

In our August newsletter: Ombudsman releases new guide for municipalities, we're hiring an Indigenous Liaison Advisor, and more

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ONTARIO OMBUDSMAN NEWSLETTER



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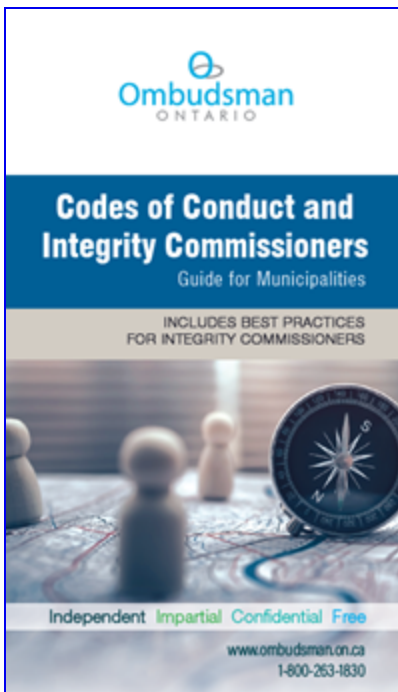


The annual conference of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) in Ottawa this month was a timely opportunity for Ombudsman Paul Dubé to debut our Office's newest municipal resource – a handbook called **[Codes of Conduct and Integrity Commissioners: Guide for Municipalities](#)**.

The Ombudsman, Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay and several of our staff were at the conference to meet with municipal, provincial and Indigenous leaders, attend sessions, and share our expertise and published materials on municipal matters at our booth.

The new guide combines resources from our website (including our guide for municipal integrity commissioners) into a pocket-sized handbook. It includes information about relevant legislation and best practices for creating a code of conduct, appointing an integrity commissioner and establishing complaint and inquiry protocols.

It's a companion to our other popular handbook, ***Open Meetings: Guide for Municipalities***. **[Both guides can be found on our website here](#)** and hard copies can be requested from our office.



“Our aim with these guides is not to replace local accountability mechanisms, but to ensure they are working as they should,” Ombudsman Dubé said. “Our work helps avert future complaints and promotes consistent standards across the province.”

Attending municipal conferences enables our staff and the Ombudsman to share information with mayors, councillors and administrators about how we can help municipalities resolve local problems. We resolve thousands of complaints each year about municipal services, by-law enforcement, housing, infrastructure and utilities, in addition to our role as open meeting investigator for most of the province’s 444 municipalities.

Here are the Ombudsman’s findings in some recent open meeting cases:

- [Kawartha Lakes council](#) followed the open meeting rules in the *Municipal Act, 2001* when discussing how to regulate short-term rentals.
- [Members of Amherstburg’s Accessibility Advisory Committee](#) did not violate the rules when they went to a local public transit facility for a demonstration of the features of an accessible bus, because the gathering did not materially advance the committee’s business.
- [Calvin council](#) should have notified the public about meetings of two municipal working groups, but it was not required to make the agendas public.

[Learn more about our work with municipalities](#)

**We’re hiring: Ombudsman seeks
Indigenous Liaison Advisor**

The Ombudsman launched a search this month for a consultant to fill the role of Indigenous Liaison Advisor, as part of our Office's Indigenous Services Plan. "A key goal of our [Strategic Plan](#) is to 'embed principles of Truth and Reconciliation across our operations,'" the Ombudsman said. "Building relationships and expanding our services to Indigenous peoples and communities is crucial to this goal."

The successful consultant will be an Indigenous person who can provide the Ombudsman with expert advice and focus on advancing Ombudsman Ontario's outreach and engagement with Indigenous communities.

[Read the posting here](#)

[Back to school: How the Ombudsman can help you this year](#)



As students across the province head back to school, our Office is here to help them and their families with issues related to school boards and post-secondary institutions.

We resolve thousands of cases every year in the education sector. We work closely with school boards, universities, colleges, and other bodies to make sure services are fair, and help connect students and families with the right officials to resolve their concerns.

At the school board level, we can address issues related to enrolment, support services for students with special needs, student safety, and busing services. We also promote transparency in school boards, by investigating complaints about meetings held by a board of trustees or a committee of a board – [read about those here](#).

In the post-secondary sector, we often resolve cases related to admissions processes, academic decisions, communication of policies and information, requests for tuition refunds, student services, and the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP).

Not sure we can address your issue? [Contact us directly](#) and we can help walk you through it.

