

In our May newsletter: Welcoming newcomers with information and help, strengthening ombudsmanship around the world, supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and more

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ONTARIO OMBUDSMAN NEWSLETTER



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Welcoming newcomers with information and help



Ombudsman Paul Dubé and numerous members of our team spoke to a steady stream of new Ontarians about our work at the 10th annual Toronto Newcomer Day at Nathan Phillips Square on May 23. The event drew some 10,000 people throughout the day, and offered our staff the opportunity to speak to attendees – in many different languages – about all the ways we can help them with issues with provincial public services in the province.

We underscored that our service is independent, impartial and free for everyone in Ontario, regardless of their immigration status. We explained how we help with driver's licences, health cards, ServiceOntario, school boards, municipalities, post-secondary education, and more.

Among the resources we shared were new editions of our brochures that are now available in Arabic, Chinese (Traditional and Simplified), Farsi, Hindi, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish and Tagalog, in addition to English and French. [Check them out on our website.](#)



Read more about how we can help you

Strengthening ombudsmanship around the world



Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé and Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay attended the 13th World Conference and board meeting of the International Ombudsman Institute, hosted by the National Ombudsman of the Netherlands in The Hague, from May 12 to 17. Ombudsman Dubé is the IOI's president for North America, a position he has held since 2016. The conference, which is held every four years, gathered more than 200 delegates from 60 different countries to discuss challenges and best practices in ombudsman work around the world.

European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly spoke to attendees about the crucial role that ombudsmen play:

"As an Ombudsman I see the role as fundamentally about the prevention of abuse of

power. When most of us hear that phrase we think of corruption, or of very serious maladministration, but an abuse of power can also be the failure of a government body to reply to a citizen, or to incur stressful delays in dealing with a matter, or to be careless in the administration of a grant or benefit,” said Ombudsman O’Reilly. “When we see our role as lending our power to the powerless citizen to enable them to deal with a powerful administration as an equal, then we can confidently direct and organise our work through that simple prism. We can make those choices and adopt those strategic positions.” [Read the full speech.](#)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, also spoke to the conference about how ombudsman offices and human rights institutions “help to protect our universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.” He noted that this work is “essential to improving public services by identifying systemic failings, and by ensuring that governance becomes more transparent and more accountable.” [Read the full speech.](#)

Learn more about how the Ontario Ombudsman can help ensure you are treated fairly and your rights are respected

[Accessing your rights](#)

Our Office was in the spotlight this month on Accessible Media’s cable TV show, *Kelly and Ramya*. On the weekly “Know your rights” segment, Ombudsman legal counsel Brittany Ross-Fichtner shared how we help resolve complaints about government services, including examples of disability-related issues we handle. She also spoke about how we accommodate complainants to make it as comfortable as possible for them to communicate with us.

“Lots of people have things to complain about,” said segment host Danielle McLaughlin during their chat. “But I love the idea that there are people out there who can help us do that effectively.” [Listen to the podcast of the show here.](#)

Among the top sources of complaints to our Office are those relating to social services, including the Ontario Disability Support Program. [Read more about our work on these types of complaints here.](#)

[Supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ communities](#)



On May 17, the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, Ombudsman Ontario staff members attended the raising of the Progress Pride flag, hosted by Toronto Pflag at City Hall. Toronto Pflag volunteers shared impactful stories from members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and we joined them in recognizing this year's theme, "No one left behind: Equality, freedom and justice for all."



On May 17, members of our 2SLGBTQIA+ Outreach Team also attended Pride Toronto's Youth Conference in downtown Toronto, and shared information about our work at our booth. **Next month, watch for our Office at the Toronto Pride Parade and street fair!**

Children and Youth in Care Day – and a call for further safeguards



On May 14, our Office commemorated the 10th Children and Youth in Care Day, established by the *Children and Youth in Care Day Act, 2014*, which recognizes the resilience and contributions of children and youth in the child welfare system. Ombudsman Paul Dubé took the opportunity to stress that our Office is committed to protecting the rights of all young people. He noted that our Children and Youth Unit's "unwavering commitment to supporting these young members of our communities is instrumental in providing the good care and support that every child and youth deserves."

