

Annual Report

2023-2024





Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario

We are dedicated to being an effective agent of positive change for the people of Ontario. We do this by standing for the rights and well-being of Ontarians, ensuring their voices are heard, grievances are addressed, and public services are delivered with the utmost professionalism and fairness.

Land acknowledgement and commitment to reconciliation

The Ontario Ombudsman's work takes place on traditional Indigenous territories across the province we now call Ontario. The City of Toronto, where our office is located, is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We are thankful to be able to live and work on this land, and we acknowledge the many treaties that overlay it.

We believe in the significance of land acknowledgments as a way to recognize, respect and honour this territory, the treaties, the original occupants, their ancestors, and the historic connection they still have with this territory.

As part of our commitment to reconciliation, our focus in the next few years will be on:

- 1 Demonstrating our Office's dedication to serving the constitutionally recognized First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples of Ontario;
- 2 Providing educational opportunities for our staff to help them learn more about our shared history and the harms that have been inflicted on Indigenous peoples;
- 3 Working to establish mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples across the province; and
- 4 Continuing to integrate recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls into our work.

We are grateful for the opportunity to work on this part of Turtle Island.

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.



June 2024

Hon. Ted Arnott, Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Province of Ontario
Queen's Park

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased to submit my Annual Report for the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, pursuant to section 11 of the *Ombudsman Act*, so that you may table it before the Legislative Assembly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Dubé', written over a light blue circular background.

Paul Dubé
Ombudsman

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“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. [...]

“A narrow description of this institution as a complaint handling body fails [...] to give adequate expression to its deeper role as an embedder of democracy, as a driver of change [...].”

– Emily O’Reilly, European Ombudsman, speech to the International Ombudsman Institute’s World Conference and General Assembly in The Hague, May 16, 2024

“The important role of ombudsman and mediator institutions, including in the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance and the rule of law, is more crucial today than ever [...]

“[They] can have a fundamental contribution to make in rebuilding and enhancing trust and social cohesion. By working to correct injustices caused by maladministration, improving public services by identifying systemic failings, and ensuring that governance becomes more transparent and more accountable.”

– Ilze Brands Kehris, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, speech at UN headquarters, New York, May 22, 2024



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OMBUDSMAN'S MESSAGE

Focusing on rights – and the future

It is an honour to present my ninth Annual Report as Ombudsman as this Office prepares to mark its 49th anniversary. The time is ripe for both reflection and forward thinking – and this report, fittingly, does both.

It has been a momentous year. Between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024, our Office received **27,030** cases (complaints and inquiries) from Ontarians seeking our help. That is almost a record high – surpassed only in 2018-2019, when we received thousands of complaints about the Ontario Cannabis Store in its first few months of operation.

Not only did we receive 2,479 more cases this fiscal year than in 2022-2023, we saw record or near-record volumes in several areas of our jurisdiction, including municipalities, school boards, children and youth in care and French language services. And we were still able to resolve **57%** of cases in two weeks or less.

What those four topic areas have in common is that they are relatively new to our organization. Although the very first Ombudsman, Arthur Maloney, urged the province in 1975 to include local government administration in his mandate, it was not until 2016 that Ontarians could come to us with their concerns about municipalities and school boards. And oversight of child protection services and French language services was only transferred to us five years ago, in May 2019.



May 25, 2023: Ombudsman Paul Dubé, left, greets members of the public with our staff, at our booth at Newcomer Day, Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto.

To see such large numbers of people seek our help in these areas is heartening. Although there can be many factors underlying an increase – or decrease – in complaints, what is undeniable is that more Ontarians now have recourse to their Ombudsman than ever before, for a wider variety of issues. Whether we are recommending solutions, proposing best practices, verifying fair procedures, investigating complex problems, or simply connecting people with the appropriate avenue of complaint, the assistance we provide to Ontarians is indispensable. As this report illustrates, the results we obtain for them are tangible and significant.

New jurisdiction: Five years of progress

In 2019, we created two specialized units within our Office to handle the unique challenges of helping children and youth in care, and monitoring compliance with the *French Language Services Act*. Both units brought our proven and effective approaches to this work, along with enormous dedication and passion for promoting the rights of young people and Francophones. Five years later, I am proud to say we have seen remarkable results.

Children and Youth Unit

Specialized in speaking directly with children and listening to their concerns about foster homes, group homes and children's aid societies, our Children and Youth Unit has received nearly **8,000** cases since 2019 (**1,722** cases this fiscal year, the second-highest total to date). We also received close to **1,000** cases about youth justice centres in that time, from young people in custody who sought our help.

In addition to the individual results we achieved in these cases, we have also completed **4** investigations regarding children and youth since 2019, and made a total of **112** recommendations, all of which have been accepted. We have seen notable improvements, as the **Children & Youth** chapter of this report documents. This is largely thanks to what we call "proactive ombudsmanship," which involves flagging issues and making proposals for corrective action without conducting an investigation.

The Unit, headed by Director Diana Cooke, has worked closely with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to ensure that lessons learned from our investigations and case resolutions are shared throughout the child welfare sector. I also welcomed efforts to reform the use of strip searches in youth justice centres, and proposed further changes in a submission to the Ministry to better protect the rights of vulnerable youth.



January 15, 2024: Ombudsman Paul Dubé and Diana Cooke, Director of Children and Youth (right) with Leanne McLean, Tasmania's Commissioner for Children and Young People (centre), who invited them to deliver training in conducting child-focused investigations, Hobart, Australia.

Children and Youth Unit staff reach out directly to young people in foster homes, group homes, provincial and demonstration schools, and through children's aid societies and associations across the province. The Unit's uniquely specialized teams (the Indigenous Circle, the 2SLGBTQIA+ Outreach Team, and the Black Children, Youth and Families Table) work with specific groups of young people who are over-represented in the system. These teams have also enriched the knowledge and practices of staff across our Office and inspired our internal Equity, Diversity and Inclusion efforts.

It's important to note, of course, that we are the Ombudsman for ALL children and youth in Ontario. This past year alone, we also helped hundreds of children and their families with matters related to school boards, special education, special needs and much more, as evidenced in the **Education** and **Social Services** chapters of this report.



March 20, 2024: Ombudsman Paul Dubé and French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard at the raising of the International Francophonie Day flag at Toronto City Hall.

French Language Services Unit

Led by French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard, this unit has also made remarkable progress in promoting the rights of Francophones in five short years. The unit has received some **1,800** cases in that time (including a record **511** this fiscal year). By employing the Ombudsman approach – making direct contact with complainants, reviewing the facts, finding resolutions, flagging issues and conducting investigations

when warranted – they have achieved tangible results, documented in **4** dedicated annual reports to date (watch for Commissioner Bouchard's next one in December).

As noted in the Commissioner's last report, our Office's recommendations to improve French language services have prompted progress, as has the Unit's investigative work. (The Commissioner's latest own-initiative investigation, focusing on a lack of French in the province's out-of-home advertising, is completed and a report is being prepared for release.)

Commissioner Bouchard has also worked to engage with the Franco-Ontarian community in all its diversity, making connections with a wide range of French-speaking groups and individuals, from newcomers to seniors to businesspeople to Deaf and 2SLGBTQIA+ Francophones.

Members of linguistic minorities cannot always count on their rights being respected automatically; it requires vigilance and determination to know and insist upon those rights. For Francophones in Ontario, filing a complaint with our Office can be easier and more effective than marching on Queen's Park or litigating to the Supreme Court of Canada. Making a complaint to our Office is simple, and it can result in better services for all.

And resolving and investigating complaints is only part of what the FLS Unit staff do. Proactive ombudsmanship is also a large part of their work, as they engage with government agencies and community groups on a regular basis. With the support and collaboration of our entire organization, they also ensure a "Francophone lens" is brought to other issues in our purview.

Promoting rights and transparency

These are far from the only examples of our work in promoting the rights of Ontarians, particularly the most vulnerable. This report includes numerous examples of how we helped individuals access much-needed services



August 20, 2023: Ombudsman Paul Dubé speaks with a mayor at our booth at the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference, London, Ont.

and aid, and promoted transparency and fairness, the right of access to justice, and the right to see local governments deliberate.

Correctional services

In a year when most of the province's correctional facilities were filled to – or exceeded – capacity, we received **4,444** cases about them, our top source of complaints. In response, we dispatched experienced staff to resume on-site visits to correctional facilities – a practice that

had been halted during the COVID-19 pandemic. They spoke with correctional and health care staff, observed conditions, flagged complaint trends and discussed solutions. I look forward to reporting more on the results of this work in future reports. We are committed to continuing these visits in the coming fiscal year.

Improving local governance

Our Office's expertise in Ontario's open meeting rules – which protect the right of the public to see local government in action – has been sought out by municipal officials and residents alike. This past year, our new best-practice guides for municipal integrity commissioners were welcomed by numerous officials. We also brought this expertise and emphasis on transparency to the school board level, publishing our decisions on several closed school board meetings.

Councils, local boards and school boards are important democratic institutions, and we are proud to do our part in clarifying their responsibility to be open to the public. And residents of the North have similar rights, as I pointed out in a March 2024 submission to the Ministry of Northern Development on the subject of Local Services Boards. Such boards have powers to impose fees and taxes and should be subject to the open meeting rules, as well as the scrutiny of my Office as “local boards.”

Police oversight

As of April 1, 2024, our Office now has additional oversight of provincial police complaint and oversight bodies – a long-awaited step forward for civilian oversight. Now, in addition to the Special Investigations Unit, we oversee the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency, Inspectorate of Policing and Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission.

Systemic investigations

A key part of ensuring that Ontarians benefit from our investigations is following up to see that recommendations

are implemented. As always, this report provides updates on the progress made in several cases. Notably this year, we concluded that the Ministry of the Solicitor General has fulfilled the bulk of the recommendations regarding the use of force by correctional officers in our Office's 2013 report *The Code*, as well as those regarding segregation placements of inmates in my 2017 report *Out of Oversight, Out of Mind*. These changes ensured more protection for the rights and well-being of vulnerable inmates.

My last Annual Report (released in October 2023) summarized the reports we released on two major investigations in the early part of this fiscal year, regarding delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board (May 2023), and long-term care home inspections during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (September 2023). All **137** of my recommendations in those cases were accepted, and in recent months, the relevant agencies have begun reporting back to us on their progress in implementing them. Meanwhile, our investigation into the plight of adults with developmental disabilities who are improperly housed in hospitals is near completion, as is our most recent one, involving the Ministry of Education's direct payment programs to compensate families for school disruptions.

Indigenous relations

One of my top priorities as Ombudsman is the development and implementation of our Office's Indigenous Services Plan. We want to learn from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Ontario, and have sought input and assistance in the co-development of a partnership strategy that we hope will pave the way for effective exchanges of information between this Office and Indigenous peoples, and lead to positive change.

Our goal is to build respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities and earn their trust in order to be able to provide more services to them. To that end, we have embarked on a journey of learning, beginning with training that enhances our

cultural awareness, sensitivity, and understanding. This includes sessions about our shared history from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and learning about Indigenous cultural practices from a Traditional Knowledge Keeper.

Beginning to develop capacity to adequately and appropriately address relevant issues has already enhanced our service for, and engagement with, Indigenous peoples. While there is much more work to be done, we have taken steps to be more responsive to Indigenous peoples in resolving individual matters and flagging potential systemic issues. Recently, for example, members of a First Nation raised concerns with our Office's Indigenous Circle about difficulties in obtaining birth certificates (see the **Certificates & Permits** chapter of this report), and we are also looking into issues with the Ontario First Nations HST rebate program (see the **Money & Property** chapter).

One of the highlights of the past year has been the discussions I have had with Indigenous peoples and communities. I was honoured to be invited to meet with a number of First Nations groups, and members of our team were invited to have information booths at several Indigenous-led gatherings, including the Chiefs of Ontario annual meetings in 2023 and 2024. We recently began the process to recruit a full-time Indigenous Liaison Advisor and Indigenous Services Coordinator to assist with furthering these efforts.

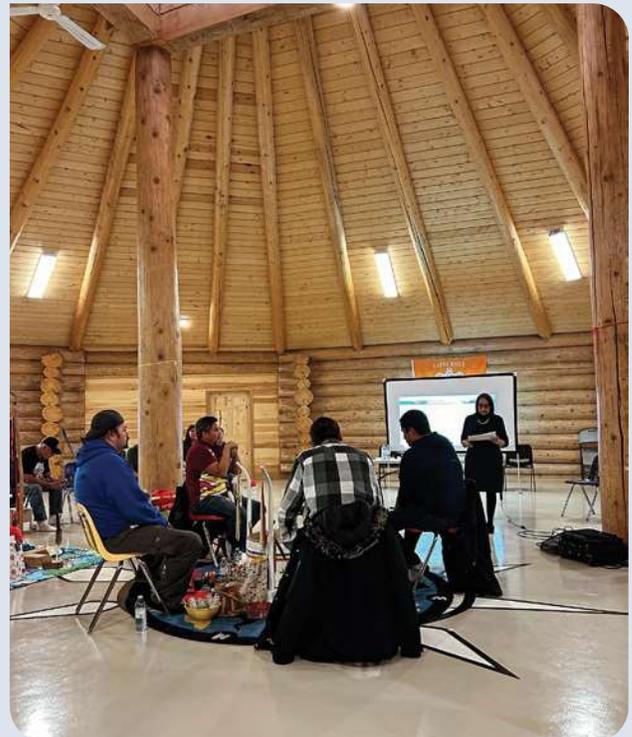
In November 2023, I was deeply honoured to visit Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation) in northern Ontario to meet with community members and leaders and learn about the conditions they were facing. The three-day visit highlighted the community's profound trauma and challenges, particularly with regard to the mercury contamination in local waters. I was extremely moved by the stories of hardship and injustice faced by the community and by its resilience and commitment to ensuring the safety of children.

A notable example of this commitment is an innovative program to build homes for at-risk youth and vulnerable families. During our visit, we were told there had been a delay in Hydro One installing the poles to bring electricity to these homes, and there appeared to be a communication breakdown between the community and Hydro One. I reached out to Hydro One's Ombudsman, and by working together, we were able to communicate the urgency of the situation to the corporation. I was thrilled to learn that the line was installed within the month.

My team and I are actively seeking more opportunities to have good words with Indigenous communities that broaden our mutual understanding and enable the Ombudsman's Office to optimize its contribution to reconciliation. In the meantime, relevant findings from the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation



November 6-8, 2023: Images from Ombudsman Paul Dubé's visit with staff to Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishnabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation). Hydro connection to these new homes was established shortly after the visit.





June 5, 2023: Ombudsman Paul Dubé and Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay (front row, centre and far right) visit Queen's Park with members of the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman (CCPO) during the CCPO's annual meeting, Toronto.

Commission and the Calls for Justice from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report will continue to guide our work.

National and international engagement

Beyond promoting optimal public services and government administration, ombudsman offices around the world have a crucial function as democratic institutions. The 2019 international set of standards known as the **Venice Principles** describes the ombudsman as an important element in protecting the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The

ombudsman's role in "the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance and the rule of law" was also recognized by the United Nations in its 2020 *Resolution on the Role of Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions*.

In an address last month to the World Conference of the International Ombudsman Institute, European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly said this role is "fundamentally about the prevention of abuse of power," noting that this can range from "serious maladministration" to "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."



September 12, 2023: Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay and Ombudsman Paul Dubé at the investigation training workshop they were invited to deliver at the United States Ombudsman Association annual conference, Atlanta.

She pointed out that crises rarely happen overnight but develop over many years, and we as ombudsmen can help by alerting administrations to the potential risks of not taking timely action.

So offices like ours must be visible and vigilant, and come together regularly to share expertise and discuss common issues. We need to support strong, independent ombudsman institutions, and respond to threats that they face with solidarity and strategy.

Ombudsman Ontario has engaged with and supported Canadian and international colleagues for decades. The investigation training we provide remains in demand around the world. The important sharing of information and strategies also allows us to learn from our colleagues and help develop best practices nationally and internationally.

In light of this, our engagement with other ombudsman institutions is embedded into our long-term strategy and I am grateful to be a member of organizations like the

International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman, and the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman.

I am honoured and privileged to serve as President of the IOI's North American Region, a role that enables me to keep informed of best practices and emerging issues while promoting the importance of ombudsmanship, good governance and transparency internationally. As North America's lead representative on this world body, I have emphasized the need to promote appropriate standards (like the Venice Principles) for ombudsman offices, and to continue to collaborate with bodies like the United Nations that can help defend them around the world and emphasize their value to liberal democracy.

Strategy for the future

Lastly, I am excited to include in this report, for the first time, our blueprint for the future. As I noted last year, in the years since our two mandate expansions and the pandemic, our team has worked tirelessly to ensure our Office is providing optimum service to an ever broader spectrum of Ontarians.

