

In our January newsletter: We are growing to help more Ontarians – learn more about working here, and join our team!

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Growing to help more Ontarians: We're hiring

The number of organizations the Ombudsman oversees has doubled in recent years, and complaints to our Office are increasing -- so [we're expanding to help more Ontarians than ever before](#).

We handle 25,000 complaints every year. Our skilled, compassionate Early Resolution Officers (EROs) and Investigators capably resolve cases about government organizations (like ServiceOntario, OHIP, correctional facilities, and social services), tribunals (such as the Landlord and Tenant Board), municipalities, school boards and universities, as well as cases related to child welfare, and complaints about access to French language services.

Just what does an Early Resolution Officer do? Read this interview with Maxim, an ERO with our Children and Youth Unit.



On the job with an Ombudsman ERO

What do you do at the Ombudsman's Office?

"I'm responsible for taking complaints about issues concerning children and youth who receive services from children's aid societies, foster homes, group homes, and secure treatment facilities. Every day, I take calls from young people and adults to help them solve challenging problems. My work also includes analyzing complaint trends and meeting with children's aid society staff."

What do you like about working here?

"I am passionate about working with children and young people to help them achieve their full potential. Working here, I have a unique opportunity to do that in an impartial and unbiased way. I like being able to help resolve the challenges that young people and their families experience with children's aid societies or in residential care."

What is your background?

"I have a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Juris Doctor degree, as well as practical experience providing legal services in the family, civil, and criminal areas of the law."

"It's important in my role that I listen without judgment, act compassionately, and use a trauma-informed approach."

What are skills you use daily?

"It's important in my role that I listen without judgment, act compassionately, and use a trauma-informed approach when speaking with vulnerable individuals. I appreciate that our Office has a collaborative and friendly work environment where we are encouraged to ask for help or guidance. I also rely on the feedback and mentorship of my colleagues."

What would you like people to know about the Ombudsman's Office?

"Our Office provides a critical service for the people of Ontario. We're the only organization of our kind that resolves complaints from Ontarians about public provincial services. Even if something is outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, we refer people to help wherever we can. We help keep our government institutions accountable which, in turn, helps to build trust in our public institutions."

"The Children and Youth Unit has a special role to play, because we take and resolve complaints from young people in care. Children and youth may not know how to stand up for themselves, or where to go for help. We want them to know that they have the right to contact our Office, and that we'll help them and give them an opportunity to be heard."

We have several open positions for EROs and Investigators – check out the [current opportunities](#) on our website today!

Coffee with French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke



Last month, French Language Services Commissioner, Kelly Burke, was interviewed by journalist Jhade Montpetit and host of Radio-Canada's "Les malins," to talk about her Franco-Ontarian roots and her career. The two met at a student coffee shop at the University of Ottawa, Commissioner Burke's alma mater.

In the interview (in French only), Commissioner Burke recounted memories of growing up with four sisters in a bilingual household in Cornwall. From an early age, her Francophone mother and Anglophone father instilled in her the importance of being educated in both official languages, along with a particular love for French. This served her well early in her career as a French immersion teacher, where she taught in Cornwall, Sarnia, Petrolia and Toronto. She later graduated from UOttawa's French Common Law program.

After working as a lawyer in the private sector, she became Crown Counsel with the Government of Ontario practising Labour and Employment law, and later held senior executive positions, including Assistant Deputy Minister of Francophone Affairs. She was appointed French Language Services Commissioner in January 2020.

Commissioner Burke noted that her career path enabled her to exercise problem solving skills to find solutions to very important issues using mediation first – an ideal fit with an organization that focuses on solving complex issues through shuttle diplomacy and early resolution.

Looking back at her accomplishments so far as Commissioner, she underscored the critical role her team played early in the COVID-19 pandemic, when she emphasized that government should communicate with Ontarians simultaneously in French and English. Several changes were made to give Franco-Ontarians better access to pandemic-related information in French – which she saw as proof that she had the government's ear.

