

In our December newsletter: French Language Services Commissioner urges Ontario to create a digital directory of public services that must be available in French, helping Indigenous communities across the province, and more

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ONTARIO OMBUDSMAN NEWSLETTER



French Language Services Commissioner urges Ontario to create a digital directory of public services that must be available in French

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French Language Services Commissioner urges Ontario to create a digital directory of public services that must be available in French



On December 5, French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard released his 2023-2024 Annual Report, calling on the Ministry of Francophone Affairs to publish a comprehensive digital directory of services covered by the *French Language Services Act (FLSA)*, so Francophones can easily find and access them.

“When travelling around the province, I have heard from many people who had no idea that the *FLSA* existed,” said Commissioner Bouchard. “Even Ontarians who had heard of it told me they don’t know which Government of Ontario services were covered by the *FLSA* or where they could find these services in their communities.”

Commissioner Bouchard’s report summarizes the tangible results achieved by the Office of the Ombudsman and its French Language Services Unit. It presents an increase of 2.3% in the number of cases received compared to last year: 395 cases received between October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2024.

The report details progress made on previous Annual Report recommendations, including training all frontline provincial employees on their obligation to provide an “active offer” of service in French, ensuring government social media accounts are bilingual, posting all

provincial job opportunities in English and French, and updating Ontario Regulation 398/93, which lists designated agencies offering "public services" within the meaning of the *French Language Services Act*.

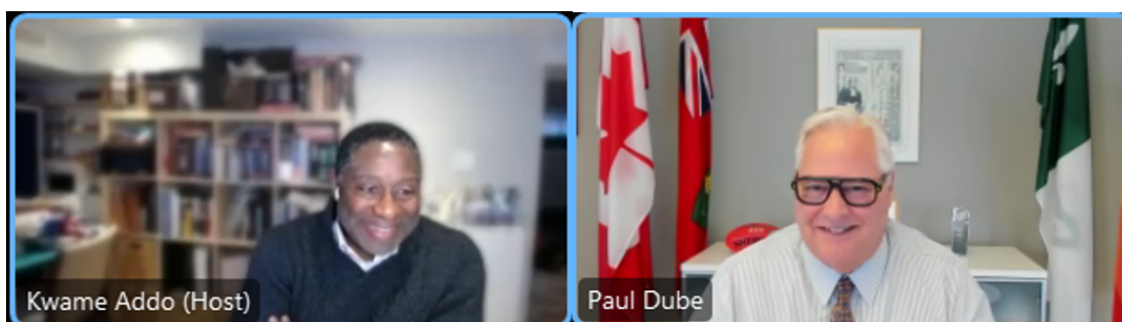
Since taking office in March 2023, Commissioner Bouchard has met with thousands of Francophones and close to 200 organizations across the province.

- [Read the Commissioner's report highlights](#)
- [Read the Commissioner's remarks](#)
- [Read the full report](#)

In the News:

- [L'Ontario devrait recenser ses services en français en ligne, selon Carl Bouchard \(Radio-Canada\)](#) - in French only
- [Le commissaire Bouchard demande un répertoire complet des services en français \(ONFR\)](#) - in French only

Helping Indigenous communities, from Toronto to across Ontario



In the spirit of continued collaboration and knowledge exchange, Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé, alongside Diana Cooke, Director of our Children and Youth Unit, met with Toronto Ombudsman Kwame Addo and his staff on December 11 to discuss how we can best serve Indigenous communities. Ombudsman Dubé noted that our offices have a unique ability to identify and comment on emerging issues and propose changes to improve the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Ontario public sector agencies that provide services to them.

[You can read more about Ombudsman Ontario's services for Indigenous people here.](#)

Here, there and everywhere



International Ombudsman Summit

On December 3, Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé was invited to speak at the inaugural International Ombudsman Summit, hosted by the Hong Kong Ombudsman to commemorate its 35th anniversary. The Hong Kong Ombudsman funded the participation of 40 countries across six continents in the event.