This past year, we made significant progress towards reaching our full staffing complement of 186, and over the past few months, we developed an organization-wide, three-year Strategic Plan that will guide this Office through next year's 50th anniversary and beyond the end of my term in 2026. You will find our **Mission, Vision, Values and Principles** in the next section of this report, along with our **Strategic Priorities**.

Our plan prioritizes service excellence and value for all Ontarians, with the aim – as always – of improving public services through our work. I look forward to reporting to you on our progress on these important goals next year.



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2023-2024 AT A GLANCE



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1 June 25, 2023: Our Office's presence in the Toronto Pride Parade. **2 July 25, 2023:** Ombudsman staff at our booth at the Elders Gathering hosted by Nijjaansinaanik Child and Family Services at Henvey Inlet First Nation Traditional Grounds. **3 June 12, 2023:** Ombudsman staff at the annual Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario conference, Niagara Falls. **4 December 12, 2023:** Members of the Quebec National Assembly intern program meet with Ombudsman Paul Dubé, Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay and French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard at our office. **5 January 21, 2024:** Ombudsman staff with an attendee at the annual Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference, Toronto. **6 September 6, 2023:** Ombudsman staff greet delegates at our booth at the annual Ontario East Municipal Conference, Ottawa. **7 April 15, 2024:** Communications Officer Mélima Bouchard delivers a presentation at the Ontario Society of Senior Citizens Organizations spring learning exhibition, Toronto.



8 February 9, 2024: Members of the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme meet with Ombudsman Paul Dubé, French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard and Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay at our office. **9 April 16, 2024:** A member of our French Language Services Unit greets a participant at our booth at the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario's "Health Day" event, Toronto. **10 August 20, 2023:** Ombudsman Paul Dubé and staff at the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference, London, Ont. **11 October 27, 2023:** A member of our Children and Youth Unit at the Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care conference, Niagara-on-the-Lake. **12 October 16, 2023:** Ombudsman staff at our booth at the Ontario School Counsellors Association annual conference, Mississauga. **13 February 20, 2024:** Children and Youth Early Resolutions Manager Eileen Laffey speaks about our "Misty's Story" report at the anti-human-trafficking conference Traffic Jam, Ottawa. **14 February 8, 2024:** Children and Youth Investigator James McQuirk speaks to Child and Youth Studies students at Brock University, St. Catharines. **15 March 21, 2024:** Ombudsman staff at our booth at an event for transgender and non-binary youth hosted by Sherbourne Health, Toronto.

ABOUT OUR OFFICE

Who we are

The Ombudsman is an independent, non-partisan Officer of the Ontario Legislature, appointed by all parties, whose role is to ensure that the provincial government and public sector serve people in a way that is fair, accountable, transparent and respectful of their rights.

We intervene to resolve or investigate issues involving government and public sector administration and make evidence-based recommendations for corrective action when necessary. We do so based on complaints or on our

own initiative, and are recognized internationally for the calibre and impact of our work.

The Ombudsman is a democratic institution, not a government department, and an essential element in states based on democracy, the rule of law, good administration and respect for rights.

The Office of the Ontario Ombudsman was established in 1975 and takes complaints about the administrative decisions and actions of more than 1,000 public sector and government bodies in Ontario, as well as French language services and services provided in the child protection sector.



What we do

We foster sound public administration by promoting accountability, transparency, fairness and a respect for rights. We provide free assistance to people who need help accessing public services or having their rights respected.



What we don't do

Notable exclusions to our jurisdiction are the decisions of judges and the functions of any court, the conduct of elected officials (including the Premier and Cabinet), as well as hospitals and long-term care homes.



OUR VISION

A public sector that serves Ontarians in a way that is fair, accountable, transparent and respectful of their rights.



OUR MISSION

To be an effective agent of positive change for the people of Ontario by enhancing government and public sector fairness, accountability and transparency, as well as promoting a respect for rights.



OUR PRINCIPLES

Impartiality: We do not take sides when resolving complaints or investigating concerns. Our decisions and recommendations to improve public services are based on the facts and the evidence.

Independence: We are independent. We do not take directions from government, public sector agencies, interest groups or individual complainants.

Confidentiality: Our reviews, resolutions, and investigations are done in private. Protecting the confidentiality of those who contact us is central to how we work.

Fairness: We work to ensure that government and the broader public sector act in a fair, open, and transparent manner when delivering public services and programs.



OUR VALUES

Trust: We seek to build appropriate and productive relationships based on trust and credibility.

Respect: We treat everyone with dignity and respect and strive to listen and respond with compassion.

Accessibility: Our services are free and accessible.

Excellence: We strive to achieve the highest professional standards through the delivery of efficient and timely services and impactful, high-quality work.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

2024-2026

As the core of our strategic plan for the next three years, our strategic priorities outline how our work supports our vision and mission.

PILLAR 1

PRIORITIZE SERVICE EXCELLENCE AND VALUE FOR ALL ONTARIANS

Strive for unparalleled service excellence and value through innovative solutions and a steadfast commitment to meeting the diverse needs of Ontarians.

1. Elevate our public profile to increase awareness of and engagement with Ombudsman Ontario.
2. Employ technology to optimize accessibility and service delivery to Ontarians.
3. Leverage our data to ensure we remain responsive to the evolving needs of Ontarians.
4. Embed principles of Truth and Reconciliation across our operations.

PILLAR 2

STRENGTHEN AND IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICES THROUGH EXEMPLARY OMBUDSMANSHIP

Strengthen and improve public services for the benefit of Ontarians by promoting accountability, transparency, fairness and a respect for rights.

1. Maximize the impact of our case resolutions and investigations to improve public sector services.
2. Practice proactive ombudsmanship through education and appropriate information sharing with government and public sector bodies.
3. Establish ourselves as global leaders in our field, recognized for excellence in enhancing governance through impactful, high-quality work.

PILLAR 3

FOSTER A WORKPLACE THAT EMPOWERS AND UNIFIES OUR TEAM

Foster an environment where our team is empowered, valued and united in a shared sense of purpose.

1. Continue to build a team of diverse and experienced professionals who are committed to our mission, vision and values.
2. Cultivate a unified, equitable and inclusive workplace culture that enables and supports our team.
3. Promote excellence and continuous development of our team.



May 17, 2024: Ombudsman Paul Dubé, second from right, with fellow members of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) board, at the IOI's quadrennial World Conference and General Assembly, The Hague.

Our affiliations

Our Office works collaboratively with many other provincial, national and international oversight bodies to share insights, strategies and best practices. They include:

International Ombudsman Institute (IOI): The only global organization for the co-operation of 205 independent ombudsman institutions from more than 100 countries worldwide, the IOI was founded in Canada in 1978, and is based in Vienna, Austria. It promotes the development of ombudsman institutions around the world as important to democratic oversight, and supports them through research, training and information exchange. Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé has been President of the IOI's North American Region since 2016.

Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman (CCPO): Every province, as well as the Yukon and Northwest Territories, has a parliamentary Ombudsman. All belong to the CCPO, through which they support each other and share expertise.

Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO): The FCO brings together a range of ombudsman offices across Canada, including those that operate within public sector bodies or organizations.

International Association of Language Commissioners (IALC): The French Language Services Commissioner is our Office's representative to the IALC, which shares best practices and expertise in protecting minority language rights around the world.

Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates

(CCCYA): Our Office is a member of the CCCYA, an association of independent officers of the legislature from across Canada who have mandates to advance the rights of children and youth.

L'Association des Ombudsmans et des Médiateurs de la Francophonie (AOMF):

The AOMF supports independent ombudsmen, mediators and human rights commissioners throughout the French-speaking world.

United States Ombudsman Association (USOA):

The USOA fosters the development of professional ombudsman offices across the U.S., Canada and elsewhere.

Canadian Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (CACOLE):

Our Office regularly shares expertise in oversight of law enforcement with members of CACOLE, which advances the application of civilian oversight of law enforcement throughout Canada and abroad.

National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE):

NACOLE works to enhance accountability and transparency in policing in the United States through civilian oversight.

International Corrections and Prisons Association

(ICPA): An international organization of correctional services professionals and oversight bodies, the ICPA promotes standards for humane and effective correctional practices.

HOW WE WORK



COMPLAINT INTAKE

We take complaints via the complaint forms on our website, by email, phone or letter, or in person by appointment. Our staff will contact you for more details to review your complaint. We will not divulge your name or information to anyone without your consent, and there is no charge for our services.

Not a complaint? No problem – we also handle inquiries. Our staff can answer general questions or point you in the right direction.



REFERRALS

If your complaint is not within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, we will refer you accordingly. If you haven't tried existing complaint mechanisms, we'll suggest you do that first – and return to us if the issue isn't resolved.



EARLY RESOLUTION

We always seek to resolve complaints at the frontline level if possible. To do so, we often make inquiries and requests for information with the relevant bodies, for example, to learn more about their processes and policies.



INVESTIGATION

If we are unable to resolve the matter, the Ombudsman may decide to conduct an investigation. We notify the organization in question, and we may conduct interviews and request documents or other relevant evidence. If the Ombudsman determines that there is a potential systemic issue underlying the complaints, he may decide to launch a systemic investigation.



FINDINGS AND REPORTS

When an investigation is completed, the Ombudsman provides the findings to the organization in question for a response before they are finalized. His findings and recommendations are published in investigation reports and/or in our Annual Reports, and shared publicly on our website, via social media, news media and our newsletter. Copies are also available from our Office.



RESULTS

We communicate the outcome of individual investigations and most reviews and resolutions to complainants and the relevant public sector bodies, as warranted. Summaries of many such cases are published in our Annual Reports and other communications. When the Ombudsman's recommendations are accepted, our staff follow up to ensure they are implemented, and we monitor to ensure problems don't recur.

“ I found myself in a situation trying to find someone who could possibly assist me with [a provincial government agency's processes], and after MANY attempts, nothing happened.

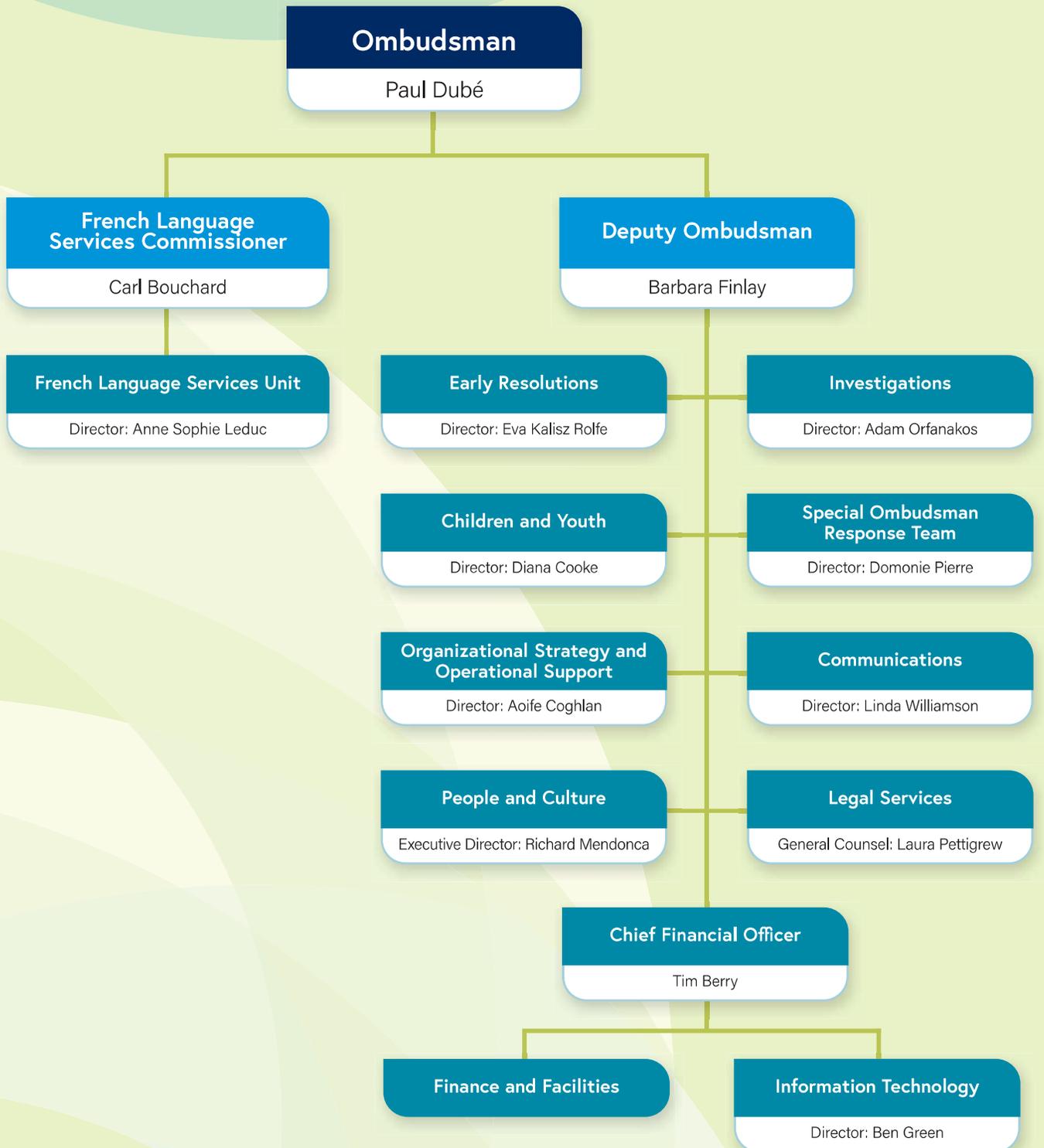
No matter what I tried, my calls were never returned... The lack of consideration for my request left me extremely disappointed and emotional for days.

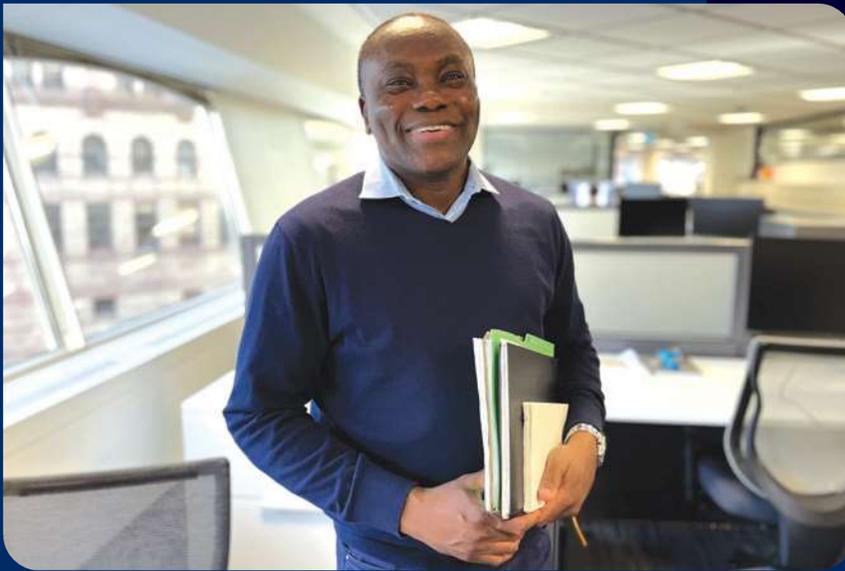
That's when I decided to contact the Ombudsman Office and was greeted by [an Early Resolution Officer] who from the get-go was very polite and helpful. I'm perhaps a little embarrassed to admit it, but I broke down in tears and then explained every step I took to try and get some answers.

[Your Early Resolution Officer's] willingness to assist me was so welcoming after the terrible experience I had gone through. She listened, provided me with some comforting words and followed up with [the agency]. What an amazing experience with someone who finally understood the importance of my situation.”

- Letter from complainant, spring 2024

WHO WE ARE





“As a French-speaking person, the issues I deal with are close to my heart and I've experienced some of them personally. I have always worked to help vulnerable people by finding solutions that benefit them. This work allows me to help find solutions to real problems for people and achieve fulfilling positive results.”

— Toyi, Early Resolution Officer,
French Language Services Unit

“I work with really passionate, caring and intelligent people. I enjoy getting to work on many different areas of law, like administrative and municipal law, or in the education sector. No two complaints are the same. 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.”

— Brittany, Legal Counsel



“I am constantly learning about new aspects of government operations, building expertise and gaining new skills. Our Office places a high emphasis on the merits of each case we resolve and investigation that we conduct, which satisfies me that the hard work that I do is done in pursuit of the greater good of all Ontarians.”

— Richard, Investigator, Generalist Unit



ABOUT THIS REPORT

Cases discussed in this report were received between **April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024**. Significant events and developments occurring between March 31, 2024 and the time of publication – such as report releases or important resolutions of issues – are also included.