“I value language, culture, and maintaining Canadian bilingualism. Ontario plays a vital role in protecting French language services... I see myself as someone whose skills can contribute to those objectives.”

When Ms. Monpetit described her as “ambitious”, the Commissioner answered: “Yes, and my ambition has been directed towards things that I believe in, that I value. I value language, culture, and maintaining Canadian bilingualism. Ontario plays a vital role in protecting French language services and promoting Canadian bilingualism. I see myself as someone whose skills can contribute to those objectives and I highlight the importance of those goals at every opportunity.”

[Listen to the full interview in French here.](#)

A new frontier: How NWT got its Ombud



The latest episode of “Making it Fair,” the Canadian Conference of Parliamentary Ombudsmen podcast, is all about a startup: Colette Langlois, who became the Northwest Territories’ first Ombud in 2019, speaks with former Member of the Legislative Assembly Wendy Bisaro about the long road to establishing the office.

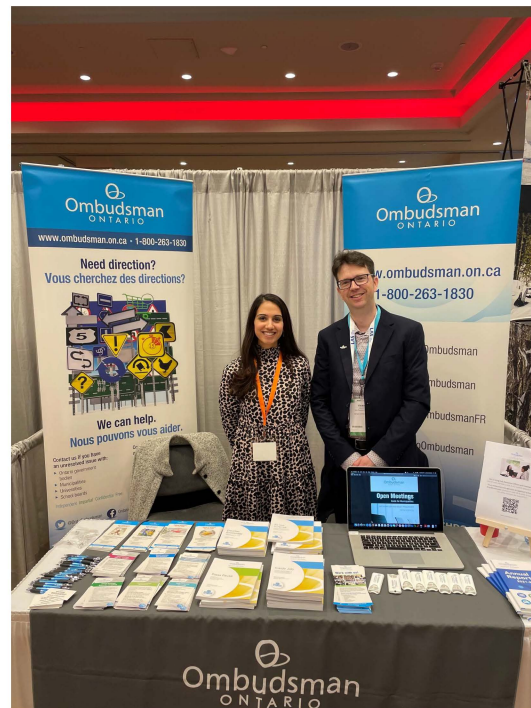
“Making it Fair” can be found on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcast, and Pocket Casts.

[Listen now to “Fairness: A New Frontier.”](#)

Municipal matters: **Reaching out to rural Ontario**

From January 22 to 24, Ombudsman staff connected with numerous newly elected council members from across rural Ontario – just a block away from our downtown Toronto office. At our booth and sessions at the annual [Rural Ontario Municipal Association \(ROMA\)](#)

conference, which draws more than 1,000 delegates, we shared information about how we handle complaints about municipalities, such as issues related to by-law enforcement, councils or committees, housing, infrastructure, or closed meetings. [You can learn more about the types of municipal complaints we can address here.](#)



Hot off the press: New open meeting guide



The brand-new, fifth edition of our popular handbook, *Open Meetings: Guide for Municipalities*, is now available in print and on our website! This handy reference is written and designed to help municipal clerks, council members, staff and the public understand the open meeting rules in the *Municipal Act, 2001*, and answer questions about common

procedural issues.

This updated 2023 edition includes new examples from recent Ombudsman investigations, including those related to virtual meetings. It also features excerpts from relevant legislation and best practice suggestions.

Hard copies will be mailed to all Ontario council members and clerks. You can also [download and print the accessible PDF from our website](#). While you're there, take a look at our other resources related to municipal governance – including our digital Open Meetings Case Digest and tip cards.

HOW WE HELPED – CASE SUMMARIES



“Help wanted” in both languages

A man filed a complaint about Ontario Health’s job postings. The link for applications transferred job seekers to a third-party site. That site and the job postings on it were in English only. A message at the end of each job description indicated that the French version would be available shortly. No such description was ever posted.

