

In our April newsletter: NEW REPORT:
Ombudsman finds that teen's pleas for foster
care went unheard, and more

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ONTARIO OMBUDSMAN NEWSLETTER



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New report: Teen's pleas to York CAS went unheard, Ombudsman finds



York Region Children's Aid Society failed to respect the rights of a 16-year-old girl who repeatedly asked for a foster placement before she died, Ombudsman Paul Dubé's latest investigation has found.

In his report, [*Rights Unrecognized: Mia's Story*](#), released April 29, the Ombudsman details how "Mia" was "kicked out" of her home in October 2019 and left without safe and permanent housing. She entered into a Voluntary Youth Services Agreement (VYSA) with York CAS in December 2019.

Such agreements are supposed to give 16- and 17-year-olds the "full range" of protection services that are available to younger children in care. But even though she specifically asked for CAS help with a placement and re-enrolling in school, Mia never received the support she sought. She was not provided with a foster placement, and at one point it was suggested that she could "stay in a shelter," the Ombudsman found.

The Chief Coroner found that Mia's death in 2020 was not related to the child protection services she received. However, the Ombudsman identified concerns about the adequacy

of her care, and launched an investigation into those concerns.

“Because her voice was never heard and her requests for services were not adequately met, Mia never had the chance to regain stability and achieve her goal of returning to high school. Although her death was not the fault of York Region Children’s Aid Society, it highlighted significant deficiencies in the steps that were taken to protect her,” the Ombudsman writes in the report.

His report makes 20 recommendations to York CAS, all of which have been accepted. His Office also flagged 90 complaints about VYSAS – dating back to 2019 and involving 30 different CASs – to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The Ministry acknowledged the importance of increasing knowledge and training in the child welfare sector about VYSAs.

[Read the report](#)

In the news:

- [York Region CAS Media Release: Ontario Ombudsman’s Report](#) – York Region Children’s Aid Society Press Release
- [Teen’s pleas to York Region CAS for foster care went unheard: Ombudsman](#) – Newmarket Today
- [York Children’s Aid Society failed to provide support to teen before her death: Ombudsman](#) – The Trillium
- [York teen ‘failed’ by Children’s Aid, says report into her death](#) – CBC News

[Work with us: We’re hiring legal counsel!](#)

Are you a lawyer who wants to serve the public, help improve legislation, and have a positive impact on the lives of people in your community? Our Office offers innovative and meaningful legal careers.

Our Legal Services staff work across all units of our Office, leveraging their expertise in public sector bodies and relevant legislation. We have several Legal Counsel who investigate serious and complex cases, prepare investigative reports, and provide legal advice and support to the Ombudsman and staff.

What does this role do? Read this interview with Brittany, Legal Counsel.

**What do you do at the Ombudsman's Office?**

I'm responsible for my own case files, and I also provide guidance on a variety of files across the entire Office. In Legal Services, we also monitor legislation developments that may affect our Office's jurisdiction, and conduct staff training.

What do you like about working here?

I work with really passionate, caring and intelligent people. They have a wide variety of backgrounds – lawyers, paralegals, social workers, teachers, and more. I learn something new from them every day. Another thing I enjoy is getting to work on many different areas of law, like administrative and municipal law, or in the education sector. It's always very engaging – no two complaints are the same.

What does an average day look like for you?

There is no average day. I could be speaking with complainants one day, with staff members and government or public sector bodies the next. Some days, I work on an investigation – doing things like conducting interviews, reviewing evidence, or writing.

What is your background?

I hold a Bachelor of Arts in global development and environmental studies from Queen's University, a Master of Arts in Theatre and Performance Studies from York University and a Juris Doctor from Osgoode Hall.

What are skills you use daily?

I rely on my writing skills and ability to provide succinct legal opinions. I have to be able to speak with people from a wide variety of backgrounds. I speak with complainants who may be in vulnerable situations, or who are from marginalized or underserved communities. I also meet with high-level government officials. In these situations, I often use soft skills,

like active listening.

What advice do you have for prospective candidates for this role?

I think Ombudsman Ontario, as a workplace, is well suited for those who are naturally curious, analytical, resourceful and interested in promoting access to justice. In law school, there's a lot of pressure to follow the private practice route. I would really encourage people to consider a career in the public service. It's very rewarding when I achieve a good outcome on a file – because I know I've made a difference in someone's life.

[Apply for a role as Legal Counsel today](#)

Speaking the same language: French Language Services Commissioner shares stage with Lieutenant Governor



On April 24, French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard joined the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honourable Edith Dumont, in a conversation moderated by Gabriel Garon, at a event organized by the Club canadien de Toronto. The two discussed their perspectives on Ontario's Francophones and their respective institutions' work serving Ontarians.