We use “**cases**” to mean individual complaints and inquiries. Individual cases often involve multiple issues and several different public sector bodies, requiring input and collaboration from teams across our Office.

This report is organized by topic area, rather than by government body. The chapters are arranged in order of case volume, as shown in the accompanying chart, Cases by Subject, 2023-2024. Each topic chapter discusses the main complaint trends and significant cases of the past year.

Our Office recognizes people of all **gender identities**, and we do our best to use accurate pronouns in our work. In referring to individuals throughout this report, the gendered and non-binary pronouns used have sometimes been randomly assigned, or changed to protect the person's identity.

A breakdown of complaints by ministry, program, municipality, etc. can be found in the **Appendix**.

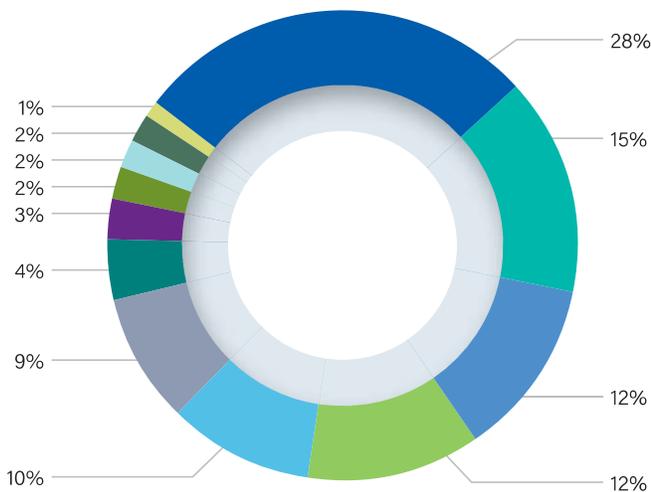


Watch for “Good to know” boxes throughout this report for explanatory notes.



CASES BY SUBJECT, 2023-2024

- LAW & ORDER
- MUNICIPALITIES
- EDUCATION
- SOCIAL SERVICES
- CHILDREN & YOUTH
- MONEY & PROPERTY
- TRANSPORTATION
- FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES
- EMPLOYMENT
- HEALTH
- ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT
- CERTIFICATES & PERMITS

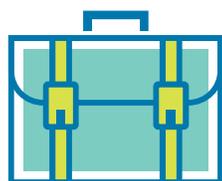


CASES BY TYPE

Within each topic area, the most common complaint – by far – is service delivery. Here are the 10 most common types of complaints we receive.

- 1 Service delivery
- 2 Administrative decisions
- 3 Communication
- 4 Delays
- 5 Legislation and/or regulations
- 6 Enforcement of rules or policies
- 7 Broader public policy matters
- 8 Procedures
- 9 Internal complaint processes
- 10 Fees or funding

2023-2024 HIGHLIGHTS



**TOTAL CASES
RECEIVED**

27,030*

44%
resolved within
one week



57%
resolved within
two weeks



43%
received
online



50%
received
by phone



7%
by mail
or fax



NEW REPORTS ON INVESTIGATIONS**

Rights Unrecognized – Mia’s Story, April 2024

20 recommendations accepted

Municipal closed meeting investigations

24 reports and letters issued in fiscal
2023-2024

School board closed meeting investigations

5 reports and letters issued since
April 2023



6 SUBMISSIONS TO GOVERNMENT***

School board governance and integrity commissioners:
May 2023 and April 2024

Five-year review of *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*:
August 2023

Police use of force and training of peace officers:
October 2023

Local Services Boards: March 2024

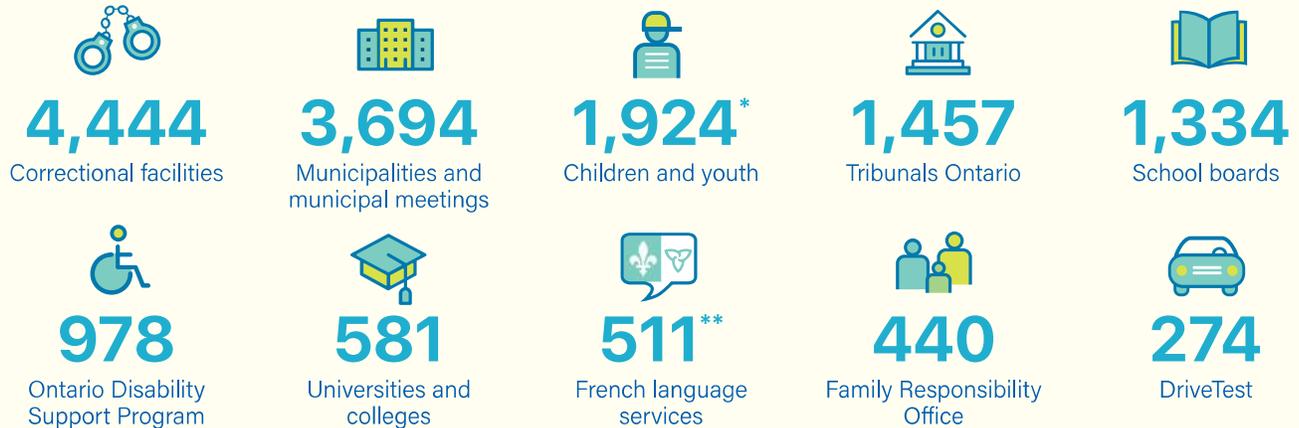
Strip searches at youth justice facilities: March 2024

*See more statistical breakdowns in the **Appendix**. **Some reports released this fiscal year were included in the Ombudsman’s 2022-2023 report, released in October 2023.

***All submissions can be found in the Resources section of our website.

2023-2024 HIGHLIGHTS

TOP 10 CASE TOPICS



COMMUNICATIONS



 **15,300**
people
Facebook reach

 **282,300**
X (twitter.com)
impressions

 **7,800**
YouTube views

 **100,329**
LinkedIn impressions

 **618**
print media articles

 **346**
broadcast media stories

OUTREACH

 **143**
events (in-person and virtual presentations, speeches, conferences, meetings, etc.)

 **171**
consultations and responses to requests from bodies we oversee

*Cases received by the Children and Youth Unit, and about youth justice centres.
**Cases received by the French Language Services Unit – details of these will be published in a separate annual report in late 2024.

YEAR IN REVIEW



LAW & ORDER

Overview

This case category, which includes services provided through the ministries of the Solicitor General and the Attorney General, consistently generates the highest volume of cases to our Office. Most of the complaints and inquiries we handle are related to the provincial correctional system. We also deal with hundreds of cases about administrative tribunals, as well as cases about aspects of the justice system and policing that are within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

Cases about correctional services increased substantially in fiscal 2023-2024, to **4,444** (from 3,524 in 2022-2023), as many facilities were at or above full capacity. Tribunals Ontario – a cluster of administrative tribunals that includes the Landlord and Tenant Board and the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, among others – was the single most complained-about organization for the fourth year in a row, although cases dropped to **1,457** from last year's 2,043.

The Ombudsman's jurisdiction over police oversight bodies was broadened to include the new Law Enforcement Complaints Agency, Inspectorate of Policing and Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission, as of April 1, 2024, when changes enacted in the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019* finally came into force.

However, local police services themselves remain outside of our Office's mandate, as do police service boards and Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) detachment boards. Judges and court decisions are also outside of the

Ombudsman's jurisdiction. For all such cases, we refer people to the appropriate complaint avenues.

Trends in cases – policing

In 2023-2024, we received **282** complaints about local police services, which we referred to other appropriate avenues. However, our Office can and does tackle systemic issues related to policing through our oversight of the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of the Attorney General, including police training in de-escalating situations where people are in crisis (see more under **Investigations – policing**).

Expanded jurisdiction over police oversight – as of April 2024

On April 1, 2024, several long-awaited aspects of the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019* finally came into force. The new Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA) replaced the former Office of the Independent Police Review Director. LECA and the new Inspectorate of Policing fall within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. LECA deals with cases about police conduct, and the Inspectorate takes complaints about compliance with policing legislation and regulations, police board member conduct and local police policies and procedures.

The Ombudsman's new oversight in all of these areas only extends to complaints about incidents that occurred after April 1, 2024.

Our Office continues to be able to deal with issues related to the Special Investigations Unit and the renamed Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission, and has jurisdiction over the OPP for matters related to the *French Language Services Act*.

As with other investigative bodies we oversee, our role is not to redo investigations or overturn decisions, but to ensure these organizations are following a fair process. We continue to function as an office of last resort, referring people first to frontline complaint processes where appropriate.

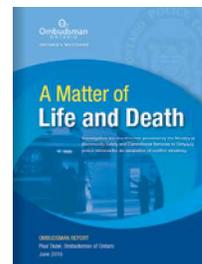
Ombudsman's submission to government – de-escalation training standards

In October 2023, the Ombudsman made a submission to the Ministry of the Solicitor General as part of its consultation on new regulations under the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*. The Ombudsman proposed clear and consistent standards across Ontario on the use of de-escalation techniques by all peace officers.

He also took the opportunity to reiterate his key recommendation from his 2016 report, *A Matter of Life and Death* – that police be required to use de-escalation techniques before force wherever possible when dealing with persons in crisis (see more on this report under **Investigations – policing**).

Investigations – policing

Police de-escalation training



Report: *A Matter of Life and Death*, released June 2016

Investigation update: In July 2013, 18-year-old Sammy Yatim was shot dead on a Toronto streetcar by police who were called because he was seen holding a small knife. The shooting prompted multiple probes

by the Special Investigations Unit, the Chief Coroner of

Ontario, and our Office. Ombudsman Paul Dubé's 2016 report focused on how police across the province are trained to de-escalate situations involving people in crisis. The investigation also reviewed the findings and recommendations in multiple inquests into similar deaths over the past 25 years.

The Ombudsman made **22** recommendations in his report, all of which were accepted. While progress has been slow, the Ministry has taken some steps toward implementing these. It introduced a new visual training aid that refers to de-escalation as a "guiding principle," replacing the use of force model that had been in place since 2004. (Based on our findings and those of several inquests and independent reviews, the Ombudsman called for this model to be replaced in 2016.) The Ministry also introduced a new Mental Health Crisis Response Training curriculum to help officers respond better to people in crisis, mandatory for all police services as of April 2024. We continue to monitor the Ministry's progress on this issue closely.

The coroner's inquest into Sammy Yatim's death concluded in February 2024. The death was ruled a homicide, and the jury made 63 recommendations aimed at avoiding similar deaths in future. Many of these echoed those in the Ombudsman's report, including asking the Ontario Police College and all police services to prioritize other options than use of force in de-escalation training. The inquest jury also asked the college and police services to "make trauma-informed de-escalation and peer intervention training a mandatory component of annual requalification training."

“ It is our hope that the recommendations put forth from this inquest will make Ontario a better and safer place to live.”

– Statement by jurors in the coroner's inquest into the death of Sammy Yatim, February 1, 2024

Trends in cases – correctional services

The fair and humane treatment of people in Ontario correctional facilities, including their health and safety, has long been a priority for our Office. In line with previous years, correctional services were the top source of complaints and inquiries in 2023-2024 – we received **4,444** cases about correctional facilities, a 26% increase from 3,524 in 2022-2023, but below the peak of 6,000 in 2019-2020.

The most common inmate concerns continued to be medical care, overcrowding, lockdowns, segregation (solitary confinement) and the use of force by correctional officers. Our staff liaise proactively and regularly with relevant officials in the Ministry of the Solicitor General and correctional facilities to discuss individual cases, complaint trends, and potential systemic issues.

In March and April 2024, a team of Ombudsman investigators conducted visits at four correctional facilities to view conditions in person and meet with senior staff to discuss specific complaints. We have plans to visit and tour additional facilities in the coming year. Our visits to Sudbury Jail, Maplehurst Correctional Complex, Vanier Centre for Women and Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre were productive. For example:

- At Sudbury Jail, we viewed the measures taken by the facility in response to inmate complaints about poor living conditions, and a mouse infestation in particular. We discussed the measures taken to remediate the infestation, and continue to follow up with the jail on this issue.
- We received multiple complaints from inmates at the Vanier Centre for Women about severe

overcrowding, not getting time out of their cells, and no access to services, including showers, due to construction projects. During our visit, staff told us the facility was dealing with a record high number of inmates. We were told staff were working to ensure inmates were given at least two hours outside their cells each day. We continue to monitor complaints about living conditions and receive updates about the construction projects.

- Our visits to Maplehurst and Hamilton-Wentworth focused on speaking with senior staff about the steps being taken to address overcrowding and lockdowns. We viewed several different units in each facility, including areas we were told were overcrowded. We discussed inmate complaints about a lack of access to phones and other services, and are monitoring the facilities' responses.

With so many cases involving the human rights of inmates every year, we are committed to remaining abreast of the latest developments and best practices in the correctional services field. We exchange information with colleagues nationally and internationally about standards for humane and effective correctional practices.

Medical issues and health care

Access to health care is consistently the most common concern we hear from inmates, including access to specialists, medication and mental health services. We take the protection of the human rights of inmates seriously, and prioritize cases where their safety and well-being might be at risk.

Some examples:

- After arriving at a correctional facility, an inmate did not receive his regular prescription medication for three weeks. We escalated his complaint to the facility's health care team, and he saw a doctor the same day.
- An HIV-positive inmate told us he wasn't receiving his medications. As a result of our inquiries, he was scheduled to see his HIV specialist, who ordered the drugs he needed.
- An inmate in mental distress asked several times to see a doctor and got no response. Our staff stepped in, and he was seen by a mental health nurse right away.

Cultural and diet issues

We routinely hear from inmates about issues in having their cultural and spiritual practices accommodated – as well as problems with the meals they receive, which are often related to religious practices or health accommodations. We generally resolve these through contact with staff at the facilities. For example:

- After we spoke to senior staff, an inmate who hadn't eaten in four days began receiving the halal meals he requested.
- An inmate with an eating disorder was provided with the meal replacement shakes she had been prescribed by a psychologist, once we flagged her case.
- After a Muslim inmate complained to us that he was not able to obtain a headwrap, our staff spoke to the facility's chaplain, who provided him with a kufi cap, as well as a Quran and a prayer mat.
- An inmate told us of his difficulties in obtaining reading materials pertaining to his Jehovah's Witness faith, and in meeting with a minister. After we spoke with the chaplain at the facility, the inmate confirmed that a meeting with a Jehovah's Witness minister had been arranged.

Accessibility

Inmates with physical disabilities often require accessibility devices, and our Office can help by liaising with staff to ensure that they are aware of inmates' concerns and needs.

For example:

- An inmate who is an amputee told us he was unable to shower safely without the wheelchair and shower bench he requested. We immediately contacted senior staff, who confirmed he was promptly provided with both items.
- An inmate complained that his orthopedic shoes were lost when he was transferred to a new facility, and he told us this forced him to increase his medication for pain. We spoke to facility staff, who ordered new shoes for him.

Access to Indigenous services

Our work has led to improvements affecting the rights of vulnerable individuals, including Indigenous inmates. For example:

- An Indigenous inmate complained of repeated delays in response to her requests to see a social worker, so she could apply to an Indigenous healing lodge. We spoke with facility officials, who said staffing shortages had resulted in delays. We kept in touch with the inmate, who confirmed she was able to submit her application.
- An Indigenous inmate told us he had not been able to smudge regularly at his facility, and he wasn't allowed traditional medicines such as cedar, sage, sweetgrass and tobacco. After we intervened, he met with a Native Inmate Liaison Officer and was provided with smudge spray, sage medicine, and a new

medicine bag. We also confirmed that he was offered the opportunity to attend Indigenous programs and ceremonies.

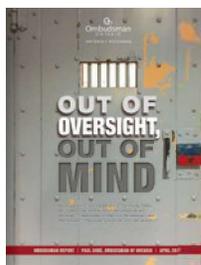
Personal property

When we receive complaints from inmates about their personal property going missing – for instance, during transfers between facilities – we liaise with local staff to help ensure their items are returned. For example:

- Months after an inmate had been transferred from an Ontario jail to a federal facility, he complained to us that his personal items, including medical records and prescriptions, still hadn't been transferred, which affected the care he was receiving. We spoke with senior staff at the provincial facility, who located his belongings and made sure they were delivered to him.
- An inmate told us his phone had gone missing from his personal property, and he needed it for evidence at an upcoming court hearing. We advised facility staff, who recovered the phone.

