

In our April newsletter: Ombudsman finds child welfare agencies failed to ensure the safety of Indigenous girl, “Active offer” regulation under the French Language Services Act now in effect, and more!

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**New investigation report: Ombudsman finds child welfare agencies failed to ensure the safety of Indigenous girl**

**“Active offer” regulation under the French Language Services Act now in effect**

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# New investigation report: Ombudsman finds child welfare agencies failed to ensure the safety of Indigenous girl



Multiple child welfare organizations failed to ensure the safety of a vulnerable Indigenous girl who repeatedly went missing while she was supposed to be receiving supervised services from a foster care agency, Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé found in his latest report, released April 13.

In his report, [\*Missing in Inaction: Misty's Story\*](#), the Ombudsman examined what went wrong during the 47 days in 2020 that “Misty,” a 13-year-old from Northern Ontario, was living in a home operated by Johnson Children’s Services.

Misty, who has unique vulnerabilities, a history of substance abuse and was a suspected victim of sex trafficking, went missing seven times while she was in Johnson’s care in a Southwestern Ontario city (which is not identified in the report in order to protect her identity). At one point, she disappeared for 19 days. During these absences, there is evidence she was physically and sexually assaulted, used hard drugs, and suffered an overdose.

The Ombudsman launched his investigation after concerns were raised about the adequacy of measures taken to ensure Misty’s safety by Johnson Children’s Services, as well as Anishinaabe Abinooji Family Services, an Indigenous children’s aid society near her home community, and the children’s aid society in the Southwestern Ontario city where she went missing.

“It is a sad and longstanding reality that Northern Ontario lacks sufficient resources to offer the treatment and care required to address the complex challenges faced by Indigenous children like Misty,” Ombudsman Dubé states in the report.

“It is particularly pressing that agencies in Southern Ontario such as Johnson Children’s Services Inc. educate themselves and their staff on the learnings from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and consider the risk factors unique to Indigenous children in their decision-making around their care.”

The three organizations have accepted all 58 of the Ombudsman’s recommendations. including that they report to his office every six months on their progress in implementing them.

[The full report and press release are available here.](#)

#### **In the News:**

- [Ontario ombudsman slams foster care company, child welfare agencies for failing Indigenous girl – Global News](#)
- [Child welfare agencies failed to protect vulnerable Indigenous child: Ombudsman – APTN News](#)
- [Child-welfare agencies failed Indigenous girl from North: Ombudsman – Sudbury Star](#)

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**“Active offer” regulation under the *French Language Services Act* now in effect**



On April 1, 2023, [Ontario Regulation 544/22: Active Offer of Services in French – Prescribed Measures](#) came into effect.

Carl Bouchard, Ontario's Interim French Language Services Commissioner, welcomed the change, which requires that ministries, provincial government agencies and third parties delivering services on behalf of the government proactively inform the public of the availability of services in French, and offer them at the time of the request. This change presents significant opportunities for the improvement of French services across the province.

Interim Commissioner Bouchard noted that this change reflects calls from our office and others for the government to include “active offer” in the planning and delivery of its French services. Anyone who has a problem accessing these services is encouraged to [contact the Ombudsman's French Language Services Unit](#) – we can help.

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**[Here, there and everywhere](#)**



### North and northwest – making municipal connections

From April 26-28, Ombudsman staff connected with municipal council members and staff at two conferences in Ontario – the Ontario Small Urban Municipalities conference in Brantford and the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association conference in Thunder Bay. We offered delegates information about our complaint resolution processes, shared examples of municipal cases, and distributed pamphlets and brochures with tips to help municipalities resolve issues locally.

We also answered questions about how we handle issues related to by-law enforcement, housing, infrastructure, and closed meetings, and encouraged delegates to contact our Office if they have questions about how we work. [Click here to learn about some of the municipal issues we address.](#)

Look for us next month at the annual conference for the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, May 8-10 in Parry Sound!



### **Welcome newcomers!**

Join us on May 25 for the ninth annual Toronto Newcomer Day in Nathan Phillips Square in downtown Toronto.

Stop by our booth from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for interactive activities, information and resources about our Office, and to meet some of our friendly staff. The event is free and open to everyone! [Click here to learn more.](#) #TONewcomerDay



### **Speaking of French language services...**

Throughout March and April, Interim French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard met with dozens of Francophone organizations to stay informed about the issues affecting their respective sectors and to help them better understand the work of our Office's French Language Services Unit.



The groups discussed the challenges and questions they face in receiving French services, as well as the process for bringing forward complaints to our Office. The Interim Commissioner reiterated our Office's commitment to ensuring that Francophones can access the services to which they are entitled under the French Language Services Act.

Have you experienced a lack of services in French? Making a complaint is simple – [contact us!](#)

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## HOW WE HELPED – CASE SUMMARIES



### Urgency escalated

After he suffered a traumatic brain injury, an eight-year-old boy in the care of a northern children's aid society (CAS) was airlifted from his home community to a rehabilitation hospital in southern Ontario. Hospital staff contacted us when the boy's rehab stint was over and he was supposed to be discharged, because they could not reach the boy's home CAS about where he needed to go next.

Staff from our Children and Youth Unit contacted the CAS and escalated the case to the service director. We discovered there had been a miscommunication between that agency and a southern Ontario CAS about who was responsible for finding the boy a placement that met his special needs. Once we intervened, a placement was soon found and he was able to move out of the hospital.

[Click here to learn more about how we helped with issues or](#)



**Skills in French required**

A crane operator attempted to contact Skilled Trades Ontario (STO) to request an explanation regarding an invoice and was unable to obtain services in French. Our French Language Services Unit reviewed the man's complaint and brought it to the STO's attention. As a result of our intervention, the STO's telephone system was modified to ensure that clients requesting services in French are only directed to bilingual operators.

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





### [After the fire](#)

After firefighters used foam containing PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) to put out a fire at her property, a woman complained to us about how long it was taking to ensure her water was safe to drink. Officials at the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks told us a new standard for regulating PFAS in drinking water had been developed in response to this situation, and that a plan would be submitted to address the environmental impact. The property owner later confirmed that work had begun to clean up her property and install a water treatment system.

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

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## CAREERS

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

**NEW:** [Information Technology Manager](#)

### **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

APPLY TODAY!

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File a complaint or contact us here

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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. The Ombudsman's investigations have benefited millions of Ontarians and prompted widespread reforms, including improved newborn screening, a more secure lottery system, and better tracking of inmates in segregation.

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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