

In our October newsletter: Connecting with ombudsman colleagues across Canada, Dress Purple Day, and more!

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Connecting with ombudsman colleagues across Canada

Why we “dress purple” on October 27

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Spread the word: We're hiring!

Connecting with ombudsman colleagues across Canada



On October 18 and 19, ombudsman and oversight staff from across the country met in Ottawa for the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman's biannual conference. This year's event, under the theme "Together Again: Strengthening Ombuds Practice through Connectedness and Inclusion," welcomed more than 150 in-person and 70 virtual attendees to discuss common challenges and big-picture questions facing ombudsman offices and the people we seek to help.

Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé and colleagues spoke to delegates in three separate sessions. On the first day of the conference, Ombudsman Dubé and British Columbia Ombudsperson Jay Chalke shared strategies to enable meaningful engagement on issues affecting Indigenous people and groups, with a view to promoting reconciliation.

Our Children and Youth Director, Diana Cooke, teamed up with General Counsel Laura Pettigrew to lead a session on how to incorporate inclusive language in investigative reports.

And French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke presented highlights of her recent investigation into Laurentian University's cuts to French-language programs. Her presentation touched on the role of a language commissioner within an ombudsman office, and strategies for conducting an effective investigation that leads to strong recommendations. All of the Commissioner's recommendations in this case were accepted, and [you can read the report here](#).

Why we “dress purple” on October 27



Every October, children’s aid societies across Ontario raise awareness about the important role individuals and communities play in supporting vulnerable children and youth through the “Dress Purple” campaign.

On October 27 – Dress Purple Day – the Ombudsman and staff shared their thoughts on what helping children and youth in care who contact our Office means to them – and the significance of wearing purple on this day.

All young people in care [have a right](#) to contact the Ombudsman’s Office whenever they wish. This can be if they feel they were treated unfairly, or have questions about their specific rights entitling them to a certain standard of care in the child welfare system.

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE



Did you miss Ombudsman Day? Catch this video

The second Thursday in October each year is Ombudsman Day, where ombudsman practitioners and other oversight bodies highlight the ombudsman profession, and educate the public about how an ombudsman fights for fairness.

To mark the day this year, we created a short video answer to the question: “What is an ombudsman?” For starters, the gender-neutral term originated in Sweden and means “citizen’s representative.” [Watch to learn more.](#)

Efforts to support Indigenous communities and reconciliation

On October 21, Ombudsman Paul Dubé presented as part of a panel at the annual conference for the Alternative Dispute Resolution Institute of Canada in Ottawa. The panel, which also included representatives from ombudsman offices in B.C. and Northwest Territories, as well as the Ombudsperson for American Indian Families of Minnesota, discussed their approaches to improving services for Indigenous communities with an aim to supporting reconciliation.



School for board superintendents

On October 13, Early Resolutions Manager Paul Sloan presented virtually to the Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program as part of a training course for school board superintendents. The presentation and lively discussions centred on our Office's focus on administrative fairness and how we resolve issues about school boards. [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](#).



Bonjour Kingston!

On October 15, staff from our French Language Services Unit attended the Franco-Foire organized by l'[Association canadienne française de l'Ontario Mille-Îles \(ACFOMI\)](#), a community event that showcases various Francophone organizations and French-language services and products available in the Kingston and Thousand Islands area.

We shared information on the role of the French Language Services Commissioner and how we receive and resolve cases. Many visitors shared their experiences in accessing government services in French and expressed gratitude for our work.

Completing the circle: Francophone roundtables wrap up

French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke completed her series of virtual roundtable discussions with the executive directors of Francophone organizations this month. Groups from the central (GTA and Penetanguishene), eastern (Ottawa-area), and southwest (Kitchener-Waterloo, Sarnia-Lambton, Windsor, London and the Niagara) areas shared concerns of their members and their experiences with our Office. (Roundtables with provincewide groups and those from the north were held in September.) Participants provided valuable insights about the challenges experienced by Francophones and suggestions for improving the delivery of services in French across the province.

Service in French: It's the law

On October 17, French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke gave a presentation to students of the Glendon School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA). Her presentation provided a high-level overview of the *French Language Services Act* and her recommendations to government since 2020, which focus on planning and evaluating services in French to ensure they are equivalent to those provided to the general population in English. The Commissioner delivered a similar presentation on October 31 to a group of language rights students at the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Law.

HOW WE HELPED – CASE SUMMARIES



[ID help](#)

A 14-year-old needed our help getting identification documents to register for school and access health care, after he was removed from his home by a children's aid society (CAS) over safety concerns.

The youth looked to his CAS worker for support because he was unable to get his identification documents from his mother. When he didn't hear back from the worker in more than two weeks, he contacted our Office. We spoke to the youth's worker, who said he would have to write an "advocacy letter" on the youth's behalf, then take him to a nearby ServiceOntario centre to obtain the ID. We asked him to schedule this, which he did, and the youth received his new temporary ID within three days.

Our Children and Youth Unit staff will listen, review concerns about the experiences and services provided to young people by the child welfare system, and help find solutions. If we can't help directly, we will refer you to someone who can. [Contact us](#).

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



[Post-mortem refund](#)

A man who had continued to make regular family support payments to his former mother-in-law, who had cared for his now-adult daughter, complained to us after he learned the older woman had been dead for more than a year. He alerted the Family Responsibility Office (FRO) – which had administered the support payments – and asked to be refunded all payments that it took after her death. We discovered that FRO officials had never been informed of the woman's death and were about to transfer the funds to the Ministry of Finance because she could not be located. Once they confirmed that she had died, they refunded the man more than \$2,800.

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



Intermittent licencing

A Francophone man who wanted to renew a licence plate did not receive services in French from ServiceOntario in a designated area. When we contacted the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery (then the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services), we learned that services in French by phone and in person were not available at this ServiceOntario centre at all times. To ensure that this ServiceOntario location had the necessary bilingual staff, we worked with the ministry, and this location now provides services in French by phone and in person at all times.

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

SPREAD THE WORD: WE'RE HIRING



We would love to work with you! We offer:

- Collaborative, exciting work with exceptional colleagues passionate about public service
- Comprehensive health, dental and vision benefits
- Generous paid maternity and parental leave
- Hybrid working environment with an office centrally located on the subway line
- A commitment to work-life balance
- Defined-benefit pension plan through the Ontario Pension Board
- Ongoing training and professional development opportunities

[Check out all of our open positions in the Careers section of our website.](#)

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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