Investigations – correctional services

Tracking of inmates in segregation



Report: *Out of Oversight, Out of Mind*, released April 2017

Investigation update: Segregation – keeping a prisoner isolated and confined separately from the general prison population – has a tremendous impact on a person's

rights, health, safety and well-being. This investigation was prompted by a surge in complaints to our Office, as well as the extreme case of Adam Capay, an Indigenous man who was held in segregation for more than four years while awaiting trial for murder.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General has made significant strides toward implementing the **32** recommendations from this report over the past seven years. Among other things, it implemented a new definition of “segregation” that is based on the conditions the person is experiencing, not the area where they are held. It also improved policies and training for recording segregation placements, and ended the practice of “restarting the clock” when a person in segregation transfers to another facility. It has also collected segregation data and made it available to the public.

The Ombudsman also recommended that the Ministry consider creating an independent panel to review all segregation placements. Instead, it has implemented an internal segregation review process led by its own staff who monitor and record placements every 5, 10, and 15 consecutive days.

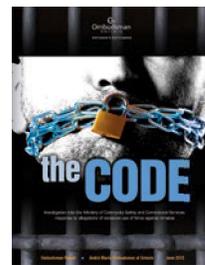
Our review of this process and related complaints suggests that the Ministry’s review team, while not fully independent, is engaging in meaningful reviews, considering inmates’ circumstances and options and including input from its Human Rights Unit. We will continue to monitor and assess this process, but the Ombudsman considers the bulk of the recommendations to be completed.

We have seen a significant decrease in segregation-related complaints since the Ombudsman’s report, from 200+ per year in the late 2010s. This dropped to 162

prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and 75 in 2020-2021. In 2023-2024, we received **116** such cases. We work with Ministry officials to resolve these individually and flag issues as warranted.

We are paying particular attention to complaints from prisoners who are held in segregation despite the correctional facility knowing that the person has mental illness. Since August 2021, regulation changes have made it unlawful for facilities to hold an inmate who has serious mental illness in segregation, with no exceptions. Nevertheless, we continue to receive complaints from inmates who were held in segregation despite “serious mental illness” alerts on their files. We are making inquiries with facilities and senior Ministry officials about these cases, and about how the Ministry plans to comply with the regulation.

Use of force by correctional officers



Report: *The Code*, released June 2013

Investigation update: Eleven years after our Office’s report on a pervasive “code of silence” around the use of force by correctional officers on inmates, the Ministry of the Solicitor General has

fully implemented 43 of the Ombudsman’s **45** recommendations. The remaining two involve installing closed-circuit video in all correctional facilities and training for managers in handling potentially volatile situations.

The Ministry has confirmed that all but three facilities are now equipped with closed-circuit cameras,

and more than half of its managers have received defensive tactics training. It is expected that all recommendations will be implemented by the end of 2025. We continue to meet regularly with the Ministry to receive updates on these issues and discuss and resolve individual use-of-force cases.

In 2023-2024, we received **114** complaints related to the use of force against inmates. We follow up with the inmates and institutions in these cases, to ensure the required investigations are conducted according to Ministry policies.

Other trends in cases

Administrative tribunals

Tribunals Ontario – which comprises 13 administrative tribunals that collectively deal with some 100,000 cases each year – continued to generate a high volume of complaints and inquiries in 2023-2024. Although the number of cases dropped to **1,457** from last year's record high of 2,043, this remains higher than in previous years (1,110 in 2021-2022, and 935 in 2020-2021). Once again, the vast majority of these – **1,284** cases – were about the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), the subject of the Ombudsman's May 2023 report, *Administrative Fairness Delayed, Justice Denied*. For more on the LTB and that investigation, see the **Money & Property** chapter of this report.

Cases about other Tribunals Ontario bodies increased in 2023-2024, notably the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) – **135** cases, up from 93 the previous year. Delays remained a common

topic of complaint, and we resolved many cases by facilitating communication with tribunal officials. The HRTO continues to have a significant backlog, exacerbated by issues with recruitment and retention of adjudicators, as well as technical challenges due to Tribunals Ontario's digital-first approach to hearings. We are actively monitoring the HRTO's efforts to clear this backlog, which include increased focus on mediation, prioritization of older files, and a streamlined approach to its review process.

Private Security and Investigative Services Branch (PSISB)

We received **14** cases about this branch of the Ministry of the Solicitor General in 2023-2024, most related to client service issues. One case involved how the branch communicated its decision regarding a fatal incident involving a licensed security guard. We reviewed the Ministry's handling of a complaint about the guard's conduct and shared best practices aimed at helping the Branch improve its complaints processes, service policies and transparency in communicating with the public. In light of our inquiries, the Branch updated its communications to complainants and created a new standard operating procedure for public complaints.

“ We appreciate your thorough review of PSISB's processes and welcome this opportunity to increase the fairness and transparency of our communications with complainants and members of the public.”

– Response from the PSISB Director/Registrar to Ombudsman's best practice suggestions

Case summaries

Mistaken identity

A transgender inmate contacted our Office after she was involved in an altercation with correctional officers. When we made inquiries, we learned that the facility's computer system had not been updated with the correct information regarding the inmate's gender identity, even though she had submitted a written statement to the facility.

RESULT: The facility updated its records and staff ensured that a social worker met with the inmate to let her know about the supports available to her.

Privacy protections

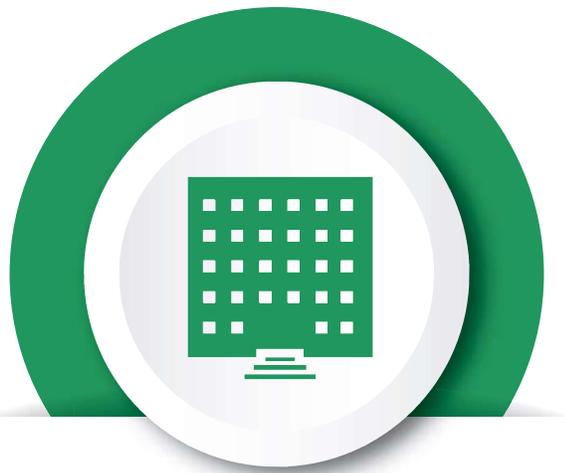
We received complaints from a group of 10 inmates, all women, that they were strip searched by correctional officers in their unit, in view of one another. We flagged this case to senior staff at the facility.

RESULT: After our intervention, the facility purchased privacy screens to prevent similar incidents in future, and staff were reminded to conduct searches in a manner that better maintains inmate privacy.

Report as required

We received complaints from two inmates at the same facility, alleging they had been sexually assaulted. One inmate complained that they were sexually assaulted by another inmate, and the other complained that they were sexually assaulted by staff. When we inquired with facility staff, we found that neither allegation had been looked into, and they were only investigated months later, after we intervened. The facility also failed to notify the Ministry's Correctional Services Oversight and Investigations unit, as required by policy.

RESULT: Our Office routinely monitors Ministry investigations and oversight of inmate allegations of sexual assault. In this case, we escalated our concerns to senior Ministry officials, and all facilities in the province were reminded of the reporting requirements regarding sexual assault allegations.



MUNICIPALITIES

Overview

Ontario’s 444 municipalities consistently generate a high volume of complaints and inquiries to our Office. We can review cases about all aspects of municipal administration (except those within the jurisdiction of the Toronto Ombudsman), as well as closed municipal meetings.

In 2023-2024, we received a record **3,595** cases about general municipal issues – a significant increase from 2,814 the previous year. We resolved the vast majority of these by making referrals or working closely with municipal staff to address concerns and sharing best practices to improve transparency, fairness and general processes.

Since the Ombudsman’s mandate was fully extended to municipalities in January 2016, we have received almost **25,000** complaints and inquiries about them, and conducted **6** formal investigations of general municipal issues.

Complaints about closed municipal meetings remained steady in 2023-2024, with **99** cases (consistent with 95 the previous year). The Ombudsman issued **24** reports and letters about these cases, all of which we share in an online digest to help municipal officials and the public understand and apply the open meeting rules.

Our Office works closely with municipal clerks and other officials to promote transparency, accountability and fairness at the local level. To this end, we have created a range of educational materials, including “tip cards” on various topics and, most recently, best practice guides about integrity commissioners and codes of conduct. These materials are distributed to all municipalities and are publicly available on our website. We also regularly attend municipal conferences and virtual workshops to answer questions from and share expertise with municipal staff and council members.

“ Thank you for your time and expertise in presenting to us today. The presentation was filled with helpful information. I was so encouraged to get a sense of just how many complaints/ concerns and inquiries are resolved at an early stage through discussion and response by the [Ombudsman’s Office].

I think there are times that municipalities may take for granted (or simply not realize) that this work is occurring, and how it benefits each municipality from a support standpoint.

Lastly – I wouldn’t forgive myself if I did not offer a small plug for the Open Meetings Guide and Case Digest... They have been invaluable resources. Without these, I fear many municipalities would lack the guidance needed to make good decisions around opening/closing a meeting.”

– Email from a municipal clerk



Cases about Ontario Works can be found in the **Social Services** chapter of this report. Cases about municipal hydro can be found in the **Energy & Environment** chapter.

Trends in cases – General municipal issues

The most common municipal issues raised in cases this past year involved councils and committees, by-law enforcement, housing, infrastructure, planning and land use, and local accountability officers.

Councils and committees

Councils and committees were the most common subject of complaints and inquiries in 2023-2024, with **653** cases. The Ombudsman does not take complaints about the conduct of individual council members (these fall within the remit of local integrity commissioners – see more under **Accountability officers**) and cannot reverse council decisions. However, we helped people with a wide variety of issues by facilitating communication or reviewing the fairness of council decision-making processes.

For example:

- We responded to concerns in several municipalities by verifying that they were following the rules in the *Municipal Act* when filling vacant council seats.
- We reminded a municipality about the need for a functioning Accessibility Advisory Committee, a requirement for municipalities with more than 10,000 residents.
- When residents complained that the only pickleball courts in their community closed, we confirmed the municipality will be opening new courts in a different park later in 2024.
- After a group of concerned residents complained that they’d heard a “tiny homes” project was going to be built in a local park, we discovered the municipality hadn’t yet decided on a location for the project. We

let the residents know how to participate in the public consultation process.

Accountability officers

We received **80** complaints about accountability officers in 2023-2024. The bulk of these were about integrity commissioners – which all municipalities are required to have – and a few related to municipal ombudsmen, auditors general and lobbyist registrars. The Ombudsman's role is not to redo the work of these officials, but to review the fairness of their processes and, if warranted, to share best practices to improve them.

Integrity commissioners oversee local codes of conduct for members of council and local boards, and look into alleged contraventions of the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*. When we receive complaints about the conduct of council members, we refer them back to local integrity commissioners, and ensure municipalities have clear public information about how to make such complaints.

As noted in last year's Annual Report, the Ombudsman has urged municipalities not to charge residents fees for filing complaints with their integrity commissioners, as such fees are a barrier to an important democratic function and can undermine public trust. The Ombudsman wrote to the **City of Niagara Falls** about its \$500 fee for a second time this year. He similarly urged the **Town of Pelham** to remove a \$100 fee and affidavit requirement for code of conduct complaints.

Several cases we received were about delays in integrity commissioner investigations. We encouraged the commissioners to communicate directly with the complainants and shared best practices with municipal staff for next steps if investigations exceed the expected timeframes. In a few cases related to pecuniary conflicts of interest, where integrity commissioners are required by law to complete their reviews within 180 days, we reminded municipalities of these strict requirements.

The Ombudsman also cautioned municipalities against giving integrity commissioners multiple roles, in light of a complaint we received about a municipal solicitor who was also serving as integrity commissioner. While the Ombudsman can't direct a municipality to appoint a specific person as integrity commissioner, we note his position in our new resource, ***Codes of Conduct, Complaint & Inquiry Protocols, and Appointing Integrity Commissioners: Guide for Municipalities***: "This practice undermines public confidence in the independence of integrity commissioners and their decisions, and it should be avoided."

In August 2023, we released and distributed this guide, along with a companion resource, ***Municipal Integrity Commissioners: Best Practice Guide***. Both are available on our website.

“ There should be no barriers to making a complaint to the integrity commissioner, such as fees or onerous administrative requirements (e.g., requiring complainants to swear an affidavit). Municipalities sometimes impose such conditions in an attempt to discourage frivolous and vexatious complaints. Instead, they should address this concern by giving integrity commissioners discretion to dismiss complaints for these reasons.”

– From our new resource, ***Codes of Conduct, Complaint & Inquiry Protocols, and Appointing Integrity Commissioners: Guide for Municipalities***

By-law enforcement

We receive hundreds of cases about by-law enforcement each year, and we regularly share best practices with municipalities to help them develop clear complaint

policies and appeal mechanisms. This year, we received **449** complaints and inquiries about how by-laws were (or were not) enforced, and related issues – up from 397 the previous year.

Some examples:

- A man contacted us because his neighbour's fence wasn't keeping chickens off his property; we helped connect him with the local by-law enforcement manager.
- A woman was told her municipality would step in to clean up debris in her backyard and charge her for the work. She told us she planned to clean it up herself, but couldn't due to bad weather. Our involvement bought her a few more days to tidy the yard to the municipality's satisfaction.
- A homeowner had tried in vain to get his neighbour to turn down bright lights shining into his home, but it wasn't until we intervened that the by-law officers returned to the neighbour's property and the lights were dimmed.

Housing

Municipalities and district social services administration boards are responsible for providing housing programs and services. We received **401** cases about housing in 2023-2024, up from 327 the previous year. Many were about long delays and waitlists to apply for social housing, and we helped connect these people with senior housing officials for updates and policy information.

In other cases:

- A tenant told us she felt unsafe in her apartment building because the main doors were being left open and unlocked. After we intervened, the housing provider inspected the building and pledged to install security cameras.

- We helped a tenant who was living in a hotel room and facing homelessness connect with a housing provider.
- A woman on a waiting list for subsidized housing sought our help because she believed her application was being ignored. When we spoke to the housing provider, we were told she was "next on the list" for a unit.

Infrastructure and zoning

Municipalities are generally responsible for local infrastructure, including roads, bridges, sewage treatment, culverts and ditches. We received **152** cases about infrastructure in 2023-2024, as well as **100** about municipal water and sewer services, and **135** related to planning, zoning and land use.

Some examples:

- We helped a municipality work with residents on issues relating to the municipality's takeover of a local water and wastewater treatment plant, after the residents expressed concerns about the plant's maintenance.
- After receiving a \$3,100 bill for work done on a municipal drain, a resident requested his property be disconnected from the drain but didn't get a response. After we raised this with municipal officials, they reviewed their records, found his request, and ultimately worked with the man on moving it to the next stage.
- A property owner who was dividing his land into separate properties sought our help when his municipality told him he would be required to widen an adjacent road – at a cost of close to \$6,000. We verified with municipal officials that this requirement was standard – however, in the interests of transparency, they promised to develop a fact sheet so property owners in similar situations wouldn't be taken by surprise.

Trends in cases – open meetings

All municipal meetings must be open to the public, unless they fall within the narrow exceptions set out in section 239 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. The rules apply to all municipal councils, local boards and committees of either of them, and include virtual and hybrid meetings. Anyone who thinks a meeting might have been illegally closed to the public can make a complaint.

The Ombudsman is the default investigator for these complaints in all municipalities except those that have appointed their own, and we provide this free service for most municipalities across the province (**268** of 444, a new peak). We received **99** cases about closed meetings in 2023-2024, **89** of which were within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction; the rest were referred to investigators appointed by the municipalities.

The cases we reviewed were about **54** different municipalities and local boards. The Ombudsman issued **24** reports and letters on his findings regarding **38** meetings. He found that **16** of the meetings (**42%**) were illegal. He also found **18** procedural violations and made **29** best practice recommendations in those cases. All of these reports and letters can be found on our website and in our searchable online database of decisions, called **Open Meetings: Case Digest**.



We also consulted directly with municipalities on **29** occasions about best practices for open meetings, and shared many more with municipal staff and officials at conferences and events. Our Office publishes a handbook explaining the open meeting rules and how the Ombudsman has interpreted them in numerous investigations,

called **Open Meetings: Guide for Municipalities**, which is distributed to every clerk and council member, and is available on our website. Copies can also be requested from our Office.

Electronic meetings

The open meeting rules were amended by the province in 2020 to allow municipalities to meet electronically – although there is no requirement that they do so. As such meetings are now increasingly hybrid (allowing people to attend virtually and in person), the Ombudsman's reviews aim to help municipalities ensure that they continue to follow the open meeting rules.

For example, the Ombudsman found that:

- Two meetings in the **Municipality of Calvin** were illegally closed because the public was not given the correct link to watch an electronic meeting.
- The **Municipality of West Elgin** contravened the rules when it failed to resume the public livestream of the meeting after a closed session.
- A meeting of the **Huronia Airport Task Force** (a committee of the **Township of Tiny**, the **Town of Midland**, and the **Town of Penetanguishene**) violated the rules because the meeting was not broadcast as specified in the public notice.