Ontario Health informed us that this was due to a technical posting issue and committed to improving the process. Each position posted in the future will be assessed, and it will be determined on a case-by-case basis if the position requires French language skills. Requirements will be based on the obligations related to the *French Language Services Act* and the obligations of the organization. If a need is identified, the position will be posted in both languages.

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



That's the place

Unhappy with his placement at a foster home, a 17-year-old asked his children's aid society caseworker for a placement change, only to be told the home he was staying in was best for him.

Feeling unheard, the young person contacted the Ombudsman's Children and Youth Unit. Our staff explained that all young people have the right to request a review of their placement, under the Residential Placement Advisory Committee (RPAC) process. The youth took this to his worker, who wasn't aware of this process. After we also spoke with the worker about the youth's right to a review, she said she would consider moving him.

The youth has since moved into a new home, and told our staff he is happy with the new placement and is still in contact with his children's aid society for transition planning.

[Click here to learn more about how we helped with issues or problems concerning children and youth](#)



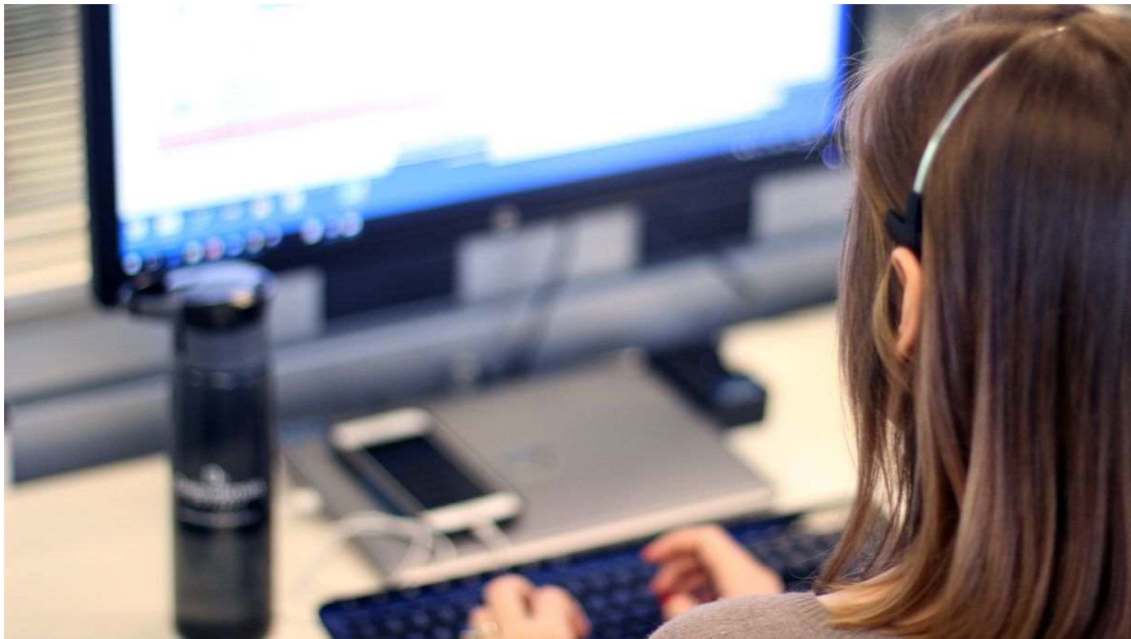
Please remain seated

A man studying online for his real estate certification complained to us after he was accused of leaving his seat during a virtual exam and then locked out of the program. He insisted that he had never left his seat, and that a glitch in the virtual proctoring technology had mistakenly identified him as an “imposter.” He had already raised the issue with the college, which acknowledged the error – but didn’t absolve him of cheating, which he feared would affect his academic standing.

As a result of our review, the college apologized to the man, officially acknowledged he had not cheated, and said it would review its relationship with the company that provided the virtual proctoring service.

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

WORK WITH US!



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

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

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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