Ms. Dumont, the first Franco-Ontarian to serve as Lieutenant Governor, told the audience that as Francophones, “we have responsibilities,” one of which is “to speak French.” She noted that in her role, she has “the privilege to celebrate the civic engagement of a great diversity of people,” and that she is “always happy” when people tell her their children and grandchildren are in French immersion.

Commissioner Bouchard said his message to Francophones who seek provincial services in their language is: “You don’t have to be afraid to ask to speak French. You have tools at your disposal to help,” like our Office, where “everyone is welcome” to contact us. “We are able to see the issues independently, with our experienced team. We are the direct path to having your linguistic rights respected.”

Commissioner Bouchard also participated in a number of other events this month. On April 24, he attended a celebration of National French Immersion Day, hosted at Queen’s Park by Canadian Parents for French, to raise awareness of French as a second language education.

On April 17, he spoke to health care professionals at a “day of reflection” on health services in French, hosted by the Assemblée de la francophonie de l’Ontario (AFO) at Collège Boréal in Toronto. We also had a booth at this two-day event, where our staff explained how our Office can help Francophones exercise their right to provincial services in French.



Ombudsman’s police oversight jurisdiction expanded

On April 1, 2024, several long-awaited aspects of the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019* finally came into force, extending the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction. Our Office can now take complaints about the new Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA) – which replaced the former Office of the Independent Police Review Director – and the new Inspectorate of Policing.

This new oversight applies only to incidents that occurred after April 1, 2024. It will operate similarly to our existing oversight of the Special Investigations Unit, the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, and the renamed Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission: Our role is not to redo investigations or overturn decisions, but to ensure these organizations are working as they should. We continue to function as an office of last resort, referring people to existing complaint processes first.

All local and First Nations police services, police service boards and OPP detachment boards remain outside of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

Strengthen school board rules for conduct and meetings: Ombudsman



In a submission to the Ministry of Education this month, Ombudsman Paul Dubé urges the Ministry to clarify the process for appointing integrity commissioners. He also suggests it amend the *Education Act* to enable members of the public to make code-of-conduct complaints about trustees.

Responding to new regulations proposed by the Ministry, the Ombudsman also suggests that it modernize the *Education Act's* rules for school board meetings to make them similar to those in the *Municipal Act*. Our Office has recently investigated several complaints about school board meetings that were not open to the public.

"I commend the Ministry's attention and commitment to enhancing school board governance and accountability by strengthening the trustee code of conduct framework," Ombudsman Dubé writes in the submission. "I am also pleased to see that the Ministry is taking steps to modernize the in-person meeting attendance requirements for trustees to promote fairness while maintaining transparency."

[Read the submission](#)

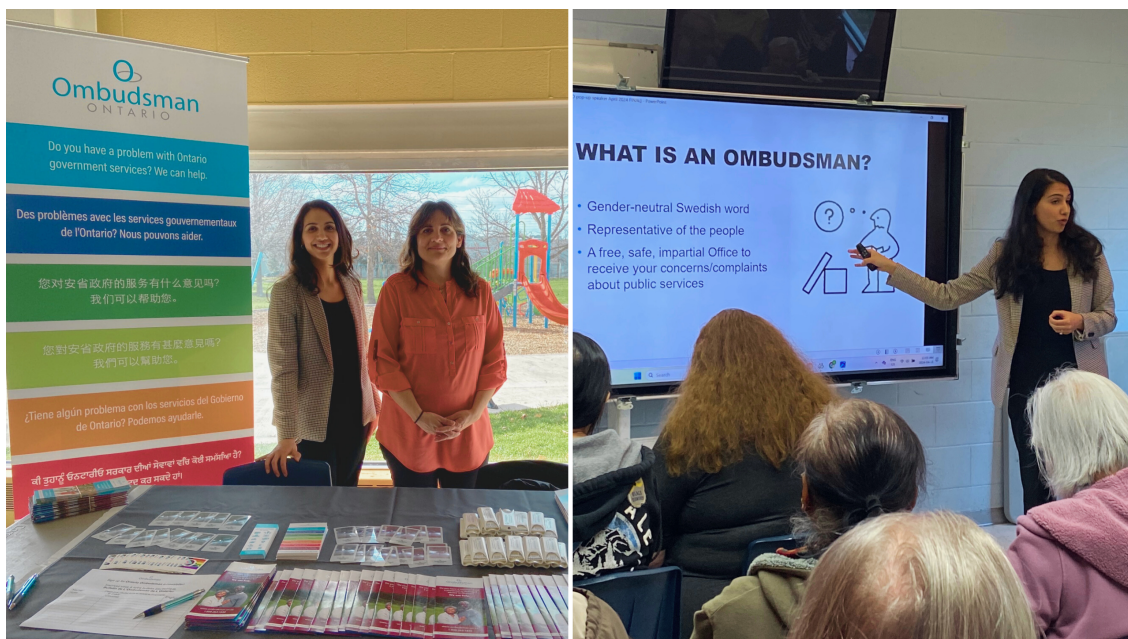
Here, there and everywhere

How the Ombudsman contributes to healthy democracy



On April 13, our Office connected with participants at the DemocracyXChange conference hosted by OCAD University and Toronto Metropolitan University in downtown Toronto. We shared information about how the Ombudsman's work promotes good governance, administrative fairness, and a respect for rights.