Informal gatherings

If a quorum of council members gathers and advances council business, there is a chance their gathering can be considered a “meeting” under the Act – whether it’s meant to be or not. For example, the Ombudsman found that:

- Three members of a **City of London** committee illegally met with a local non-profit to discuss a project before council voted to fund the project later the same day.

- An informal meeting by a trio of council members in a **Township of Morley** garage to discuss snowplow operations during a significant snowfall was against the rules.
- A quorum of council for the **Municipality of Casselman** illegally discussed council business on a Microsoft Teams call after a council meeting adjourned and staff and the public had left the call, in what the Ombudsman called “a flagrant violation of the spirit and the letter of the open meeting rules.”

Exceptions to the rules – common issues

Many of our investigations of closed meetings are about whether or not the discussion behind closed doors fit within one of the 14 exceptions set out in the *Municipal Act*. Some examples:

- The **City of Elliot Lake** was permitted to meet in closed session under the “personal matters” exception (239(2)(b)), as its discussions involved scrutinizing staff conduct and performance.
- If the municipality has a bargaining position to protect with respect to a land transaction – as was the case in closed meetings in the **Town of Huntsville** and **City of Elliot Lake** – then the exception for acquisition or disposition of land (239 (2)(c)) may apply.
- A discussion that only briefly mentioned the possibility of seeking legal advice didn’t fit the “litigation” exception (239(2)(e)) in the **Town of Grimsby**, but the discussion was permitted under the exception for “personal matters” because it involved scrutiny of the conduct of a specific individual.
- In cases where lawyers provide advice, or legal advice is otherwise shared with council, the “solicitor-client privilege” exception (239(2)(f)) may apply – as it did in the **County of Haliburton** and the **Township of Adjala-Tosorontio**.
- Both the **Municipality of Brockton** and the **County of Haliburton** violated the rules by relying on the “third party information” exception (239 (2)(i)) to close meetings, because the information they discussed wasn’t actually considered to be confidential by the third parties.

Procedural concerns

Often, we help municipalities follow best practices or improve their procedure by-laws to ensure they are in line with the open meeting rules. For example:

- There’s no requirement to provide meeting agendas in advance, but it’s a best practice to do so, as we explained to the **Town of Huntsville** and the **Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers**.
- After we spoke with the **Municipality of Callander** about failing to provide consistent public notice for committee meetings, it adopted a new procedure by-law to clarify the notice requirements.
- Before a meeting can be closed, council must pass a resolution stating the general nature of the topic to be discussed. The Ombudsman called out the **Township of Adjala-Tosorontio**, the **Town of Grimsby**, and the **Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers** for failing to do this.
- Minutes must be kept for all meetings, and the Ombudsman recommends making audio and/or video recordings to provide an accurate record. The **Town of Amherstburg** recently joined the ranks of municipalities that now follow this practice. The Ombudsman also reminded the **City of Hamilton** about keeping evidence after it deleted a video recording of a meeting that was the subject of a complaint to our Office.

Case summaries

Stair-struck

A business owner complained to us after his municipality informed him that a set of stairs on the back of his building encroached on municipal property. He told us his family had operated a business in the building for 40 years before buying the land from the city in 2004 and had never been told the stairs weren't on his own property.

RESULT: After we spoke with municipal officials, they worked with him to resolve the encroachment issue. The man was grateful for our help in facilitating the process.

Municipal mine-field

We were contacted by the leaseholder of Crown land that included ski trails and a drainage system that had previously been installed by his municipality. He told us these were contrary to his lease agreement with the Ministry of Mines, which required all activities on the property to be related to mining. He said the municipality had taken steps to remove most of the ski trails, but had stopped responding to his requests to resolve the drainage issue.

RESULT: After our Office made inquiries, including escalating the issue to the mayor, the municipality removed the remaining ski trails and erected signage to discourage public access to the property. The municipality also began working with the leaseholder to relocate the drainage system to an acceptable location.

In the zone

A homeowner reached out to us when the land around her home was rezoned from agricultural to industrial. She was concerned that her municipality hadn't engaged with residents before making the decision, and that proper environmental assessments were not done.

RESULT: We reached out to municipal officials, who agreed to speak to the resident to answer her questions. After speaking to our staff, the woman contacted the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to raise concerns about the environmental assessments. When we followed up with her, she told us the Ministry agreed with her concerns and had broached them directly with the municipality.

More fair, less taxing

A woman who could not pay her property taxes due to financial hardship sought our help after her municipality refused her request to cancel her debt. Instead, it took steps to sell her property. Her complaint raised several questions of fairness, including whether the municipality gave her adequate notice about when she would have to leave the property. Our staff raised these concerns with the municipality. The Ombudsman also wrote to the council and shared best practices to address the issues we identified.

RESULT: As a result of our intervention, the municipality developed a new tax policy, which includes guidance for staff to provide reasonable notice to people who must vacate a property as part of a tax sale, and to provide them with housing support referrals. The municipality also sent a letter of apology to the woman. Staff at the municipality told us our best practices helped them work with other owners in similar situations, resulting in the municipality not having to move forward with tax sales for these properties.

“ [Our] staff would like to thank the staff at Ombudsman Ontario for the conversation... where these best practices were shared... The [municipality] sincerely appreciates the work of the Ombudsman to ensure fairness for all Ontarians and we look forward to providing a quality, fair and transparent service to all ratepayers...”

– Response from the municipality's CAO



Overview

The Ombudsman oversees the province's 72 school boards, 10 school authorities, all publicly funded universities and colleges of applied arts and technology. We also oversee the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and their programs. We help people with a wide range of problems related to educational programs and services.

In 2023-2024, we saw an increase in cases from across the education sector. Cases about school boards reached a new peak of **1,334** – a significant increase over 794 the previous year. Cases related to the Ministry of Education also increased, from 107 in 2022-2023 to **142**. For the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, cases increased to **476** from 429 last fiscal year.

Trends in cases – Early years through grade 12

We received **1,334** cases about school boards between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024 – a record high since the Ombudsman's mandate was first extended to school boards in September 2015. Common issues raised by complainants included problems with enrolment, support services for students with special needs, student safety, and busing services.

Our Office also expanded our work in promoting transparency in school board meetings this past year. We investigated several complaints about closed school board meetings, and shared the Ombudsman's findings with the boards and on our website.

In December 2023, the Ombudsman launched a systemic investigation into the Ministry of Education's administration of its direct payment programs, after receiving complaints

from parents who were denied payments for the children in their custody because someone else had claimed the money first. These payment programs were designed to help pay for student learning supports during strikes by education workers in early 2020 and to provide financial support to caregivers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. (See more under **Investigations**.)

School name complaints

In March and April 2024, we received **336** complaints and inquiries about the **Greater Essex County District School Board's** choice of name for a new school in Kingsville, and about closed meetings held by the board. In reviewing these types of complaints, our Office looks to see if the school board followed the relevant policies and procedures in coming to its decision. In this case, the our review determined that the board acted in accordance with its policies, regulations and governance by-laws in naming the new school.

Adult learning: GED tests

In March and April 2024, we received **9** complaints from people who were trying to schedule General Education Development (GED, a high school diploma equivalent) certificate tests after it was announced that the international testing provider was ending its service in Canada as of March 31. The TVO Independent Learning Centre (TVO ILC) was responsible for offering these tests in Ontario, but delays in processing applications to register for the test led some people to fear they would not be able to take the test in time. Some contacted us mere days before March 31 and said they had paid the \$100 registration fee, but received no response.

After our Office made inquiries with TVO ILC about these cases, the applications were processed and the complainants were able to book their GED tests. TVO ILC

and the Ministry of Education announced they are working on securing a new equivalency certificate test.

“ I was trying to book my GED exam before the deadline closed and was having a lot of difficulty getting in touch with anyone ... I was getting quite stressed as the deadline approached. I contacted your [Office] ... and after a couple of brief conversations..., they let me know that somebody from the GED booking department would reach out. That happened quickly. I can't thank them and your organization enough.”

– Comment from GED applicant

Special education, accommodations and student safety

Our Office helps families when they face difficulty in navigating programs for students with special needs. Parents and guardians contact us when they run into issues related to Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which are developed through Identification, Placement and Review Committee meetings to determine appropriate supports and placements for students. Our staff speak with school board officials to ensure that families receive information relevant to the process and facilitate communication between the school board and the families.

We also hear from parents and guardians who are worried about ongoing risks to their children's safety at school, or their individual safety plans (for students whose behaviour may put themselves or others at risk). Student discipline is another common complaint – we generally deal with such cases by connecting students and parents with the appropriate school board officials.

Some examples:

- We helped a mother get a copy of her daughter’s safety plan, as well as a written summary of incidents in which the girl was assaulted by another student.
- We made inquiries and confirmed that a school apologized to a mother who wasn’t informed when her son hit his head at school, and sent a reminder to all staff to notify parents in such situations.
- We prompted school officials to re-examine a boy’s suspension from school, resulting in an apology and a commitment to investigate the circumstances that led to the suspension to ensure that it would not happen again.
- A boy who faced an exclusion from school was provided with an alternative placement in a special education program after we intervened.

Enrolment

Our Office often helps parents who are facing challenges with enrolling their children in certain schools or programs, usually by connecting them with the appropriate officials to address the issues and avoid disruptions in the students’ schooling.

Some examples:

- We helped a mother who had limited Internet access communicate with a school board in order to enroll her daughter in a new school.
- We helped the mother of a boy who has specific support needs transfer to a new school board and access transportation, after he was initially denied due to staff shortages.

Fees for newcomers to Canada

We received **4** cases in 2023-2024 about school boards

asking newcomers to Canada to pay tuition fees (in one case, as much as **\$16,000**) to enroll their children in Ontario schools. While school boards are permitted to charge tuition fees for children whose parents or guardians are temporary residents of Ontario, the *Education Act* outlines exemptions to this rule, e.g., when a parent or guardian is awaiting the outcome of their permanent resident or work permit application. In the complaints we reviewed, school boards were looking to charge fees to parents whose circumstances suggested that they should be exempt.

We raised this issue with individual school boards, as well as with senior officials within the Ministry of Education, who pointed to a memorandum requiring school boards to charge tuition fees in certain circumstances. Our review of the memorandum noted areas where there was inconsistent and unclear guidance to school boards on this issue. We raised concerns with the Ministry about potential unfairness, and we were told it is reviewing the memorandum. We are continuing to monitor this issue.

Students on hold

We received **14** cases raising concerns about the **Durham District School Board’s** reasoning and process for designating a “holding school” to temporarily accommodate enrolment growth from new local housing developments. The school board provided us with information about the decision and how it was communicated. We continue to review this issue.

Transportation

In Ontario, most school boards arrange bus transportation for their own students, with the bulk of the operating funding provided by the Ministry of Education. In 2023-2024, we received **84** complaints about transportation, including issues related to busing for

children with special needs, transfers between schools, and cancelled routes. We resolve these wherever possible by connecting people with the relevant board officials. For example:

- A mother complained that her son, who has autism, was not allowed to ride on the bus for children with special needs, despite a doctor's note confirming his requirements. After we spoke to board officials, they allowed the student on the appropriate bus.

Ottawa school bus changes

We heard from **5** affected families in September 2023 when the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority cancelled some bus routes for students of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and the Ottawa Catholic School Board. We raised the issues with the transportation consortium and the Ministry of Education. The consortium told us it was improving communication with parents, providing alternative public transit options for students, and enhancing efforts to recruit new drivers. The Ministry also hired an external consulting firm to conduct a third-party review of student transportation at the two boards. We continue to monitor the results of these efforts.

Closed school board meetings

Under the *Education Act*, all meetings of a board of trustees or a committee of the board must be open to the public, with some narrow exceptions. As the Ombudsman first noted in his 2019 investigation report *Lessons Not Learned* (regarding a board's handling of a school closure in North Bay), all school board meetings must follow open meeting rules that are similar to those for municipal council meetings (discussed in the **Municipalities** chapter of this report).

This fiscal year, we received an unprecedented **200+** complaints about closed school board meetings, the bulk

of which were about closed meetings of the **Greater Essex County District School Board** in February, March and April 2024. In June 2024, the Ombudsman informed the board by letter that he found the meetings did not violate the *Education Act*.

The Ombudsman has issued findings regarding closed meetings held by **6** school boards since the fall of 2022. All were made public by the boards in question, and are also available on the Education section of our website.

For example, the Ombudsman found that:

- Some meetings by a **Near North District School Board** committee were held electronically with no option for the public to attend them in person, contrary to the *Education Act*. The board accepted his recommendations to improve transparency.
- Meetings of the **Niagara Catholic District School Board** did not violate the *Education Act*, but he encouraged the board to make more information public about the matters it plans to discuss in closed session and any security protocols for its meetings.
- The **Durham District School Board's** safety protocols at meetings were reasonable, and he commended the board for its efforts to resume in-person meetings.

“ I encourage the school board to continue to review its meeting practices, and to ensure that it places as few conditions on the public's ability to freely access and observe open meetings as is safely possible.”

– Letter from Ombudsman Paul Dubé to Durham District School Board, November 29, 2023

Ombudsman's submission to government – school board governance

In April 2024, the Ombudsman made a submission to the Ministry of Education as part of its consultations on regulatory proposals about code of conduct complaint processes and physical attendance requirements for trustees at school board and committee meetings.

The Ombudsman made **15** proposals in his submission, focused on promoting trustee accountability and the fairness and transparency of school board meetings. For instance, he called on the Ministry to allow the public to file complaints to school board integrity commissioners, and to require commissioners to make their reports public if they find a board member contravened the code of conduct. He also proposed that boards be able to meet virtually if the safety of board members, staff or the public is at risk.

Trends in cases – post-secondary

Cases about colleges and universities increased in 2023-2024 over the previous year, in part due to a range of concerns raised by and about international students. We received **292** cases about colleges of applied arts and technology, compared to 236 in 2021-2022, and **289** about universities, up from 205. The most common complaints were about admissions, communication of policies and information, grade appeals, and requests for tuition refunds.

We helped students connect with the right officials or intervened to resolve their concerns, and directed cases outside of our jurisdiction – such as those about conduct

of faculty members or workplace issues – to appropriate complaint avenues.

Since 2019, all Ontario colleges and universities have been required to have policies to protect free speech on campus, and complaints about them can be directed to our Office. We did not receive any complaints about these policies in 2023-2024.

Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP)

We received **160** cases about OSAP loans and grants in 2023-2024, consistent with 169 received the previous year. We helped students resolve problems with poor communication, delays, and conversions of grants to loans.

For example:

- We helped a single mother of a child with special needs get what she called a “life-changing” grant of **\$11,000** from OSAP, after she waited nearly five years for it to be approved.
- OSAP officials restored a **\$7,000** grant to a student with disabilities, after we prompted them to discover that it had been converted to a loan by mistake.
- We helped a student secure a grant after she waited 16 weeks for word from OSAP, which told her she had submitted an incorrect document.

International students

Many of the concerns we heard from international students in 2023-2024 were about requests for tuition refunds from colleges. For example, we helped a student from Jamaica get her tuition refunded when she did not receive her visa in time to attend classes.

In January 2024, the federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced a cap on study permits for international students, due to concerns about a lack of available housing and the quality of education provided by so-called private “diploma mills.” The cap was expected to reduce the number of international students in Ontario – estimated at 240,000 in 2023 – by half. In late March 2024, the province announced that 96% of the permits would be allocated to publicly funded colleges and universities, and none would go to private career colleges.

Our Office is monitoring the impact of these changes on the administration of public services in the post-secondary sector.

Investigations

Direct payment programs for parents and students

Launched: December 2023

Investigation update: The Ombudsman launched this investigation after parents complained to us that they were denied payments for the children in their custody because someone else had claimed the money first. Some who had sole custody were left with no recourse when the child’s other parent or a relative who had no role in caring for the child applied first and claimed the money.

The Ministry of Education first offered direct payments through its Support for Parents program in early 2020, during strikes by education workers. After the COVID-19 pandemic forced school closures, the Ministry created similar programs, including Support for Families,

Support for Learners, and the Ontario COVID-19 Child Benefit. The most recent program was Catch Up Payments in 2022-2023. All were implemented with the aim of helping parents and guardians pay for learning supports for students.

Since the first program was introduced in 2020, our Office has received more than **200** complaints from parents and guardians about challenges in obtaining the benefits. The investigation is focused on the fairness and transparency of the Ministry’s administration of the programs. At the time of writing this report, investigators were in the process of interviewing complainants and Ministry officials.

“ We heard disturbing accounts from parents who were not only denied funding for the children in their care – they were not told who received the payments. [...]

If the Ministry’s aim is to support children directly through these programs, then it has a duty to do so fairly and ensure that the money goes to those who have the children in their care.

