

In our September newsletter: Franco-Ontarian Day
celebration events, Ombudsman closes file on Niagara
"Inside Job" report, and more!

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Face-to-face with Ontario's Francophonie



The province marks Franco-Ontarian Day every year on September 25, but this has been a particularly memorable September as Francophones and Francophiles resumed celebrations in person for the first time since 2019.

Throughout the month, French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke spoke at numerous community events, conducted media interviews, and hosted the first of a series of virtual roundtable discussions with Francophone stakeholders to hear their concerns and discuss the work of our Office's French Language Services Unit.

On September 25, Commissioner Burke spoke at the Franco-Ontarian flag-raising ceremony in Sarnia – an historic event, marking the first such celebration since the area became a designated region under the *French Language Services Act* last year.

"I have many fond memories of my time in Sarnia, and it's wonderful to see that the Francophone community here is thriving," she told the crowd, alongside Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley, federal and provincial Members of Parliament Marilyn Gladu and Robert Bailey, as well as staff from the Centre communautaire francophone de Sarnia-Lambton. Early in her career, Ms. Burke taught French in schools in the area.

The Commissioner also attended the Franco-Ontarian flag-raising outside the Legislative Assembly at Queen's Park on September 23, alongside Ombudsman Paul Dubé, staff from our French Language Services Unit, representatives from the provincial government and opposition parties, and the Assemblée francophone de l'Ontario, which organizes the event each year.

As well, she spoke at networking events from Penetanguishene (September 22) to Ottawa (September 27). Watch for more information about these and other events in the Commissioner's 2021-2022 Annual Report this December.

Statement on Bill 7: An ongoing key theme in the Commissioner's recent discussions has been the importance of ensuring that Francophones can receive health services in their language. On September 22, she issued a statement calling on the government "to take into account the special status of the French language in Ontario" in authorizing the movement of patients under the new *More Beds, Better Care Act, 2022*, "to ensure that Francophones who will be affected by the new measures ... receive care in French throughout the process." Read the full [statement](#).

Follow our [social media accounts](#) for timely updates on the Commissioner's activities.

Honouring children and survivors of residential schools



September 30 marks the second annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This day – also recognized as [Orange Shirt Day](#) – honours the thousands of children who were forced to attend residential schools and never returned home, and survivors and their families.

As an Office, we acknowledge the importance of our collective efforts toward reconciliation. This year, on September 19, the Ombudsman and all our staff welcomed a speaker from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) for a presentation to help advance our understanding of the history of residential schools. Our Office will be closed on September 30, as our staff are invited to explore awareness opportunities to continue their learning of this painful and tragic legacy in Canada's history.

Suggested resource: The NCTR's "[Truth and Reconciliation Week 2022](#)" program for schools offers age-appropriate content for students in Grades 1-12

Ombudsman closes Niagara “Inside Job” file



In November 2019, Ombudsman Paul Dubé's report [Inside Job](#) revealed that the former

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) hired by the Regional Municipality of Niagara in 2016 had been provided with confidential information leaked by insiders during the hiring process. It also exposed serious inadequacies in the local ombudsman's review of the matter.

This month, the Ombudsman confirmed that the municipality has successfully implemented all of his 16 recommendations, including:

- Developing an employee code of conduct that includes the protection of confidential information
- Training staff on the use of personal email and retention of corporate records
- A policy setting out the process for hiring a CAO
- Clear terms of reference for any future investigations by an ombudsman hired by the municipality

In a press release, Regional Chair Jim Bradley said: "I want to thank Mr. Dubé, and his staff, for the exceptional report and recommendations, as well as their commitment to work with us as we implemented policies to make the Region more open, fair and transparent. The residents of Niagara deserved better, and these new policies and practices will help make sure we are living up to our constituents' appropriately high expectations."

In the news: [Ombudsman closes file on contentious 2016 chief administrative officer hiring - Niagara Falls Review](#)