A full house for fairness



On April 15, Ombudsman staff gave a presentation to a full room of attendees at the [Spring: 55+ Lifestyle and Learning Exhibition](#), hosted by the Ontario Society of Senior Citizens' Organizations, at Ellesmere Community Centre in Scarborough. We explained how we can help ensure fair treatment by provincial public services, such as ServiceOntario, the Ontario Health Insurance Program, the Ontario Disability Support Program, and much more.

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!

Turning out for International Day of Pink



On April 10, our staff joined people around the world in supporting the [International Day of Pink](#). This global anti-bullying initiative was started by students in Nova Scotia who wore pink in solidarity with a boy who was bullied for wearing a pink shirt. By participating, our staff demonstrated our Office's commitment to the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and our stance against bullying.

Indigenous outreach: Sharing information and building relationships

The Ombudsman and staff were invited to meet with several Indigenous groups and agencies this month. In all of these meetings, we discussed the value of establishing mutually respectful and beneficial relationships. On April 18, the Ombudsman spoke about his role and work during a presentation to She Is Wise, a member organization of the Ontario Native Women's Association dedicated to empowering Indigenous women and girls.

On April 12, members of the Children and Youth Unit Indigenous Circle and Eileen Laffey, Manager of Early Resolutions, visited Walpole Island First Nation and gave a presentation to band representatives and workers involved with children in care about our Office's

general role and our work with children and youth in care.

On April 5 and 19, the staff of the Children and Youth Unit delivered online presentations about their work and our Office at the Central and West Regional meetings of Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiyag Child & Family Services.

Language is our business



On April 24, staff from our French Language Services Unit welcomed delegates to our booth at the Franco-Ontarian Business Forum in Toronto. The Fédération des gens d'affaires francophones de l'Ontario (FGA) organizes this yearly event to bring together key players in Francophone economic development and entrepreneurship.

Sharing expertise with Canadian counterparts

On April 29, investigators from our Office presented to close to 150 staff from provincial and territorial ombudsman offices across the country, as part of the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman's monthly webinar series. We discussed our approach to systemic investigations, including how we follow up with public sector bodies that have accepted the Ombudsman's recommendations and report on their progress in implementing them.

[How we helped: Case summaries](#)



[Name shame](#)

A mother contacted us in frustration about the conduct of a driving instructor towards her son, a student driver. The student was in the process of a gender transition, and the name on his legal documents was not the same as the name he had chosen to use in daily life. The mother complained that the instructor was “deadnaming” her son, but the instructor told her he was following Ministry of Transportation policy.

RESULT: After we spoke with Ministry officials, they followed up with the instructor to confirm that the student could use the name of his choice. The Ministry told us that while their policy on online learning does not specifically address the issue of preferred names, it does require course providers to avoid exclusionary language, including in relation to gender.

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



[Watchful help](#)

A concerned mother reached out to our Children and Youth Unit, worried that her son might have been harmed by a staff member at his group home. We promptly contacted the teenager and relayed his mother's concerns to his Children's Aid Society (CAS).

RESULT: The CAS investigated the situation and recommended that the group home improve its de-escalation techniques, sharing these recommendations with the youth. Upon follow-up, the teenager expressed that he felt reassured and had no further concerns about his safety in the group home.

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



Understanding the assessment

A Francophone man required services from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) after he was injured at work. He needed a full medical examination (physical and psychological). The WSIB referred him to an English-only medical clinic and said he could use interpreters for his examination. He refused to go because he thought this would put him in an uncomfortable position and that going through a psychological examination using interpreters would overcomplicate things. He submitted a request to the WSIB for referral to a Francophone medical clinic and was denied.

RESULT: Our Office raised this issue with the WSIB, which reviewed the case and the Francophone man's request. The WSIB updated its procedures for members of the public who identify as Francophones, and the man was able to get his full medical examination in French. He told us that he was delighted and relieved that the situation had been resolved.

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

Careers



We continue to hire new staff – and currently have openings for a [Finance Analyst](#) 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

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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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