGENOUS CHILDREN, YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES DURING NATIONAL INDIGENOUS HISTORY MONTH



June is National Indigenous History Month – a time when Canadians are encouraged to learn about, and recognize, the history, languages, culture and experiences of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. It is also a time to remember the work that remains to be done to acknowledge and address issues facing Indigenous communities, including the [over-representation of Indigenous young people](#) in the child welfare system.

With this in mind, the Ombudsman's Indigenous Circle team, formed in 2020 within the Children and Youth Unit and led by Indigenous staff, provides guidance on cases. The circle incorporates Indigenous practices, such as smudging, talking circles and Elder participation, into our work dealing with complaints and investigations pertaining to the child welfare system.

Under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*, services to First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth and their families should be provided in a manner that recognizes their cultures, heritages, traditions, connection to their communities, and the concept of the extended family.

To enhance accessibility, we have also developed [brochures in Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Moose Cree](#).

We encourage service providers supporting Indigenous youth to inform them about how they can contact the Ombudsman's Office with questions they may have related to their care.

For more information about our Children and Youth Unit, please visit:
<https://bit.ly/ChildrenAndYouthUnit>

HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL HEEDS OMBUDSMAN'S CALL TO SCRAP COMPLAINT FEE



"I think we should listen."

That's what Hamilton City Councillor Brad Clark said during a [council meeting earlier this month](#), referring to a letter Hamilton council received from Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé in early 2022. In the letter, Ombudsman Dubé called on the municipality to eliminate a \$100 fee to file a complaint with the city's integrity commissioner.

"The [integrity commissioner] system is premised on a willing public coming forward to assist in ensuring that transparency is maintained at the municipal level," the Ombudsman wrote.

In June, following a discussion about the Ombudsman's recommendation, council voted to remove the fee. As Councillor Ninder Nann noted at the meeting, and as reported in the Hamilton Spectator: "Fundamentally, at the end of the day, a \$100 fee is a barrier. It prevents citizens from being able to access this very important mechanism to keep us elected officials accountable."

The Ombudsman applauds this decision; as he has noted, complaint fees can discourage people from making legitimate complaints due to concerns about financial cost, and go against the spirit of transparency and accountability. The Ombudsman encourages all municipalities to eliminate fees and other obstacles that make it difficult to file complaints.

Ombudsman Dubé also reminds municipalities that complaints present opportunities to improve local governance, and that municipalities should take the time to develop good complaints processes. You can find our [tips for municipal complaint resolution policies on](#)

[our website.](#)

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE



Equal access to justice in French

French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke addressed the Ontario Francophone legal community on June 10 during the annual general meeting of the Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (AJEFO), held at the Université de l'Ontario français campus in Toronto. The hybrid virtual and in-person event celebrated the resilience and diversity of the Francophone community, and the AJEFO's commitment to access to justice in French in Ontario.

Commissioner Burke thanked the full room of AJEFO members for their contributions to improve access to justice in French and for playing a crucial role in protecting and preserving Francophone rights in Ontario for future generations. She emphasized that her team at the French Language Services Unit plays a key role in improving government services in French in the province, and urged attendees to contact our Office if they face a lack of services in French.

[Have you experienced difficulties accessing services in French? Contact us today.](#)



Municipal matters: Thank you for having us, AMCTO!

On June 14, General Counsel Laura Pettigrew and Senior Counsel Joanna Bull, two of our Office's experts in municipal issues, delivered an in-person workshop on how municipalities can create policies to help handle and resolve complaints, at the [2022 annual conference for the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario](#) in Niagara Falls.

They discussed how good policies can assist municipalities in dealing with service issues,

and provided examples and case stories from the Ombudsman's work.

Delegates also visited our staff at the exhibitor trade show, where we answered questions, distributed resources like our ["tip cards" for municipal best practices](#), and handed out copies of our [municipal investigation reports](#).

[Learn more about our oversight of municipalities.](#)

Helping the helpers

This month, our Office presented virtually to staff in the newcomer program at the YMCA-YWCA in Ottawa. The presentation focused on the ways our Office can be a resource to settlement workers and people who assist newcomers to Ontario.

For example, we can answer questions and help resolve issues with getting OHIP coverage, converting foreign driver's licences, attending school or post-secondary institutions, and accessing social services and programs for people with disabilities. Ombudsman staff are experts at navigating government services as well as making referrals for matters that fall outside the Ombudsman's oversight. [Learn more about how to file a complaint or ask a question.](#)

[Would you like us to speak to your organization? Contact us today!](#)



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Webinar, this morning at [@AOMAOMBUDSMAN](#) - [#EffectiveInvestigationStrategies](#) - Building Blocks, Methods and Tools - Presentations and recording will be available soon at aoma.ukzn.ac.za



7:10 AM · Jun 14, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Sharing expertise internationally

On June 14, Domonie Pierre, the Director of the Special Ombudsman Response Team (SORT), spoke to hundreds of delegates from around the world at a virtual conference focused on investigations, conducted by the African Ombudsman Research Council and African Ombudsman and Mediators Association.

