

In our February newsletter: Ombudsman Ontario is hiring investigators, special constables need de-escalation training, and more

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Our Office's mandate has expanded, public complaints are increasing – [and our team continues to grow](#). We currently have several open positions for Investigators.

Have you ever wondered what it's like to help Ontarians by using your investigative skills? We handle some 25,000 complaints every year about government organizations, municipalities, school boards and universities, as well as cases related to child protection services and French language services. Most are resolved informally, but some warrant more complex investigation.

What does an investigator do? Read this interview with Katherine, an Investigator in our French Language Services Unit.

What do you do at the Ombudsman's Office?

As an investigator in the French Language Services Unit, I am responsible for managing investigative files on issues that affect the delivery of government services in French, as prescribed under the *French Language Services Act*. This means working on investigation plans, analyzing documents, conducting research, interviewing people and drafting investigation reports.

What do you like about working here?

I am passionate about language rights, which directly translates to my interest in our mandate of protecting the language rights of Franco-Ontarians. We are making a difference in the lives of Francophones in Ontario. I really like the investigative aspect of my work – I'm curious by nature. As an Investigator, I conduct a lot of interviews and communicate with many different people every day. I am motivated by the fact that every complaint filed with us can lead to a positive outcome and have an impact on Ontario's Francophone community.

What is your background?

I have a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies with a concentration in Political Science, and I have college degrees in Investigative Techniques and Cyber Investigation. Prior to coming to the Ombudsman's Office, I worked in private investigations, such as insurance fraud and asset tracing for banking and telecommunications institutions.

What are skills you use daily?

The skills I use most often are interpersonal skills. Since we communicate with people so frequently, we have to develop good relationships and trust. In my role, you have to be an active listener. Soft skills are important. We also work with a lot of information, and we have to use our judgment and discernment – so analytical skills are also crucial.

How important is it for you to be able to work in French and English?

It's pretty unique to have the chance to work in an office where you hear both French and English spoken every day. It's really desirable to work, write and communicate in the language of your choice. This is one of the things that attracted me to this role. Working in a bilingual and diverse office also allows us to learn about the different cultures of our colleagues and create good working relationships with stakeholders, whether in French or in English.

How would you describe the culture of the Ombudsman's Office?

This is an inclusive work environment focused on positive outcomes and good working relationships. It's a collaborative space where we are encouraged to work as a team, as well as across the various teams in the Office, and ask questions and support each other. Every day is a new day with new issues, and you know you are making a difference in the lives of Ontarians.

APPLY TODAY!

Special constables need de-escalation training: Ombudsman

Ombudsman Paul Dubé called on the Ministry of the Solicitor General this month to strengthen the oversight and training of special constables. In a submission to the Ministry's consultation on new regulations, the Ombudsman made several proposals, emphasizing the need for de-escalation training and independent oversight.

Some 3,000 special constables – peace officers – work for police service boards, transit agencies, universities and community housing corporations. They have many of the same powers as police officers, but Ontario legislation has historically provided little direction regarding the use of this authority.

The Ombudsman's submission welcomes the proposed regulations as “an important step toward remedying this long-standing deficiency.” However, he says, “my review has identified further gaps that the government should address to ensure accountability and transparency in the oversight of special constables.”

The Ombudsman has repeatedly urged the Ministry to develop a regulation requiring police officers to use de-escalation techniques before resorting to the use of force – a recommendation he originally made in a 2016 investigative report stemming from the fatal police shooting of 18-year-old Sammy Yatim on a Toronto streetcar. The Ministry accepted all 22 of the Ombudsman's recommendations at that time, but has implemented none of them.

In his new submission, Ombudsman Dubé notes this, and proposes that any new regulations for special constables include clear and consistent standards for the use of de-escalation techniques.

He also proposes that the Ministry provide an independent oversight body for complaints about special constables, and that the role of the new Law Enforcement Complaints Agency be expanded to take on this function. “I am concerned that the lack of an independent oversight mechanism may well jeopardize public confidence in the fair and impartial resolution of complaints,” he writes.