The Ombudsman also called for legislative changes to further safeguard young people in care this month, in a new submission to the Ministry of Community and Social Services regarding Bill 188, *Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024*. Among other things, he proposed measures to enhance rights for 16- and 17-year-olds under voluntary services agreements with children's aid societies, and expanded access to the Ombudsman's Office for all children and youth receiving services under the existing *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, such as those provided by unlicensed facilities, unlicensed agencies, and agencies delivering non-residential mental health or developmental services to children. [Read the full submission here.](#)

Municipal matters: Northern reflections

Ombudsman staff connected with municipal delegates at the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities annual conference in Sudbury, May 6-8. We spoke with municipal staff and council members about how we handle complaints, and offered best practice tips to help resolve issues locally. We also answered questions about closed meetings and by-law enforcement, and shared our popular guides and tip cards. [Click here to access our resources for integrity commissioners, clerks and councillors.](#)



Ombudsman legal staff also presented at two forums hosted by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, one in Sudbury on May 16 and one in Thunder Bay on May 22. They discussed the importance of establishing robust complaint protocols for local boards and offered best practice tips for conducting virtual meetings.

Look for us next month in Blue Mountain at the annual conference of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, June 9-12!

[Here, there and everywhere](#)

Kicking off Pow Wow season at Walpole Island First Nation



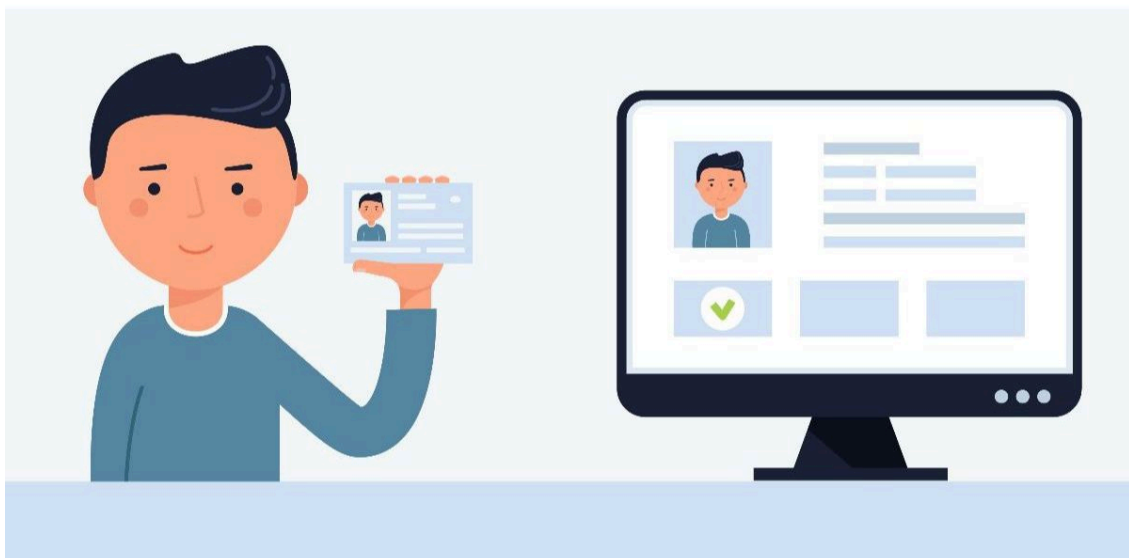
On May 18, members of our Office's Children and Youth Unit and Indigenous Circle participated in Walpole Island First Nation's 30th annual spring Pow Wow, which welcomed more than 1,000 attendees. Ombudsman staff shared information about our Office and its role, particularly our work with children and youth in care and with Indigenous communities, and distributed brochures in various Indigenous languages.

French Language Services: In class with the Commissioner



On May 1, French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard visited École Norval-Morriseau in Richmond Hill to speak to students in grades 7 and 8. He told them about their rights under the *French Language Services Act*, his role as Commissioner, and how learning French can help them achieve personal and professional goals. Staff from our French Language Services Unit also handed out information about our Office to students in grades 7-12.