Drawing on her significant expertise working with and leading SORT, Ms. Pierre discussed strategies for large-scale systemic investigations, including guidelines for developing investigations plans, managing expectations, and monitoring the implementation of recommendations.

Established by our Office in 2005, SORT is known around the Ombudsman world for dozens of systemic investigations that led to improved services for millions of Ontarians. These include increased supports for people with developmental disabilities, better tracking of inmates in segregation, improved driver licence suspension notices, fairer property tax assessments, expanded screening of newborn babies for preventable diseases, and a more secure lottery system.

HOW WE HELPED – CASE SUMMARIES



Specialist case

A transgender man complained to our Office because he was having difficulty obtaining an updated birth certificate from the Registrar General. Individuals can change the gender designation on their birth certificate if they submit certain documentation, including a letter from a physician. The man had done so, but was refused because the letter was from his psychiatrist.

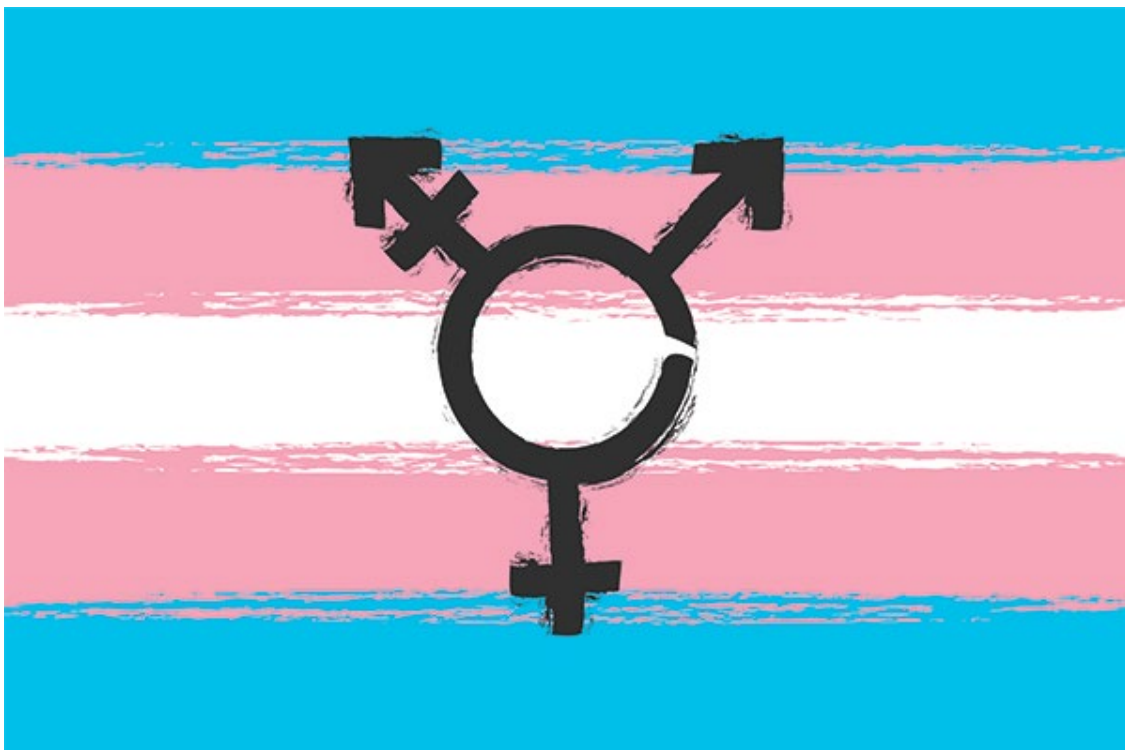
[Read the full story.](#)



[Welcome change](#)

A transgender man seeking a name change complained to us when his application was rejected because the sex on his birth certificate differed from the gender on his name change application.

[Read how we helped.](#)



[A second look](#)

A transgender woman complained that the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) had improperly refused her application for prior approval for breast reconstruction surgery. The woman explained that due to medical treatment she had undergone as an adolescent, she required additional reconstructive surgery that would not normally be covered for sex reassignment.

[We intervened – and here's what we did.](#)

SPREAD THE WORD: WE'RE HIRING



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

- [Articling Student \(2023-2024\)](#)
- [Legal Summer Student \(2023\)](#)
- [Early Resolution Officer](#)
- [Early Resolution Officer \(French Language Services Unit\)](#)
- [Early Resolution Officer \(Children and Youth Unit\)](#)
- [Legal Counsel \(French Language Services\)](#)
- [Investigator](#)
- [Investigator \(Children and Youth Unit\)](#)
- [Investigator \(French Language Services Unit\)](#)

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.

The Ontario Ombudsman's work takes place on traditional Indigenous territories across the province we now call Ontario, and we are thankful to be able to work and live on this land.

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