People have complained to us about this issue through successive iterations of these programs, and the latest version is likely not the last. Our investigation will look for the root of the problem and recommend ways to make these programs fair and transparent going forward.”

– Ombudsman Paul Dubé, press release announcing investigation into direct education payment programs, December 11, 2023

Case summaries

Course correction

A group of **50** students at a university reached out to our Office for help after they all failed the same course. The students, most of whom were international students, raised concerns about the instruction, grades and feedback they received from the university, and the financial consequences of having to repeat the class. We raised the complaints with university officials and reviewed the options available to the students.

RESULT: During our review, university officials contacted the students, explained the appeals process, invited them to discuss their concerns with the relevant dean, and offered them a chance to retake a condensed version of the course at no cost. We advised the students that if their concerns were not resolved, they could also raise them with the university's own ombudsperson.

Fair trade

A student sought our help after his college told him he would have to retake a trade course he had already effectively completed, which would delay his graduation and the full-time employment he had arranged. His college had given him under 48 hours to accept an opportunity to complete additional coursework – but when he wrote back, he did not receive a response, and encountered issues with getting information in the ensuing months.

RESULT: After we raised the case with college officials, they offered the student a new solution – a chance to complete a practical assessment, which would satisfy his graduation requirements.

Helpful information

An international student at a college of applied arts and technology requested a tuition refund when he decided to leave his program and return home to India. The college told him he had missed its deadline to withdraw and receive a refund. He asked our Office for help, saying the financial consequences were affecting his mental health.

RESULT: Although our review found the college had properly followed its refund policy – which we explained to the student – we also sent him information about free mental health resources that he could access in India. Several months later, he contacted us to say he was doing much better, and thanked us for taking the time to share information about the college's policy and the mental health resources.



SOCIAL SERVICES

Overview

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services funds and administers programs like the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), the Family Responsibility Office (FRO), the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) and Special Services at Home (SSAH), as well as programs supporting adults with developmental disabilities and children with complex special needs. Social assistance provided through Ontario Works (OW) is administered by municipalities and district social services administration boards.

Our staff assisted hundreds of people in 2023-2024 when they came to us with issues related to social services agencies. Disruptions and delays can cause significant hardship for people who access these services. Among the common problems we addressed were incorrect support payments, poor communication and delays.

Many of the people we help are vulnerable and in crisis, none more so than adults and children with complex special needs and developmental disabilities, as well as their families. We not only help resolve their individual cases wherever possible; we also use our Office's powers and expertise to investigate systemic problems and make recommendations to improve the system for all concerned.

The Ombudsman's latest investigation in this area – focusing on cases of adults with developmental disabilities who are being housed in hospitals – was nearing completion at the time of writing this report. We also followed up on persistent issues exposed in two previous systemic probes related to adults and children with special needs (see more under **Investigations**).

Trends in cases

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)

The ODSP provides income and employment supports to Ontarians with disabilities, including dental care and prescription medication coverage, as well as specific disability-related benefits. It also continues to be one of the top sources of complaints and inquiries to our Office. We received **978** cases about ODSP issues in 2023-2024, up from 922 in 2022-2023. Most of the cases we handled were about delayed or suspended payments and other administrative matters.

For example:

- An ODSP recipient was told he had received an overpayment of **\$3,500**, which he would have to pay back. After we made inquiries about the case, ODSP officials discovered the man's caseworker had made multiple errors on his file. The repayment order was cancelled and the ODSP returned **\$700** that it had already collected from the man.
- A young man missed four months of benefits due to delays in having his file transferred from the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities Program to the ODSP. After we intervened, he received more than **\$4,500** in retroactive benefits.

We also often see issues with poor communication, and facilitate conversations between ODSP recipients and staff – or help identify when a case has fallen through the cracks. Some examples:

- We helped the mother of a young adult with autism get the correct documents to register for ODSP benefits.
- We made sure an ODSP recipient got the funds he needed for a new wheelchair.

- A woman who waited two years for the ODSP to approve her application received it, including retroactive benefits.
- A man was reimbursed **\$109** after we flagged to ODSP officials that the money was deposited into the wrong account.

Family Responsibility Office (FRO)

The FRO is the agency that enforces court-ordered child and spousal support payments, and is consistently a top source of complaints to our Office. FRO-related cases declined slightly to **440** this past year, from 471 in 2022-2023.

The most common complaints were about enforcement, such as improper or inadequate action taken to enforce support payments. We also continue to hear about problems with the FRO's communication with support recipients regarding enforcement of support orders outside of Ontario. We worked closely with senior FRO officials to address these issues, including providing detailed information about persistent complaint trends that we see.

Some examples:

- A woman was owed more than **\$40,000** in support from her ex-spouse, who lives in the U.S. After we intervened, the FRO's Interjurisdictional Support Orders Unit began the collection process.
- We helped a man recover more than **\$4,000** in support payments that were mistakenly collected by the FRO.
- A man who was no longer required to pay child support was able to recover close to **\$400** in payments that the FRO collected from him in error.

Ontario Works (OW)

People in financial need can receive money for food, shelter and other living costs through Ontario Works (OW),

which is administered by municipal service managers and district social services administration boards (DSSABs). We received **390** cases about Ontario Works in 2023-2024 – a slight increase from 368 the previous year.

We helped many people get their benefits reinstated, or showed them how to appeal benefit decisions. Some examples:

- A young man who had aged out of his youth shelter sought our help when his OW caseworker stopped responding to him. After we intervened, he was able to secure housing.
- A mother was denied OW benefits because her DSSAB erroneously thought she was receiving Ontario Student Assistance Program funds. After we intervened, she was approved for benefits.
- We helped a woman whose benefits were suspended because her dependent adult daughter had missed appointments with her caseworker. OW reinstated the mother's payments, and took time to explain the program's requirements to her.
- A mother contacted us after a dental clinic refused to treat her two-year-old son because his name on her OW client card was incorrect. We reached out to senior officials, who acknowledged the card had an error and provided the mother with a new one.

Ontario Autism Program (OAP)

The OAP offers support to families of children and youth with autism, and AccessOAP helps families connect with services and manage their benefits. We received **110** cases about these programs, up from 73 the previous year. They were primarily about funding decisions, communication issues and long waits for core clinical services. Although our Office does not address policy

decisions made by elected officials regarding government programs, we can help families with individual issues related to service, administration of processes and communication. For example:

- After we contacted Ministry officials about a family who hadn't received their approved funding, the family received it through AccessOAP the next day.
- We helped a mother who had been waiting five months to receive the information she needed from AccessOAP so she could be reimbursed for her child's expenses.
- After we intervened in her case, a mother who had waited six months received a decision from AccessOAP on her child's needs assessment.

Special Services at Home

We received **79** complaints in 2023-2024 about the Ministry's Special Services at Home program, which supports families who are caring for a child with a developmental or physical disability, including with respite funding and enrichment programming for the child. In many cases, we heard from parents waiting for reimbursement, or concerned about long wait times between program approval and funding becoming available. Several told us they were unable to reach anyone at the program by phone and multiple emails went unanswered.

We raised these concerns with senior Ministry officials, who told us they are working to address the delays. One official acknowledged to us that processing banking information became backlogged in the spring of 2023 by about three months. Our Office was able to facilitate communication for many parents who were waiting for payments of \$500 to \$2,000. Our Office continues to monitor the situation and resolve individual cases.

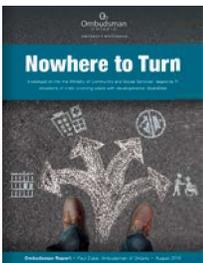
Investigations

Cases of adults with developmental disabilities who are inappropriately housed in hospitals

and

Services for adults with developmental disabilities who are in crisis

New investigation launched: March 2023



Previous report: *Nowhere to Turn*, released August 2016

Investigation update: In March 2023, the Ombudsman launched a new investigation to address complaints about adults with developmental disabilities who are inappropriately housed in hospitals,

often for years, due to a lack of services and supports in the community.

The investigation is focused on what steps the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health are taking to support the transition of these adults from hospital to appropriate community supports and supported living options.

In connection with this work, we are also reviewing the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services' progress in implementing relevant recommendations from the Ombudsman's 2016 report, *Nowhere to Turn*, which examined similar issues.

To date, investigators have interviewed more than 100 complainants, health care professionals, advocacy groups, service agencies and government staff, and reviewed thousands of documents.

Since the launch of this investigation, we have also received more than **20** new complaints from hospital staff, agencies and families who are facing similar issues and are desperate for help. We worked to resolve individual cases wherever possible while the systemic investigation continued.

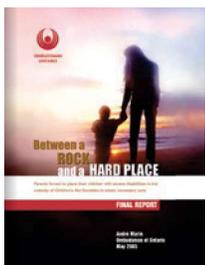
Some examples:

- A 56-year-old man with developmental disabilities and schizophrenia was in hospital for eight years – four of which were spent waiting for a suitable living option. We intervened, and a supported living option was found for him in a few months.
- A 19-year-old woman with autism had been in hospital for almost a year. We spoke to the Ministry and community services providers, who were able to move her into a supported living option in a matter of weeks.
- A 52-year-old man had spent almost four years in hospital because there were no local supported living options for him. We stepped in, and when a vacancy opened up, the man was finally provided with the additional supports he needed to live in the community.
- A 22-year-old man with autism and a history of self-injury had been in hospital for three years, spending much of that time in restraints. Our Office was instrumental in escalating his case to senior Ministry staff, and ultimately a home was found in the community, where he adjusted well and was able to have a bath for the first time in three years.

We continue to resolve general issues related to supports for adults with developmental disabilities. These include long wait times for supported living options, communication issues with Developmental Services Ontario and lack of respite services. In many cases, we are able to help families connect with the appropriate officials to seek additional supports or guidance.

We also called the Ministry’s attention to a group of complaints about day programs for adults with developmental disabilities being shut down; the Ministry then approved additional funding so the programs could reopen.

Care and custody of children with complex special needs



Report: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, released May 2005

Investigation update: Almost two decades after our Office first drew attention to this difficult issue, overwhelmed parents and guardians of children with complex special needs continue to feel they

have no option but to surrender their children to local children’s aid societies (CASs) to get the proper care for them.

Similar to the situation our investigation revealed in 2005, these families often enter into temporary care agreements, even though there are no protection concerns for the child, as they wait for intensive treatment, resources, or suitable supported living arrangements.

In 2023-2024, we received **21** complaints from families of children with complex special needs. We are able to assist many of these families as they go through the process of accessing Ministry-funded programs and services. We have also raised complaint trends proactively with senior Ministry officials.

Some case examples:

- A mother of a 12-year-old with complex special needs signed a temporary care agreement with a CAS because her son’s violent behaviours were out of control. We spoke to the Ministry to confirm it would provide funding for supports, and the child was admitted to intensive treatment.
- A 17-year-old with aggressive behaviours was housed in a hospital because a residential placement couldn’t be found for him. After we raised the case with senior Ministry staff, steps were taken to transition him to an appropriate supported living arrangement.
- A mother of a 12-year-old girl with several cognitive and mental health diagnoses sought our help after giving the local CAS temporary custody of her because the family could not care for her and there were no intensive treatment options available. An appropriate treatment option was ultimately found for the child after we intervened.

Case summaries

Long-distance resolution

A woman who had been living outside of Canada for 15 years sought our help in obtaining more than \$25,000 in child support through the Family Responsibility Office (FRO). When she left Ontario, she had asked the FRO to hold the payments for her as they accumulated, as it was easier for her to cash the cheque as a lump sum. She told us she had been trying to work with the FRO for a year to have the funds transferred, but was having difficulty communicating with her caseworker.

RESULT: After we stepped in, the FRO sent the woman a wire transfer for just over **\$25,000**, and also began taking steps to recuperate outstanding support that she was owed.

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.

Appeal to reason

A woman had her ODSP application denied after a year of waiting. Her daughter then submitted documents multiple times for an appeal of the decision, but was told the appeal wasn't processed because she didn't include specific information in the body of her email. When she sent yet another email requesting an appeal, it was denied, and she reached out to us for help.

RESULT: We followed up with an ODSP manager, who reviewed the file. The manager explained that the woman's original caseworker had gone on leave, causing delays, but their review determined that she did indeed qualify for ODSP benefits. The woman and her daughter were very grateful for our help.

Suitable support

A father in crisis sought our help to find services and supported living for his son, a 15-year-old with complex special needs. He told us his son was prone to violence and had been taken to hospital by police on several occasions.

RESULT: We spoke with the involved agencies and Ministry staff to confirm the family's needs were treated with urgency. We also reviewed the efforts of various service agencies to co-ordinate services and supports, including an intensive treatment program for the teen. Eventually, he was successfully transitioned to a suitable supported living option in a new home.



CHILDREN & YOUTH

Overview

Under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* (CYFSA), all children and youth living in foster homes, group homes, treatment placements and youth justice facilities have a legislated right to speak with and receive visits from our Office. Our dedicated Children and Youth Unit specializes in working with these young people and ensuring their rights are respected.

We have had this responsibility since May 1, 2019, when the government transferred the investigative function of the former Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth to the Ombudsman. Between that day and March 31, 2024, we received **7,868** complaints and inquiries from children in care and youth justice centres, as well as from concerned adults. We have visited hundreds of young people directly in foster homes and group homes, published **4** investigation reports, created a wide range of educational material and information targeted to young people, and engaged in outreach activities with a broad and diverse variety of groups in the child welfare sector. We have also worked proactively with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to flag and address serious concerns affecting children in care.

In April 2024, the government introduced amendments to the CYFSA that, among other things, bolster the right of all children in care to be informed about our Office, something the Ombudsman called for in a submission in August 2023. Although the *Ombudsman Act* has required all agencies to inform children in their care about us since 2019, this right was undermined by the lack of a corresponding provision in the CYFSA, the Ombudsman argued.

When young people contact us with an issue or complaint, our staff listen to their experiences and help them find solutions. We also receive calls from adults, including parents, grandparents, neighbours and concerned

professionals about issues affecting individual children and groups of young people.

Outreach, specialized teams and proactive work

In fiscal 2023-2024, we delivered more than **60** presentations to children and youth in care, children's aid societies (CASs) and frontline workers (e.g., foster parents, group home staff), as well as post-secondary students, faculty and conference attendees connected with the child welfare field. We also did **20** presentations to CAS and residential care staff specifically about their obligations to contact us about the death or serious bodily harm of any child who has received child welfare services in the past 12 months.

Our staff interact directly with young people in care via presentations at foster homes, group homes, and through CASs. After each presentation, we follow up with every young person privately, which enables us to hear their concerns directly and act on them. (For one striking example, see the first item "Group revelation" under **Case Summaries**.)

The Children and Youth Unit also has four specialized outreach teams: The **Black Children, Youth and Families Table**, the **Indigenous Circle**, the **2SLGBTQIA+ Outreach Team**, and the **Provincial and Demonstration Schools Outreach Team**. These teams conduct targeted outreach to ensure the specific concerns of Black, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, blind, Deaf and deafblind young people are recognized. They also provide consultative advice on cases in other areas of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction regarding issues of systemic racism and/or discrimination, as well as staff training.

Our Office is a member of the Canadian Council of Children and Youth Advocates and the Child and Families Chapter of the United States Ombudsman

Association, and we closely follow the work of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children.

To proactively discuss important issues and case trends, as well as the Ombudsman's recommendations and best practices, we meet regularly with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, as well as relevant associations, including the Foster Parents Society of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, the Association of Native Child and Family Service Agencies of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care, Youth in Transition, and the Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth.

Trends in cases

The Children and Youth Unit received **1,722** complaints and inquiries in 2023-2024, compared to 1,491 the previous year. There were **1,457** cases from adults (service providers, family members, support workers, police, etc.), and **265** from young people. We also received **202** cases about youth justice centres.

The majority of cases – **1,451** – related to children's aid societies. Residential licensees (group homes and foster homes) were the subject of **175** cases, and there were **27** about secure treatment facilities.

The most common complaints we hear are about young people's placements, the level of support they get from CASs, and concerns that their rights are not being respected. We address these issues in individual cases and in our interaction with young people, agencies, interest groups and Ministry officials. For example:

- We recently raised concerns with the Ministry about **90** complaints we received since 2019 about the administration of Voluntary Youth Services Agreements (VYSAs) by 30 different children's aid societies. VYSAs are used to provide child protection services to 16- and 17-year-olds who request them, but we

alerted the Ministry to numerous cases where CASs lacked knowledge and training in how they should be used. The Ministry acknowledged the importance of educating the child welfare sector about VYSAs and said it would collaborate with CASs, our Office and others. This issue was also the focus of our most recent investigation report – see more under **Investigations**.

