

In our February newsletter: Ombudsman Ontario is hiring, learning from “Misty’s Story”, celebrating Black excellence, and more

[View this email in your browser](#)
[Forward to a friend](#)

[Cliquez ici pour lire le bulletin en français.](#)

ONTARIO OMBUDSMAN NEWSLETTER



WE'RE HIRING! Come join our dynamic team!

Implementing Call to Justice 12.4: Learning from “Misty’s Story”

Celebrating Black excellence – in February and beyond

Trauma-informed approaches to complaint resolution and investigations

Here, there and everywhere

How we helped: Case summaries

Careers

WE'RE HIRING! Come join our dynamic team!

We're proud to be an office of hard-working professionals who are passionate about ensuring procedural fairness within the public sector.

Our skilled, helpful Early Resolution Officers (EROs) resolve thousands of complaints and inquiries every year about government organizations (like ServiceOntario, OHIP, correctional facilities, and social services), municipalities, school boards and universities, as well as cases related to child welfare, and access to services in French.

What's it like to help people as an ERO? Read this interview with Toyi, an Early Resolution Officer in our French Language Services Unit.



What do you do at the Ombudsman's Office?

As an Early Resolution Officer, I examine each complaint to determine the appropriate measures to resolve the issue. As an ERO in the French Language Services Unit specifically, I must determine whether the issue falls within the Ombudsman's mandate and can be addressed according to the *French Language Services Act* – for example, if it's about an institution that is designated to provide services in French under the Act.

What do you like about working here?

This work allows me to help find solutions to real problems for people in Ontario, and achieve fulfilling positive results. I am part of a minority population myself: As a French-

speaking person, the issues I deal with are close to my heart and I've experienced some of them personally.

I really appreciate working in such a collaborative office. It's a welcoming place where people regularly share information and work together daily.

What is your background?

I have a Masters degree in international policy studies and management. Before immigrating to Canada, I worked in the humanitarian sector as a community service assistant in a refugee camp, and then as a refugee camp manager. I have always worked to help vulnerable people by finding solutions that benefit them.

What are skills you use daily?

You have to have good research skills, because you often have to sift through large volumes of information, including policies and legislation. You also need good analytical skills, to be able to identify the scope of an issue.

Writing skills are important for communicating with complainants and public bodies, and for preparing reports on individual and systemic problems.

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

My mother tongue is French, but I am perfectly bilingual because I studied in English. This gives me the flexibility to work in both languages. I really enjoy this bilingual work.

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

The culture of the Office is based on excellence, and is results-oriented, because we are here to achieve concrete solutions that have a positive impact on people's daily lives.

APPLY NOW

Implementing Call to Justice 12.4:
Learning from “Misty’s Story”



The lessons of “Misty’s Story” were shared with hundreds of experts and activists from across Canada at the second annual “Traffic Jam” conference, held February 20-21 in Ottawa by A New Day Youth and Adult Services the week of National Human Trafficking Awareness Day (February 22).

Eileen Laffey, Manager of Early Resolutions in our Children and Youth Unit, spoke to delegates about the changes prompted by [Missing in Inaction: Misty’s Story](#) – the Ombudsman’s 2023 investigation into how a 13-year-old Indigenous girl was failed by the child welfare agencies that were supposed to care for her.

“Misty” was placed at a foster home in a city thousands of kilometers south of her Northern Ontario home community, but went missing seven times, once for 19 days, during which time she suffered physical and sexual abuse, as well as an overdose.

The Ombudsman made 58 recommendations to the four agencies involved in her care, including several aimed at addressing the risk factors unique to Indigenous children and the gaps in oversight, safety, and needs-based services in Ontario’s child welfare sector that were identified in the MMWIG report. The agencies accepted all of his recommendations, and the Ombudsman will provide an update on their progress in his next Annual Report.

Celebrating Black excellence – in February and beyond

In keeping with this year’s Black History Month theme of “Black excellence,” our Office celebrates our connection with Black civil rights pioneer Dr. Daniel G. Hill, Ontario’s third Ombudsman, first human rights commissioner, and founder of the Ontario Black History Society in 1978. [Read more about Dr. Hill in the Ontario archives.](#)



On February 20, we welcomed Nicole Bonnie, former CEO of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, to speak to our staff about "Black Excellence 365 Days a Year," and share her experience in advocating for transformational change within the child welfare sector, a system that has deep historical roots in colonialism and racism. Her talk was part of a series of events and activities planned from Black History Month through Emancipation Day that will include educational resources, links to cultural events, and other learning opportunities focused on combatting anti-Black racism.

On February 28, French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard addressed the Centre Francophone du Grand Toronto in a [video message](#) at their online Gala celebrating the pride and vibrancy of Black Francophone communities.