[Read the full submission here.](#)

Here, there and everywhere



Sharing expertise: Three years of positive impact on French language rights

On February 23, French Language Services Commissioner Kelly Burke gave a virtual presentation to about 100 colleagues from other Ombudsman offices across Canada, as part of the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman's monthly webinar series for staff. The Commissioner shared best practices for approaching stakeholders and getting recommendations accepted, based on her three Annual Reports, her investigation into cuts to French-language programs at Laurentian University, and numerous individual case outcomes.

Coming up: March is Francophonie Month! Watch our social media accounts for news about Commissioner Burke's speeches and other community activities during the month-long celebration of French culture and heritage.

Connecting with Black-identifying child welfare workers

On January 31, staff from the Ombudsman's Black Children, Youth and Families Table met with some 260 Black and Black-identifying child welfare workers at "All In!" – a symposium organized by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS). The meeting provided a space for workers to connect and discuss systemic issues and anti-Black racism within the child welfare system.

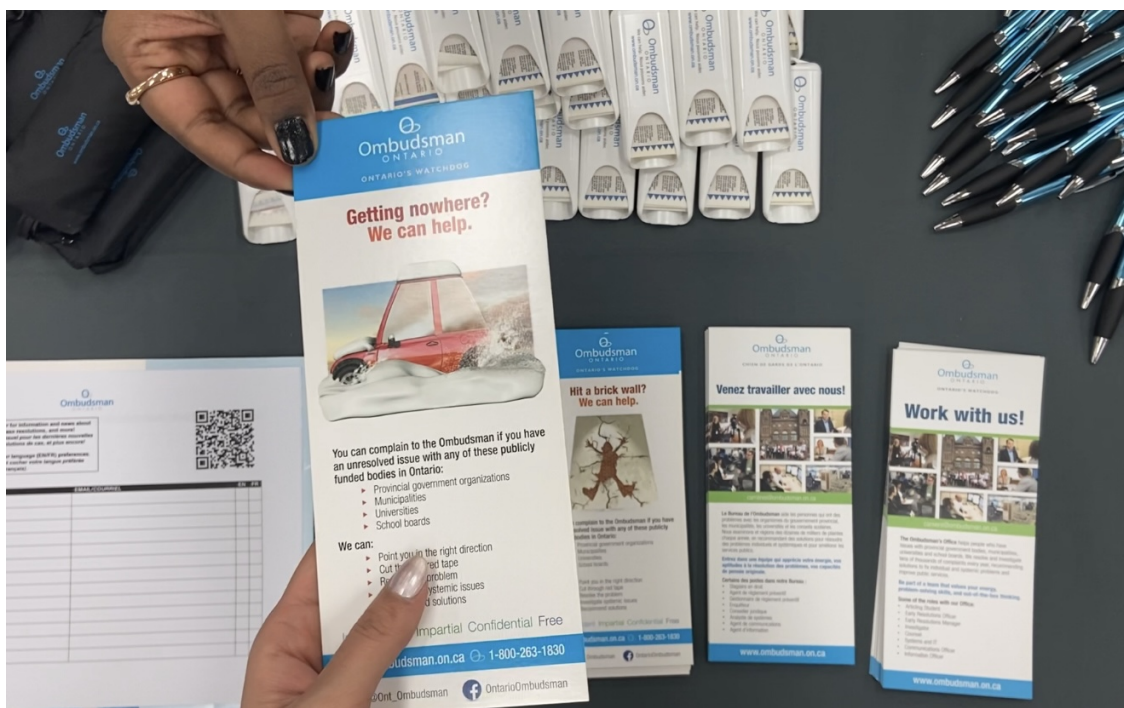
The Table, made up of staff within the Ombudsman's Children and Youth Unit who are Black, provides consultative advice on cases and investigations involving Black children and young people, and leads external outreach efforts to youth and stakeholders. Those attending "All In!" spoke about the role of our Office, how child welfare workers can help young people connect with us, and their obligations under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*, to inform youth about their rights.

Next month, staff from the Table will be at "PowerUp!" – a youth symposium hosted by the OACAS' [One Vision One Voice program](#) for Black-identifying children and youth involved with the child welfare system.



Working with the university sector

Ombudsman staff were at the Ontario University Registrars' Association conference in Toronto on February 15 and 16 to share our latest materials and answer questions about our work in the post-secondary education sector. Since gaining oversight of universities in 2016, we've resolved hundreds of complaints and inquiries about topics ranging from academic appeals and enrolment to the Ontario Student Assistance Program. Read more about how we work with universities and colleges in [our 2021-2022 Annual Report](#).