Overall, we are able to resolve most of the cases we received without formal investigation. Some examples:

- After a youth complained to us about irregular and insufficient meals at his group home, the Ministry did an inspection and required the agency to make improvements, including developing an internal complaints process. The youth told us he was very happy with the result of his call to us.
- We helped a youth who had waited two months to be reimbursed for belongings that went missing when she was abruptly moved from one placement to another. She received **\$500** in compensation.
- After a father told us he felt a CAS was dismissing allegations that his child was being abused, a new CAS worker was assigned who offered to review evidence that the father and others presented. He told us he was “pleased with how much you guys have helped.”
- We stepped in to help an Indigenous man who was struggling to care for the newborn child of relatives suffering from addiction. No paperwork had been done to secure funding for necessary medication, foster care and other resources. As a result of our involvement, a Customary Care Agreement – which allows for an Indigenous child to be cared for by a person who is not the child’s parent according to the custom of their community – was finalized to ensure the child received support.
- We helped ensure that a safety plan was enforced for a non-binary 16-year-old who told us they were being bullied in their court-ordered placement.

Hard-to-find CAS complaint forms

Parents and children who have complaints about a children’s aid society are entitled by law to raise their concerns through various mechanisms, including making a complaint directly to the CAS. The province has an official, one-step online form for this that is available at ontario.ca, but CASs are also required to publicize information about the complaints process. Several people complained to us in 2023-2024 that their CAS provided no such information.

We conducted a scan of CAS websites and found **25** that had no link to the required form, and **15** that had no reference to the complaints process at all. We also noted that the form was not easy to find through the Ministry’s website. After we flagged this to the Ministry, it pledged to remind all CASs to include an easily accessible link to the form and information about the complaints process on their websites as of March 1, 2024.

Death and Serious Bodily Harm (DSBH) reports

By law, children’s aid societies and licensed residential service providers are required to notify our Office when they become aware of an incident of death or serious bodily harm (DSBH) involving a child or youth who has received services from a children’s aid society within the past 12 months.

In 2023-2024, we received **1,685** DSBH reports. In some cases, multiple agencies are required to submit reports about the same incident. Our analysis determined that the reports reflected **151** deaths and **1,358** separate incidents of bodily harm, for a total of **1,509** incidents. (“Serious bodily harm” includes any injury requiring treatment beyond basic first aid, any injury from a physical restraint, and sexual assault.) This represents a decline in such reports from the previous fiscal year, when we received

1,971 DSBH reports, 162 of which were about deaths and 1,809 about 1,597 separate incidents of bodily harm.

We review all of these reports weekly and follow up as required – including in every case where a young person in care was injured as a result of a physical restraint (**66** cases this past year, compared to 73 in 2022-2023).

Death investigations are the responsibility of the Office of the Chief Coroner, but once they are complete, we can make further inquiries or investigate any outstanding concerns about the services provided to the youth before their death. For example, in April 2024, the Ombudsman released a report on his investigation of one such case, which came to our attention through a DSBH report. Although the youth's death was not directly related to the service she received, the Ombudsman launched an investigation into other concerns about how the children's aid society treated her pleas for help (see *Rights Unrecognized: Mia's Story*, under **Investigations**).

Youth justice centres

Youth justice centres are where young people who are awaiting trial or serving sentences for criminal offences are held. We received **202** complaints and inquiries about them this fiscal year, up slightly from 187 in 2022-2023. We prioritize cases where a young person's safety or well-being is at risk. The most common issues we heard about were health care, safety, and discipline/consequences at these facilities.

Some examples:

- After a youth told us he was hospitalized because a nurse at his facility gave him the wrong medication, we confirmed he was receiving adequate care, and we continue to follow up with the facility on how it plans to prevent such errors in future.
- A youth in custody told us another teen who had previously threatened him with sexual violence had

been transferred to his facility. We confirmed the facility was aware of his concerns, and the youth who had threatened him was transferred elsewhere.

- A mother told us she feared for her son's safety at a youth justice facility due to his complex special needs. We confirmed that the facility had a plan to support his needs and safety, including hiring an additional staff member, and that he had access to social workers and medical care.
- A youth complained to us after her youth justice centre transferred her to a new facility that was further away from her family, forcing them to cancel plans to visit her. After we relayed these concerns to facility staff, she was transferred back.
- A youth justice centre took action to address an insect infestation after a young person complained to us. We confirmed that he was moved to a different unit and that the facility had resolved the issue.

Ombudsman's submission to government: Searches of youths, staff and visitors

In response to a request for feedback from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services in March 2024, the Ombudsman made **13** proposals in a submission, urging the Ministry to amend legislation to limit strip searches at youth justice facilities.

He proposed that strip searches be used only as a last resort, and urged more specific guidance on using body scanning devices. He also called on the Ministry to prohibit routine strip searches of youths, and to ensure Francophone youths are given information about searches in French. Other proposals relate to better reporting and staff training, and respecting the gender identities of young people being searched.

Ombudsman's submission to government: Five-year review of CYFSA

As part of the government's request for input in its five-year review of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* in August 2023, the Ombudsman made **9** proposals for change to protect the rights of children in care. Two of these were incorporated into Bill 188, the *Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024*, introduced in April 2024. These changes will ensure that all children and youth in care are informed of their right to contact the Ombudsman – something that is also required under the *Ombudsman Act*.

The Ombudsman noted that the lack of such a provision in the *CYFSA* led to the mistaken impression in the child welfare sector that there was “no longer anywhere for young people to call” and “jeopardizes the right of children and youth to know about and access complaints mechanisms set up to protect their interests.”

Investigations

Services provided under a Voluntary Youth Services Agreement



Report: *Rights Unrecognized: Mia's Story*, released April 2024

Investigation update: The Ombudsman launched this investigation to look deeper into the services provided to 16-year-old “Mia” by the York Region Children's Aid Society before she

died suddenly in 2020. The investigation did not focus

on the circumstances of her death – which the required coroner's review found was not related to the CAS – but on York CAS's handling of her care under a Voluntary Youth Services Agreement (VYSA).

Despite Mia's requests to be placed in foster care, the CAS refused and suggested a shelter instead. It failed to provide her with the “full range” of protection services to which 16- and 17-year-olds are entitled under VYSAs, the Ombudsman found.

He made **20** recommendations to the CAS to improve staff training in the use of such agreements and to ensure the rights of 16- and 17-year-olds who seek them are respected. All of his recommendations were accepted by the CAS, which will report back to our Office on its progress in implementing them.

The Ombudsman's report was also provided to the Ministry for review, because of its implications for other CASs across the province. We advised the Ministry of **90** cases regarding VYSAs we received over the past five years, and identified inconsistencies we noticed between more than 30 different CASs. The Ministry acknowledged the need to increase education within the child welfare sector about the administration of VYSAs, and said it will work in collaboration with CASs, other stakeholders and our Office on this.

“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.”

– Ombudsman Paul Dubé,
Rights Unrecognized: Mia's Story

Individual cases: Many of the 90 cases about VYAs we received since 2019 raised issues similar to what we saw in Mia's case, including CAS staff lacking familiarity with VYAs and training in how they should be administered. Some CASs failed to notify the Office of the Children's Lawyer about VYAs; others established arbitrary limits on when youths are eligible for them. We also notified the Ministry of cases where CASs failed to properly assess whether youths were "in need of protection," and/or to consider their voice. We flagged several cases where CASs were not aware of the Ministry's 2021 directive that 16- and 17-year-olds with VYAs are entitled to the full range of protection services that are available to younger children in care.

Services provided to missing and at-risk Indigenous girl



Report: *Missing in Inaction: Misty's Story*, released April 2023

Investigation update: In 2020, 13-year-old "Misty" went missing seven times while in the care of a foster agency in a Southwestern Ontario city, where she had been placed because the Indigenous CAS

near her home community could find no appropriate place for her. She was physically and sexually assaulted and suffered an overdose. The Ombudsman's investigation found that the three agencies entrusted with her care – Johnson Children's Services Inc., Anishinaabe Abinoojii Family Services, and the CAS in the city where she went missing – failed to ensure her safety.

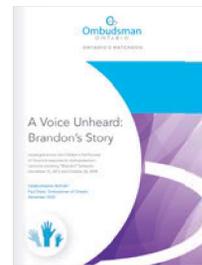
He made **58** recommendations to the agencies, all of which were accepted. Four were directed at the city CAS (unnamed to protect Misty's privacy), which related to training on Death and Serious Bodily Harm reporting and the use of child welfare warrants. These have been implemented.

Anishinaabe Abinoojii has made progress on the Ombudsman's 23 recommendations to improve its training and policies. It initiated a full policy review, began organizing training modules, and developed a series of email communications for staff that touch on themes from *Misty's Story*. The Ombudsman is encouraged by the agency's efforts thus far.

Johnson Children's Services Inc. was the subject of 31 recommendations, and while it has taken some steps to implement them, it advised our Office that Ministry-imposed conditions on its licence had halted this progress. It has reduced operations and is currently challenging the Ministry's notice of proposal to revoke its licence.

However, we were encouraged to learn that Johnson fulfilled the Ombudsman's recommendation to repay Anishinaabe Abinoojii for services that were not provided during Misty's absence. In May 2024, Anishinaabe Abinoojii confirmed it received a repayment from Johnson of **\$43,920**. We continue to monitor Johnson's implementation of the remaining recommendations.

Toronto CAS response to child protection concerns



Report: *A Voice Unheard: Brandon's Story*, released December 2022

Investigation update: The Ombudsman made **18** recommendations to the Children's Aid Society of Toronto after finding that it failed to protect the interests

of "Brandon" from age 7 to 10. This investigation was launched in 2018 (by the former Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth) when police discovered Brandon in shocking condition in a family member's filthy and infested apartment.

The Ombudsman's Children and Youth Unit completed the investigation, which revealed that the CAS's services and responses to concerns raised about Brandon's welfare were often untimely and inadequate. The CAS committed to implementing all of the recommendations, and the Ombudsman is satisfied that it has now done so.

Among other things, it continues to use our report as a training tool to increase awareness of and compliance with the provincial child protection standards and associated agency policies cited in the investigation.

Closures of youth justice centres in Kenora and Thunder Bay



Investigation: *Lost Opportunities*, released April 2022

Investigation Update: The Ombudsman made **16** recommendations to the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services after this investigation

revealed serious issues with the sudden closure of two youth justice programs in March 2021, at Creighton Youth Centre in Kenora and J.J. Kelso Youth Centre in Thunder Bay. He found that the planning and implementation of these closures was shrouded in secrecy and failed to consider the best interests of the residents, including Indigenous and transgender youths.

The Ministry accepted all the recommendations, and has since taken steps to significantly transform how it approaches youth justice program and facility closures. It has consulted staff, other jurisdictions, Indigenous Affairs Ontario and Indigenous communities, worked on a best practices manual to guide future closures, and revised several policies and procedures. Among other

things, it has revised transfer processes to improve how it records and communicates youth conflicts and supports transgender youths. The Ombudsman considers **9** of the 16 recommendations completed.

However, in the spring of 2024, we raised concerns with the Ministry about a recent youth justice centre closure where there appeared to be little notice given to the families of the affected youths or the community. We continue to actively monitor this issue.

Case summaries

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.

Routine violation

A young person in a youth justice centre complained to us that he was being routinely strip-searched by staff after every visit he had with his lawyer. He told us he raised his concern with the facility, but staff maintained that all youth justice facilities in Ontario followed this practice.

RESULT: After we made inquiries with the facility and reviewed its policy, we escalated this case to senior Ministry officials. As a result of our inquiries, the Ministry sent a memorandum to all directly-operated youth justice centres, reminding them that strip searches should not be conducted as a matter of routine after visits. We confirmed with the facility in question that it had stopped this practice.

Ready, set – redo

Three months after he turned 18, a young man told us he had been forced to rely on social assistance because he had never been registered for “Ready, Set, Go” funding, which supports young people transitioning out of care. He said he had signed a Voluntary Youth Services Agreement (VYSA) through his children’s aid society (CAS), which he was told would also provide him with funding, but he was now being told it was never approved.

RESULT: We reached out to senior officials at the CAS, who reviewed the teen’s file. They confirmed that he was indeed entitled to VYSA funds, and they issued him a cheque immediately. They also ensured he was enrolled in a continuous support program that would extend until he turned 26.

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 CAS 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.



MONEY & PROPERTY

Overview and trends in cases

This category of cases relates to provincial ministries, agencies and corporations that deal with financial and property matters, including the Ministry of Finance, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC), the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO), the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG), and the Ontario Cannabis Store (OCS).

It also includes cases about some bodies that fall under the Ministry of the Attorney General, such as the Landlord and Tenant Board and the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT), which handles money and property matters for people who are unable to do so themselves.

The Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), which is part of Tribunals Ontario, continued to be a top source of complaints and inquiries in 2023-2024, with **1,284** cases, down from the previous year's peak of 1,894. We continued to hear from individuals experiencing delays in receiving hearing dates and orders, which was the focus of the systemic investigation report the Ombudsman released in May 2023. All of his recommendations were accepted. (See more under **Investigations**.)

Cases about other organizations in this category remained relatively low in fiscal 2023-2024 – for example, there were **26** regarding the LCBO, **6** about the OCS, **19** about MPAC, and **76** about OLG.

Ontario First Nations HST rebates

We received **3** complaints in 2023-2024 from members of First Nations about delayed reimbursements under the Ontario First Nations HST rebate program. The program, run by the Ministry of Finance, provides eligible First

Nations people, bands, and band councils with rebates of the 8% provincial portion of the HST paid on qualifying goods and services purchased off-reserve. Ministry officials told us the standard processing time for these applications is eight weeks, but acknowledged there were delays due to a higher-than-usual volume of claims. We continue to follow up with the Ministry on the status of the program's processing backlog and its strategies to reduce it.

OLG Super Bowl winnings delays

In March 2024, we received **40** complaints from people waiting to access their winnings from the OLG's "Super Bowl LVIII" promotion. We were told the promotion attracted a significant number of new players to the OLG and generated a backlog of bank account verification requests from players who wanted to withdraw their winnings. Several complainants told us they were experiencing significant delays in the withdrawal process and could not get information about processing times from the OLG. We contacted the OLG about these concerns and how it is addressing delays, communicating with players, and ensuring that this situation does not reoccur. Our review of the issue is ongoing.

Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT)

We received **199** cases about the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT), up from 177 the previous year and 167 in 2021-2022. These complaints and inquiries came from people who are under the financial guardianship of the OPGT themselves, or their family members. Common issues included disputes about OPGT decisions or the availability of caseworkers. Our staff resolve such cases by facilitating communication with OPGT staff or escalating concerns to senior officials.

Some case examples:

- A man sought our help after he was unable to get in touch with his OPGT-appointed lawyer. After we spoke with OPGT staff, they agreed to write the man a letter and provide him with information about his court case.
- We helped a woman get a reloadable card through the OPGT for **\$500**, which she could use to pay for some of her personal expenses.

Investigations

Delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board



Report: *Administrative Justice Delayed, Fairness Denied*, released May 2023

Investigation update: The Ombudsman launched this investigation in January 2020 due to mounting complaints from landlords and tenants about long

waits for hearings at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB). The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the LTB's backlogs, and we received more than **4,800** complaints and inquiries in the course of our investigation.

The Ombudsman made **61** recommendations in his report, all of which were accepted by Tribunals Ontario (on behalf of the LTB) and the Ministry of the Attorney General. Action has been taken on **35** of these. Among other things, Tribunals Ontario and the Ministry have worked on new processes to improve training of adjudicators and tracking their appointments, and to

improve scheduling and tracking of hearings, as well as decisions on requests for urgent hearings, through the Tribunals Ontario portal.

They have also made it easier for parties to request French language services. Hearing notices now include information about requests for services in French, and parties can file applications in French. The LTB reviews data about requests for services in French to ensure sufficient French-speaking adjudicators are available.

However, even though cases about the LTB declined by about 34% in 2023-2024, the bulk of the **1,284** cases we received were about delays. According to the LTB, it now takes an average 4-8 months for hearings for new and adjourned matters to be scheduled, compared to 8-10 months in 2023. The LTB also reported that most orders are now issued within 30 days of hearing.

The LTB now has 133 adjudicators, compared to 78 at the time of our report last year, but it is still grappling with a backlog of some **36,000** unscheduled applications that have been in the queue for more than 90 days. The LTB has embarked on a staggered program to hire and train new adjudicators, but this involves several months of training and mentoring before they are able to independently hear and decide on applications.

We have also noticed an uptick in complaints about hearings that have to be restarted because the adjudicator has left (“de novo” hearings). The LTB has told us these cases are being rescheduled with urgency, and we are monitoring how it deals with this backlog. Similarly, we have seen a growing number of complaints about lengthy delays in issuing orders where cases are on hold because an adjudicator is on leave. (For example, we were told of at least two members on leave who had a combined 184 orders on

hold between them.) The Ombudsman’s report called for an amendment to the *Residential Tenancies Act* to address this cause of serious delay, and we were told by the Ministry of the Attorney General that its analysis of this recommendation is ongoing.