Holding service providers accountable for quality of care: New regulations

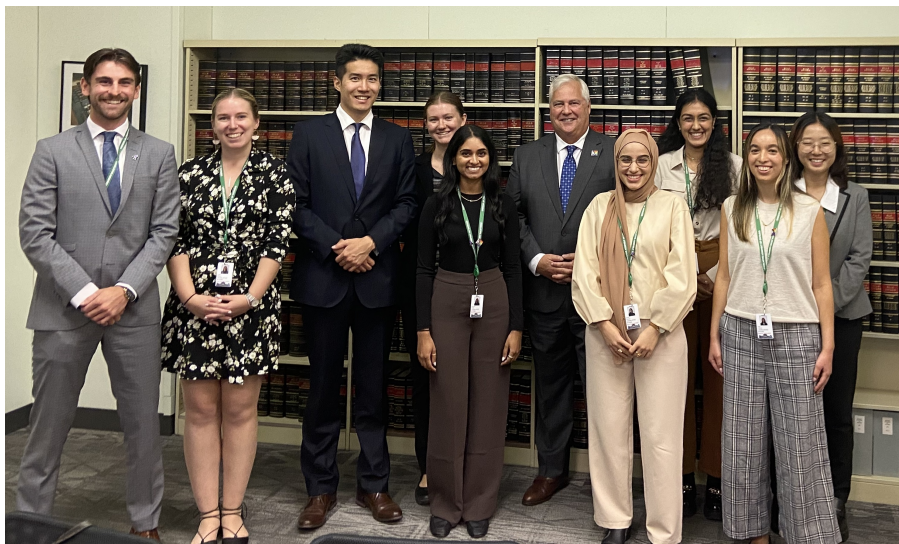


Last month, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services notified all agencies that deliver services under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* (CYFSA) of new regulatory amendments making them accountable for the quality of care they provide.

As part of the Ministry's broader [Child Welfare Redesign Strategy](#), these amendments embed its [Quality Standards Framework](#) into regulation. It has also developed a [child-friendly version](#).

As part of our work in promoting and ensuring young people's [rights in care](#), and the overall care young people should receive under the CYFSA, the Ombudsman's Office contributed to some of these amendments, most of which come into effect next July 1.

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE



Tomorrow's leaders: Meeting the 2022-2023 OLIP interns

On September 13, Ombudsman Paul Dubé, Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay, and French Language Services Unit Director of Operations Carl Bouchard spoke to this year's participants in the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme (OLIP) – which enables recent university graduates to work with MPPs of all parties in a 10-month placement. They discussed the roles of the Ombudsman and Commissioner in promoting fairness and accountability in Ontario's government and public sector bodies, and how complaints from the public help us propose solutions to improve governance. The interns provided their own engaging insights about the value of independent oversight in maintaining a healthy democracy.

Police training: Change still needed

On September 16, Ombudsman Dubé was in Trenton to speak to eastern Ontario members of the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards about our Office's role in civilian oversight of police. He noted that he remains concerned that his 2016 recommendations to reform Ontario's police use-of-force model and require de-escalation training have not yet been implemented, and he is considering whether a follow-up investigation is warranted.

Coming to a municipality near you

Ombudsman staff are happy to be back in person at two municipal events this month. On September 14, at the Ontario East Municipal Conference in Cornwall, Senior Counsel Joanna Bull and Robin Bates shared best practices for municipal complaint policies and open meetings.

And on September 30, senior legal staff will lead a session on handling local-level complaints – with special focus on zoning-related issues – at the Ontario Association of Committees of Adjustment and Consent Authorities' conference in Peterborough.

We have lots of resources for municipal stakeholders! Start with our [tips for municipal complaint resolution policies here](#).

Speaking of language

On September 7-8, the International Association of Language Commissioners gathered for its first in-person conference since our Office hosted the event in Toronto in 2019. French

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Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke represented Ontario at the meeting in Bilbao, Spain, where she and her colleagues discussed a broad range of topics, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on language rights and the role of a language commissioner within an ombudsman's office.

HOW WE HELPED – CASE SUMMARIES



Continuing education

A woman contacted us to complain about her experience with inadequate French services from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, both during telephone conversations and in written communications in response to her access to information request. We contacted Ministry staff, who committed to ensuring better written communications in French. The Ministry also hired and trained a bilingual staff member to respond to access to information requests in French.

Learn more about the French Language Services Unit which answers questions and takes complaints about services in French.



Secure resolution

A 16-year-old complained that staff at his group home weren't helpful to him after his personal belongings, including a laptop, were stolen or damaged by other youths living in the home.

When we contacted staff at the responsible agency, they confirmed another resident had been able to get into the teen's room by exploiting a weakness in the home's electronic key card system. They said they don't usually financially compensate young people for damaged items, but we asked if they would be flexible in this situation, given the inadequate security of the locks. The agency later confirmed it would replace the youth's laptop, and were working to repair the locks in the home.

Are you a young person in care? Do you have a problem or concern, and don't know how to deal with it? [Contact us](#) – the Ombudsman's Children and Youth Unit is here to help.

Click here to learn more about how we helped with issues or problems concerning children and youth



Far and unfair

We received a complaint from the father of a student with disabilities who resides during the week at a provincial demonstration school in southern Ontario. He said school officials had insisted that he pick up his daughter within two hours, because she was exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. This was impossible, because he lives a 15-hour drive away. He said the school also refused to test the girl, even though it has its own medical staff. We flagged this case to Ministry of Education officials, who agreed to fly the man to southern Ontario and provide him and his daughter with accommodation if the need arose in future. The Ministry also committed to reviewing its policies to avert similar situations.

Click here to learn more about how we helped Ontarians with their problems

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.

- [Communications Officer](#)
- [Early Resolution Officer](#)
- [Early Resolution Officer \(Bilingual\)](#)
- [Early Resolution Officer \(Bilingual, Children and Youth Unit\)](#)
- [Legal Counsel \(French Language Services\)](#)
- [Investigator \(Bilingual, Children and Youth Unit\)](#)

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.

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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