How we helped: Case summaries



[ID help](#)

A 14-year-old needed our help getting identification documents to register for school and access health care, after he was removed from his home by a children's aid society (CAS) over safety concerns. The youth looked to his CAS worker for support because he was unable to get his identification documents from his mother. When he didn't hear back from the worker in more than two weeks, he contacted our Office.

RESULT: We contacted the youth's worker, who said he would have to write an "advocacy letter" on the youth's behalf, then take him to a nearby ServiceOntario centre to obtain the ID. We asked him to schedule this, which he did, and the youth received his new temporary ID within three days.

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



[Time to reconsider](#)

A college student in an online learning program sought our help after he lost access to one of his courses. He complained that there wasn't sufficient warning that there was a time limit to complete the course. The college pointed to its fine print, which explained the time limit, and told the student he would have to take the course again at full cost.

RESULT: After we spoke with college officials, the college offered the student an extension to finish his course, and made changes to more clearly identify the time limit on its pre-registration and registration webpages.

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



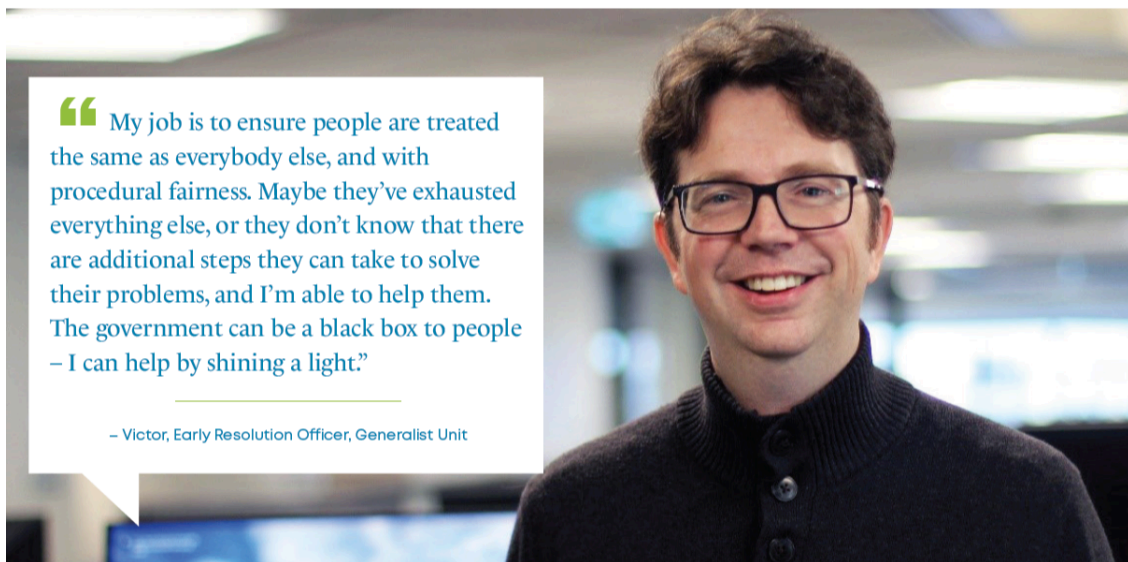
[A place for French?](#)

A Franco-Torontonian reached out to let us know that content on Infrastructure Ontario's X account (@InfraOntario) about plans for an upcoming spa, water park and multi-storey parking garage at Ontario Place was only available in English. He looked to see whether the posts were available in French elsewhere, but realized that all of the posts from Infrastructure Ontario, a government agency, were in English only.

RESULT: As a result of our intervention, Infrastructure Ontario created another X account that posts exclusively in French (@InfraOntariofr).

[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 an opening for an [Early Resolution Officer - General Unit \(12 month Contract\)](#), an [Articling Student \(2025-2026\)](#) and a [Legal Summer Student \(2025-2026\)](#)!

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.

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