Trauma-informed approaches to complaint resolution and investigations



Our Office hears from thousands of people every year who feel they've been treated unfairly by public sector bodies. Many of them have also experienced trauma in their lives. On February 6, we invited clinical psychologist Dr. Lori Haskell, a nationally recognized expert on trauma and abuse, to provide training to staff on the neurobiological impact of trauma on the brain. She explained how using a "trauma-informed" approach to interviewing and listening to complainants in certain situations can be highly effective in complaint resolution and investigations. Dr. Haskell's expertise includes addressing the impact of trauma experienced by a wide range of groups, including Indigenous peoples, victims of gendered violence and people with developmental disabilities.

[Here, there and everywhere](#)

Meeting with tomorrow's leaders: 2023-2024 OLIP interns



On February 9, Ombudsman Paul Dubé, Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay and French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard spoke to this year's Ontario Legislature Internship Programme (OLIP) cohort of interns. The interns are recent university graduates who work with MPPs of all parties during a 10-month placement.

At our Office, they learned about 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 enable us to propose solutions to improve governance. The interns provided their own engaging insights about the value of independent oversight in maintaining a healthy democracy.

Join the club – of Francophones we've helped



On February 14, French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard delivered opening remarks at the Annual General Meeting of the Club canadien de Toronto, which brought together Francophones from the business, academic, law, cultural and government sectors. He highlighted the many ways our Office has helped people access Ontario public services in French, as documented in his recent [Annual Report](#). He reminded attendees to exercise their rights to receive services in French – and to report any negative experiences to our Office.

Engaging with the Ontario Native Women's Association

On February 5, Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé and Children and Youth Unit Director Diana Cooke provided a presentation on our Office's work and initiatives to an all-staff meeting of the Ontario Native Women's Association. They discussed our commitment to building strong relationships with Indigenous communities, listening to and working closely with organizations.

Classes to CASs – reaching child welfare professionals



Our Children and Youth Unit staff shared information about our work at multiple events across the province this month. These included On February 8, the team presented to second-year students of the Child and Youth Services Community Engagement Class at Brock University. On February 13, they met with Community and Justice Services students at Centennial College. On February 20 and 21, they spoke to students in the first, second and third years of the Child and Youth Worker Program at St. Clair College in Windsor. They also discussed our work and services with foster parents, staff and youth at the Windsor Essex Children's Aid Society on February 21.

We see you, seniors!



On February 12 and 28, Ombudsman staff attended events hosted by the Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario in Toronto, at AccessPoint on Jane in York, and at the Jenner Jean-Marie Community Centre in East York. We explained to attendees how we resolve administrative issues with driver's licences, ServiceOntario, OHIP, social services programs, and much more.



In March, you'll find us at the Seniors Active Living Fair 2024 at Bernard Betel Centre in Toronto and the Spring into Wellness Seniors' Fair at the Bob Morton Centre in Barrie!

Is your seniors' organization interested in hearing more about how we can help? Contact us at info@ombudsman.on.ca to schedule a presentation or request brochures!

[How we helped: Case summaries](#)



Understanding the bill

A Francophone woman who was in a car crash in the Ottawa region received a bill from the Ministry of Transportation's Highway Incident Claims Unit. She called and asked to speak to a bilingual employee, but was unable to receive services in French. In response to our inquiry, the Unit told us that the unilingual Anglophone employee who took the call was new and wasn't familiar with the procedures.

RESULT: As a result of our intervention, the Unit improved its provision of services in French by:

- Reminding employees of procedures;
- Updating the French language service procedure in their handbook; and
- Asking two bilingual agents from two other departments to help them ensure they can always provide services in French.

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



Culture change

A Black 16-year-old complained that her CAS worker was insensitive to her needs for specific hair and skin care products, which are essential for meeting her cultural* and personal care requirements.

RESULT: After our involvement, the agency responded by supplying the appropriate products and ensured the inclusion of Black staff members in meetings with the youth. She has expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the first meeting.

**Under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, a service provider is required to take identity characteristics such as race, ancestry, colour and ethnic origin into account when providing services.*

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



[Wait for it](#)

A woman who had been approved for a second payment of \$10,000 from the Ontario Small Business Support Grant program, sought our help after months of waiting. She said program officials had told her just to wait.

RESULT: At our urging, they reviewed her case and said they would expedite her second payment – but she still didn't receive it. We reached out again to officials, who admitted that some payments had been affected by technical issues. They confirmed she would receive her payment in a few days and the woman thanked us for our help.

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

[Careers](#)



We continue to hire new staff – and currently have openings for [Investigators](#), [Early Resolution Officers](#) and [Legal Counsel](#)!

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
- Ongoing training and professional development opportunities

APPLY NOW

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. 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.

Copyright © 2024 Ontario Ombudsman, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).