Speaking with seniors

Staff at our booth at the Seniors Active Living Fair in North York on February 22 answered questions from seniors, distributed helpful resources, and handed out copies of our [2021-2022 Annual Report](#). We can help seniors resolve problems with driver's licences, health cards, programs such as the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), and much more. [Learn more about how to file a complaint or ask a question.](#)



Giving back to the community

Our staff help Ontarians in many ways – even outside of work: Our recent winter clothing drive collected brand-new gloves, mittens, hats, scarves, beanies, thermal leggings, and warm socks for donation to a community relief kitchen near our downtown Toronto office.

HOW WE HELPED – CASE SUMMARIES



Without subtitles

A woman informed us that French subtitles had disappeared from the videos on the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development's Facebook page entitled "Lieux de travail de l'Ontario (Ontario At Work)." Although this page is in French, the majority of the videos are in English and previously included French subtitles.

We contacted the ministry and were informed that the subtitles had been replaced with captions compatible with new accessibility guidelines. The subtitles on the video no longer appeared automatically, forcing Francophones to tweak Facebook's settings to access the features reserved for people with accessibility needs.

Following our intervention, the Ministry reinstated automatic French subtitles on its Facebook page.

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



[On her own](#)

A 16-year-old in care of a children's aid society felt that her needs were not being met since she had a change in caseworkers. She told staff in our Children and Youth Unit that she recently had to go to hospital alone, even after telling her worker she was having health issues.

She also said her new worker had not started the process for a Voluntary Youth Services Agreement for her, and she needed a place of her own, winter clothing and food. With her consent, our staff contacted her caseworker to review the youth's concerns. The caseworker said she is actively looking for housing options for the youth. We subsequently followed up with the youth, who confirmed she has since received funding for shelter, clothing and food.

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



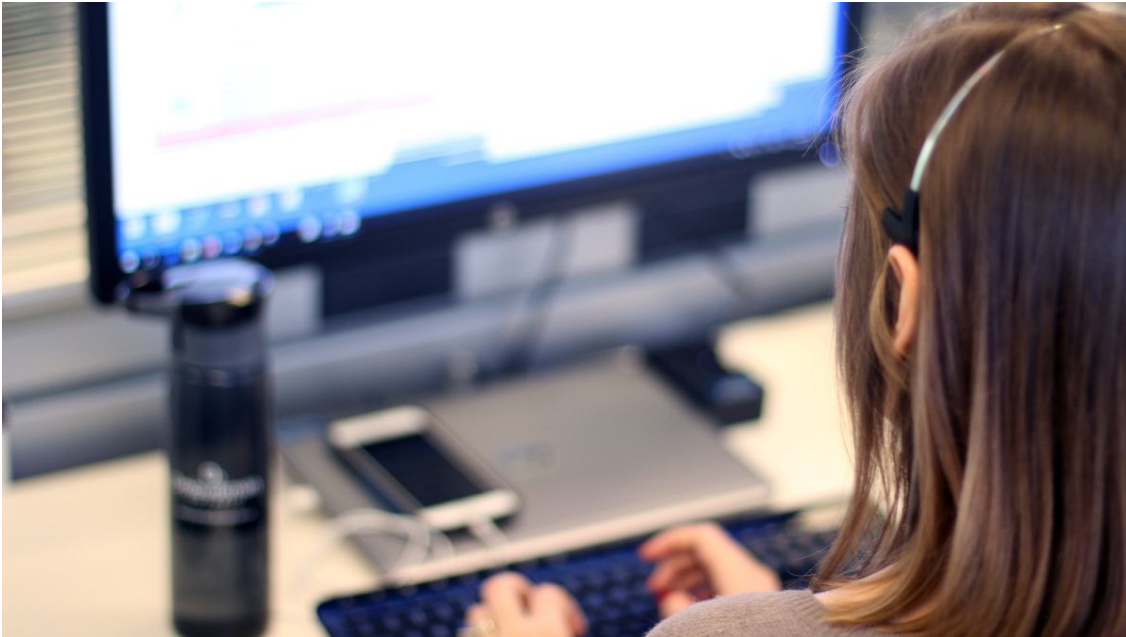
Please remain seated

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](#)

CAREERS



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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