You can also read more about the work we do in the education sector [here](#)

Here, there and everywhere



Pow wow summer: Building relationships at Indigenous gatherings

As part of our commitment to contribute to reconciliation, build relationships and provide accessible and relevant services to Indigenous communities, we take part in Indigenous events throughout the province. Members of our Office's Indigenous Circle team attended the Gathering of Our People at Moose Cree First Nation from July 30 to August 2, 2024. Our team also participated in the Anishinaabe Keeshigun gathering and pow wow in Fort William from August 17-18, 2024.

At these events, we spoke with many people about how our Office can help them navigate public services. In particular, we highlighted the work of our Children and Youth Unit in helping Indigenous youth in care. Watch for us next month at the 71st annual Curve Lake pow wow at Curve Lake First Nation, September 21-22.



Southwestern Ontario's Francophonie welcomes Commissioner Bouchard

French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard met with several Francophone community organizations in Southwestern Ontario as August drew to a close. Between August 26 and 28, he visited London, Windsor, Sarnia and Chatham. Among the groups he connected with were the Centre communautaire la Girouette in Chatham, Centre communautaire de Sarnia, Centre communautaire francophone de Windsor Essex Kent, Réseau-femmes du sud-ouest de l'Ontario in Windsor, and Carrefour communautaire francophone de London.

As he did in previous visits to the Sudbury and Ottawa areas (May 2023 and March 2024 respectively), the Commissioner spoke with francophone group leaders and members about the issues they face, our shared interests in promoting the rights of Francophones across the province, and how we can help Francophones access provincial services in French.

In the News:

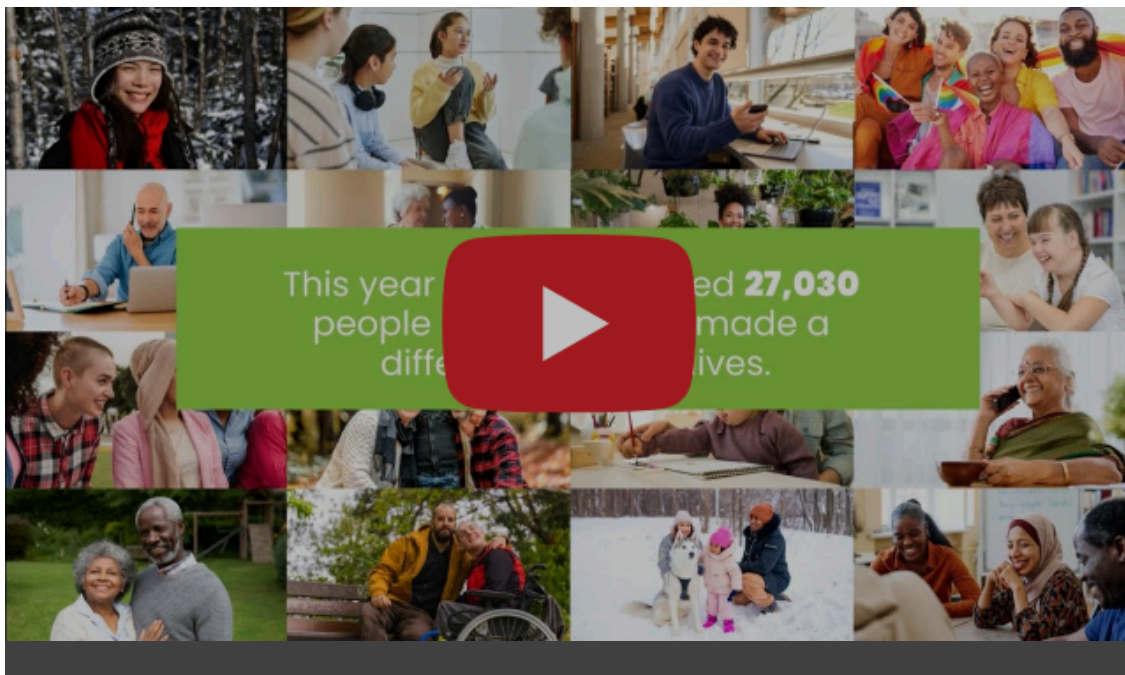
- [Visite du Commissaire aux services en français à Windsor](#) - Radio-Canada (in French only)

Did you catch our 2023-2024 Annual Report?



[Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé's ninth Annual Report](#), released on June 26, reflected record and near-record complaints in several areas of his jurisdiction, including those focused on the rights of vulnerable children, people with disabilities, inmates and Ontarians seeking services in French. The near-record case volume is up 10% from the previous year and is among the Office's highest in decades. The report also unveils the Ombudsman's [new three-year Strategic Plan](#), which prioritizes service excellence and value for all Ontarians.