Ombudsman Dubé participated in a panel discussion on “Promoting Mediation and Multi-agencies Collaboration in Handling Public Complaints,” where he addressed the vital importance of collaboration and relationship-building in ombudsman work. He was also honoured to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Hong Kong Ombudsman to promote collaboration and mutual support of these institutions.

Reaching new Ontarians

On December 2, Communications Officer Maria Chegade and Early Resolution Officer Pino Zito gave a presentation to settlement workers at the Learning Enrichment Foundation, an organization that assists refugees and immigrants of all backgrounds in Toronto. We explained how our Office can help newcomers and ensure they receive fair treatment by provincial and public sector services like ServiceOntario, DriveTest, the Ontario Disability Support Program, school boards, and more.

Have a concern? [Contact us](#) – we can help you or figure out where you need to go next!



Embracing the spirit of giving

This holiday season, Ombudsman staff were happy to give back to the community, including by donating blood to support the Canadian Blood Services clinic in downtown Toronto and by raising \$800 in donations for Toy Mountain to purchase holiday gifts for teens. We are proud of our team's contributions to making a positive impact during this time of year.

[How we help: Case summaries](#)



Deadline driven

A driver who suffered what he believed to be a seizure in April was diagnosed by a neurologist and, as required by the Ministry of Transportation, had his licence suspended pending a medical review. In October, his doctor faxed documentation to the Ministry to prove he was eligible to have his licence reinstated. However, the Ministry never received the fax. When the doctor learned this and sent it again a month later, the Ministry said it would take another 30 business days to process. The man feared he would lose his job if he did not have his licence reinstated by mid-December.

RESULT: Ombudsman staff explained the situation to the Ministry, and the next day, its Driver Licensing Medical Review Section confirmed it had received the medical information and reinstated the man's licence. **The man told us: "You've made my Christmas and you've made my job!"**

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



No test, no job

After completing truck driver training in Ottawa, a Francophone man tried multiple times to get a certified bilingual driver examiner for his test at a DriveTest centre in southern Ottawa, a designated area under the *French Language Services Act*. He complained to us that despite confirming the appointment, the centre told him each time that the bilingual examiner was unavailable. He told us that he had been hired for a job on the condition that he would pass his test: “If I can’t pass this test, I can’t earn a living.”

RESULT: The Ministry of Transportation, which contracts a private company to provide drivers’ tests at a variety of centres across the province, told us the only bilingual examiner certified for trucks had been unavailable, but the man would be tested within 10 days at another centre. We have since confirmed that the DriveTest centre that was the subject of the complaint now has three certified bilingual driver examiners for heavy vehicles.

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



Group revelation

After giving a presentation at a group home, our staff were conducting private conversations with the residents, as we normally do. Several of these young people raised serious concerns about access to food and education, and disrespectful staff behaviour regarding their personal identities, privacy and safety. They told us they had complained to a supervisor, but things had not changed. It was clear that they knew what their rights were and that many of them were being violated. We noted that some of what they described could be in violation of licensing standards for group homes.

RESULT: We shared our concerns with the relevant children's aid societies (CASs) and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Subsequently, the Ministry made unannounced visits and found 50 areas of non-compliance with the group home's licence. We followed up with each of the young people individually to ensure their concerns were addressed by the Ministry or their CAS.

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

Careers



We're looking for a **bilingual Communications Officer** for an 18-month contract! Do you have experience producing communications materials, creating website and social media content, and planning events? We offer excellent work-life balance and collaborative, exciting work with colleagues who are passionate about public service.

[Take a look at the posting and apply today.](#)

See you next year!



From everyone at Ombudsman Ontario, our sincere wishes for a safe, joyful, and peaceful holiday season, and a happy and healthy new year.

We had a wonderful time meeting with groups and individuals across the province in 2024.

As we look ahead to marking our 50th anniversary in 2025, we look forward to hearing from and helping even more of you.

Come and see us at our booth at the **Rural Ontario Municipal Association** conference **January 19-21** at the Sheraton Centre Hotel in Toronto!

Holiday hours: Our office and phone lines will be closed from noon on Tuesday, December 24 through Thursday, December 26 – and from noon on Tuesday, December 31 through Wednesday, January 1.

Complaints and inquiries can be made anytime through our website.

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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