To learn more about the types of cases we resolved, check out this new video:



How we help: Case summaries



Double encryption

A blind Francophone man complained to us after a community health centre in Northern Ontario sent him confidential, encrypted documents regarding his health in English only. Since he couldn't open these documents by himself, he had to ask someone else for help, disclosing his personal data in the process of unlocking the documents.

RESULT: As a result of our intervention, a member of the centre's social work team who had been in contact with the man for a few years asked the nursing staff to exclusively

send him documents that are unencrypted and in French from now on, so that they are in a format that the man can access. The centre's management also asked employees to have a member of the social work team read any confidential messages to the man.

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



Support secured

A staff member from a youth residence contacted us, concerned that a youth with special needs and physical disabilities wasn't receiving adequate support, such as grab bars in the shower and railings on porch stairs. The youth's mother and children's aid society worker had asked the home to install this equipment on his behalf several times, backed by an occupational therapist's assessment. Although the home's supervisor told us the necessary renovations were done, the mother told us the grab bars were still not in place.

RESULT: We followed up with the residence supervisor, who confirmed five days later that the grab bars were installed and provided photos to prove it. The youth's mother expressed gratitude for our assistance.

Click here to learn more about how we helped with issues or problems concerning children and youth



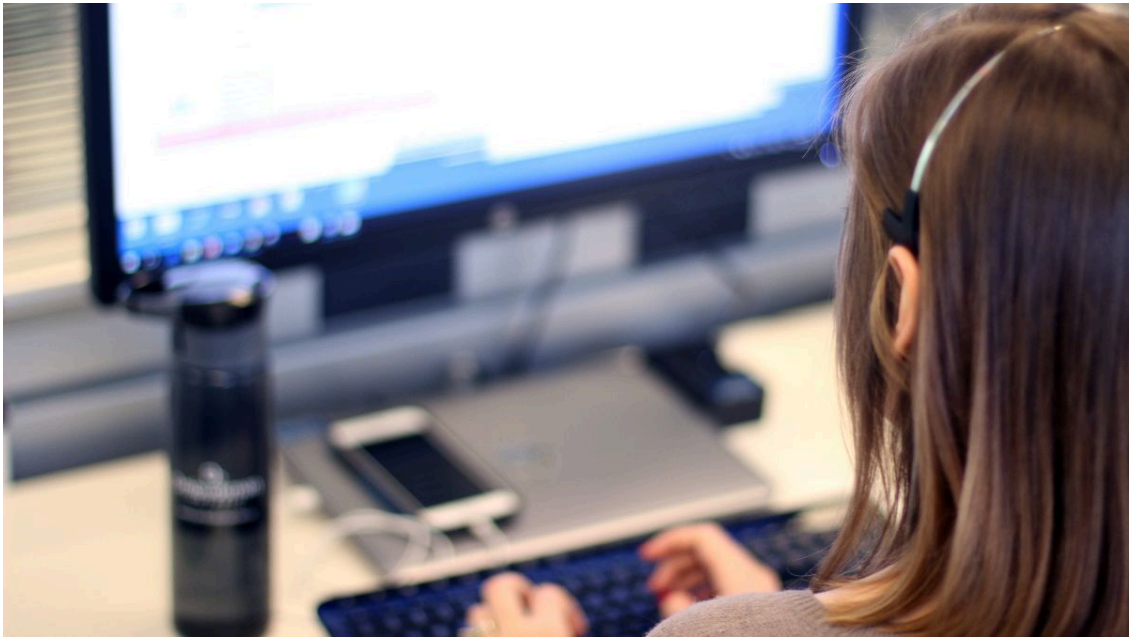
[Pricey blunder](#)

A woman sought our help because she hadn't received Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) payments or drug benefits from August 2020 to October 2021.

RESULT: After our intervention, the manager reviewing the file discovered the woman's caseworker had made a mistake in calculating her benefits. The woman's entire entitlement was re-evaluated, and officials at the ODSP determined she was eligible for assistance during the period her benefits had been suspended. She was provided with more than \$10,000 in retroactive benefits, and the ODSP apologized for the mistake.

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

[Careers](#)



We're hiring an [Indigenous Liaison Advisor](#). We are looking for a qualified and experienced consultant to provide the Ombudsman with Indigenous liaison advisory services, who will play a critical role in advancing our commitment to facilitating engagement and building relationships with Indigenous peoples, nations and communities across what is now referred to as the province of Ontario.

[APPLY TODAY](#)

[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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