Although the Ombudsman acknowledges the progress made in implementing his recommendations, the continued high volume of complaints to our Office suggests more needs to be done, and we will continue to actively follow up with the LTB and Tribunals Ontario and to monitor case trends as well as the impact of the LTB’s changes.

Individual cases: As always, we continue to help individuals with their issues with the LTB. Some examples from the past year:

- We helped a tenant who received an eviction order after he was unable to attend an LTB hearing because he was in jail.
- We looked into an eight-month delay for a landlord’s hearing and discovered their application had gone missing after their fee was processed. A hearing was scheduled.
- We found out the reason a man waited 15 months to have his case reviewed was because it was never submitted for a decision; he received one shortly after we intervened.
- We helped a Francophone landlord who had faced a stressful four-month wait for a written version of an LTB decision in his favour. After we escalated the case to a senior LTB official, he received the decision, and told us: “This restores a little confidence in the Landlord and Tenant Board system.”

Case summaries

Post-mortem review

A woman contacted us in frustration over delays and a lack of communication from the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT) regarding a deceased relative who had been an OPGT client. She was waiting to be reimbursed for an outstanding funeral expense and told us she had to resubmit documents she had already provided.

RESULT: After we made inquiries about the woman's case, the OPGT reimbursed her **\$200**, and a manager connected with her to discuss her concerns about the OPGT's services.

Friendly assistance

A woman complained to us that her friend, who was a client of the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT), was struggling to pay for her day-to-day expenses with the weekly \$50 the OPGT provided. The friend said she tried to resolve the complaint directly with the OPGT, and was unsuccessful.

RESULT: Once our Office made inquiries, the OPGT agreed to raise the woman's allocation of funds to **\$100** per week.

Lack of urgency

A landlord who claimed her tenant was threatening to kill her and her children asked for an urgent hearing with the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB). Seven months later, still waiting, she sent in a form asking for an expedited hearing, saying the tenant was damaging her property – but her matter was repeatedly adjourned.

RESULT: Our staff contacted LTB officials, who discovered that after the last adjournment, the adjudicator had forgotten to mark the file as a priority. The error was corrected and a hearing was scheduled for the next available date.

Surprise eviction

A woman called us for help on the morning that she, her partner and three children were being evicted. She was shocked that her landlord had obtained an eviction order, because they had agreed to a rent repayment plan during a Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) hearing months earlier, and she had been making payments.

When we looked into the case, we discovered that the landlord had made multiple applications to evict these tenants, which created a different LTB file. Despite his recent agreement with the tenants, he still had a valid eviction order on another file, and had the local sheriff act on that one. The family spoke to us from Tim Hortons later that day, where they were frantically trying to call shelters.

RESULT: We reached the Vice Chair of the LTB, who reviewed the file based on our calls, and told us the LTB would order the landlord to keep the unit as is pending an emergency hearing. The tenants spent a weekend in a hotel, but were readmitted to their home immediately after their hearing. We referred them to legal aid resources to seek compensation for their expenses and confirmed that they planned to remain in the landlord's unit for the time being.



TRANSPORTATION

Overview and trends in cases

Cases in this chapter relate to the Ministry of Transportation and its programs and agencies, including those that deal with driving and driver licensing, vehicles and highways, and public transit (Metrolinx and GO Transit). In 2023-2024, we received **718** complaints and inquiries in this category. These included cases about booking driving tests, renewing or obtaining driver's licences, and medical reviews of licences.

Complaints about delays and backlogs in road tests at DriveTest centres declined significantly this year, thanks to the Ministry's efforts to address this issue. We received **274** cases about DriveTest, compared to 375 in 2022-2023.

Driver licensing issues

We helped many drivers resolve a wide range of problems related to driver licensing, from correspondence and testing issues to licence suspensions. Some case examples:

- A man completed the testing for a full motorcycle (M) licence, only to be told he was not eligible for it because his lower-level (M2) licence had expired. He told us he'd received no notice of the expiry. After we looked into his case, he received his M licence.
- We spoke to Ministry officials about a driver who had to renew his temporary licence three times while waiting nine months for his new permanent licence to arrive by mail. He was asked to provide ServiceOntario with additional documents and received his licence shortly thereafter.
- A man who moved to Ontario from Quebec told us he couldn't work as a commercial truck driver because

his class A licence was not on his driving record. We flagged the case to Ministry staff, who updated his record the same day and sent him his permanent licence.

Licences for drivers from outside Canada

As noted in last year's Annual Report, we often receive complaints from drivers from outside Canada who were denied Ontario licences, or forced to go through the graduated qualification system for new drivers, because their previous driving credentials were not recognized. We help by facilitating communication, sharing documents, or escalating concerns to the Ministry. For example:

- A woman with 17 years of driving experience in China told us she had provided translated documentation of her driving record, but was treated like a new driver with only 12 months' experience. After we spoke to Ministry officials, they admitted this was an error, and agreed to recognize her full driving experience.
- A man originally from Hong Kong who had moved from Quebec to Ontario complained that DriveTest had failed to add his Hong Kong driving experience to his driving record. After we intervened, the Ministry made an exception and accepted his driving experience, making it possible for him to book his G road test right away.
- A refugee who had documentation of his driving experience in Iran sought our help when a DriveTest centre rejected his documentation when he applied for a G2 driving test. After we raised the issue, Ministry staff updated the man's driving record, which allowed him to schedule his G2 test right away.

Heavy Commercial Vehicle Deferred Payment Plan

Created during the COVID-19 pandemic, this plan provided financial relief for owners of large commercial vehicles,

such as buses and farm vehicles, allowing them to defer payment of licence plate renewal fees incurred in 2020 and 2021. Although applications to the plan closed (and licence plate renewal fees were eliminated) in 2022, we helped several people resolve outstanding issues with this program in 2023-2024. For example:

- A couple received a full refund of **\$633** after they were charged for stickers for a vehicle that was no longer licensed.
- More than **\$1,300** in fees were waived for a man who was charged for three heavy commercial vehicles that were not being used.

Case summaries

Correcting the record

A transgender woman who changed the name and sex designation on her driver's licence contacted us in frustration after being told that her car insurance would now cost more. She said that in making the changes, the Ministry had given her an entirely new licence number, which was no longer connected to her previous good driving record. She complained that this meant insurers would treat her as a new, higher-risk driver.

RESULT: Ministry officials told us that driver's licence numbers are generated in part based on a person's name, date of birth, and gender. When a driver changes their personal information in these categories, a new driver's licence number is issued – however, the old and new files are supposed to be merged into one driving record that is accessible to insurers. The Ministry offered to prepare a letter that the woman could share with insurers, confirming her driving experience without deadnaming her (using her pre-transition name). Ministry staff also

told us they are reviewing their processes regarding the use of personal information in the assignment of driver's licence numbers.

Kept in suspense

A senior sought our help when his driver's licence was suspended, just seven months after he had gone through an extensive process with the Driver Medical Review Office to get it reinstated.

RESULT: When we raised the case with Ministry officials, they clarified that although they had asked the man to undergo further medical assessments, there was no need for his licence to be suspended. The Ministry contacted him to clarify the steps he was expected to take to maintain a valid licence.

Motorcycle mix-up

A man noticed that the driver's licence he'd had for four years did not indicate that he was also qualified to drive a motorcycle. He told us that DriveTest and the Ministry said his only recourse was to start the motorcycle licensing process all over again.

RESULT: After we intervened, Ministry officials acknowledged that the man's licence was incomplete due to an error on their end when it was issued. They agreed to amend his licence and driving record, so he would not have to requalify for a motorcycle licence.



FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES

Overview and trends in cases

The French Language Services Commissioner plays an important role in supporting Ontario's Francophone community. Reporting to the Ombudsman, the Commissioner is responsible for monitoring compliance with the *French Language Services Act (FLSA)* and recommending ways to improve the delivery of government services in French.

In December 2023, the Ombudsman announced that Carl Bouchard – who had served as Acting Commissioner since March 2023 and Director of Operations, French Language Services Unit since February 2020 – had been selected to fill the role permanently after a nationwide selection process.

The Commissioner and our French Language Services Unit proactively promote French language rights in Ontario, engage in outreach, review and analyze complaints and trends, conduct investigations related to compliance with the Act, prepare reports which include recommendations, and monitor implementation of the recommendations. The benefits of this work, done in collaboration and with the support of our entire Office, are tangible and significant.

Between May 1, 2019 and March 31, 2024, the FLS Unit received **1,756** cases. We have also produced **4** dedicated annual reports (separate from the Ombudsman's annual reports), and conducted two formal investigations. As required by the *FLSA*, the Commissioner's annual reports include recommendations to the government to improve its delivery of services in French.

The FLS Unit received a record **511** complaints and inquiries between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024. This represents a 73% increase over the previous fiscal year,

and the highest case volume in this area since our Office assumed responsibility for ensuring compliance with the *French Language Services Act* five years ago.

These cases reflect concerns raised by Franco-Ontarians about a wide range of issues, including about some specific and high-profile matters. For instance:

- We received about **100** cases about the Ministry of Colleges and Universities' decision not to fund the University of Sudbury as a standalone French-language university.
- Similarly, we heard concerns from more than **100** people about a labour disruption that affected the services of a mental health and addiction centre that provides services to Francophones.
- A group of concerned parents contacted us when they heard that a Francophone daycare centre in Toronto that is designated under the *FLSA* might be closing its doors.

Although our work on some of these issues is continuing (and will be detailed in the Commissioner's Annual Report in December), in all of these cases, the FLS Unit engaged directly with complainants and the organizations to gather the facts and determine whether or not the *FLSA* was complied with.

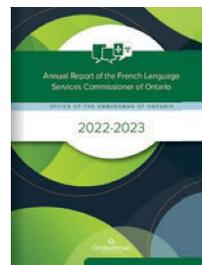
Outreach and engagement

Throughout the past fiscal year, the Commissioner and the FLS Unit continued to prioritize outreach activities in Francophone communities and to educate Francophones on their right to receive provincial services in French. Our staff and Commissioner Bouchard participated in dozens of meetings, engagements and events with Francophone groups representing many sectors, including education, health care, social services, business, police services, and newcomers to Ontario.

“ In recent months, as we increased our outreach efforts across the province and with many diverse aspects of Ontario's Francophonie, we have seen more and more people turn to us for help in accessing government services in French. Many individuals and groups have thanked us for our help – and many public servants have told us they appreciate how working with us has helped them improve the services they provide.”

– Statement by Carl Bouchard, French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario, December 4, 2023

Annual Report of the French Language Services Commissioner 2022-2023



Commissioner Bouchard's Annual Report – covering cases received between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023 – was released in December 2023. Along with detailing the results achieved by the FLS Unit in hundreds of individual cases, he reported on the government's progress on all recommendations made by our

Office for the improvement of the delivery of French language services since 2019.

All **11** recommendations made in previous annual reports on French language services, along with the **19** in our 2022 investigation report *Strengthening the Designation* (regarding Laurentian University's cuts to French-language programming during its financial restructuring in 2021), were accepted. The government has made “great strides” in implementing most of them, the Commissioner reported.



December 7, 2023: French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard releases his 2022-2023 Annual Report at a press conference at the Queen's Park Media Studio.

For example:

- Each ministry now plans its French language services in a systematic and standard way.
- All of the government's general public job postings on its website must be in both English and French.
- The Ministry of Francophone Affairs has developed a plan to correct and update the outdated list of organizations designated under the *FLSA* in Regulation 398/93.

The Commissioner made four new recommendations, including urging the government to:

- Develop guidelines for government agencies to ensure their social media accounts comply with legal requirements for an "active offer" of service in French.
- Improve training for frontline staff – including those who do not speak French – in how to handle requests for French language services, and remind them of their French language services obligations.

These new recommendations were well received, and the Commissioner will report on their status in his next Annual Report.

Investigations

Unilingual out-of-home government advertising

Launched: July 2023

Investigation update: The Commissioner launched this investigation on his own motion in July 2023 into an apparent lack of French in the provincial government's out-of-home advertising. The investigation is focused on whether the *French Language Services Act* was respected. As of the writing of this report, the investigation had been completed and the Commissioner was preparing for the report's release.

Cuts to French-language programs at Laurentian University



Report: *Strengthening the Designation: A Collaborative Effort*, released March 2022

Investigation update: This investigation examined the impact of the cuts made by Laurentian University to French-language programming as a result of its financial restructuring in 2021. It also focused on the administration of the university's designation by the Ministry of Francophone Affairs and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. The investigation concluded that all three parties failed to fulfil their responsibilities under the *FLSA*.

The report included **19** recommendations for addressing these issues and improving the provision of French language services. In his December 2023 Annual Report, Commissioner Bouchard noted that all three parties had made significant progress on the recommendations. They continue to report back to the Commissioner every six months.

Case summaries

Double encryption

A blind Francophone man complained to us after a designated 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 has been in contact with the man for a few years asked the nursing staff to 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.

Telephone tag

A Francophone in Eastern Ontario reached out to tell us about her experience as a witness to a situation while camping. She had wanted the police to intervene because it

appeared as if a few individuals were harassing some senior citizens, so she contacted the local Ontario Provincial Police detachment and 911. She told us that she was put on hold after requesting services in French. The 911 operator transferred her call to a local OPP detachment, which put her on hold and then transferred her call to an answering machine. She was unable to speak with a live officer. We brought these two issues to the OPP and the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

RESULT: In light of our intervention, the OPP created a separate platform dedicated to French 911 calls. The OPP also reviewed its process and made changes to the French version of the automated call waiting message for 911 calls and for the local detachment's phone line. The woman thanked us for our work.

The portal is open

The doctor of a Francophone woman who needed surgery was of the opinion that it would be too risky for her to drive. He sent her file to the Ministry of Transportation's Driver Medical Review Office to ask them to suspend her driver's licence. The woman got a letter with a personal identification number (PIN) to create an account on the Ministry's portal so she could track any changes in her file. The letter was in English, with a paragraph in French outlining the process for submitting a request to receive a French copy. The woman thought that this process was too complicated for people who didn't understand English, and our Office raised the issue with the Ministry.

RESULT: As a result of our intervention, the Ministry made the letter bilingual and now sends it to drivers at the beginning of the process. That way, when someone first accesses the portal, they can choose their preferred language, which will be linked to their account for the duration of the process. The woman said she was very happy with the response.

[Note: These case summaries originally appeared in the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the French Language Services Commissioner, released in December 2023.]



We publish a separate Annual Report of the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario. The next one, covering cases received between October 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024, will be released in December.



EMPLOYMENT

Overview and trends in cases

The Ombudsman oversees the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development and its programs, agencies and tribunals, including the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and its internal ombudsman, the Fair Practices Commission.

We received a total of **427** complaints and inquiries about the Ministry and its programs in 2023-2024 – up from 356 the previous year. These include cases about the Ministry's apprenticeship programs for skilled trades. For example:

- We flagged an error in the Ministry's system that had removed a level two apprentice electrician from the waitlist for a level three training class. The Ministry apologized to the man and ensured he was given priority status for enrolment.

The top source of cases in this area is the WSIB, which generated **218** complaints and inquiries in 2023-2024 – up from 183 in 2022-2023 and 200 the year prior. We also received **57** cases about the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal, consistent with last year's total of 59.

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Cases about the WSIB usually relate to delays, communication issues, or disputes over compensation decisions. We refer cases to the WSIB's Fair Practices Commission, or to the offices of the Worker Adviser or Employer Adviser as needed. We also facilitate

communication and make inquiries directly with the WSIB when appropriate. For example:

- A woman told us the WSIB denied her claim over the phone, and couldn't appeal the decision because she hadn't received a written copy. After we escalated the case to senior officials, the WSIB agreed to email her the decision so she could pursue her appeal.

Case summaries

Proof of skills

A man had been waiting to receive a new wallet card from Skilled Trades Ontario – proof of his skilled trade credentials – for more than a year. He told our Office he received conflicting information about the reasons for the delay.

RESULT: After we raised the case with Skilled Trades Ontario officials, they apologized to the man and offered to provide a letter confirming his credentials until the new wallet card could be issued.

Bridging the gap

A man sought our help in obtaining his Joint Health and Safety Committee Certification through the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. He said the Ministry refused to recognize his training because there was a 14-year gap between his completion of the first and second parts of his certification.

RESULT: After we intervened, Ministry officials clarified that they needed the man to provide more information about the training he completed. Shortly after he did so, he received his certification.

Stress reducer

A man lost his house when his Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits were cut off. Although this decision was eventually reversed and his benefits were reinstated through the WSIB, he was diagnosed in the meantime with severe depression. He told our Office he was having difficulty accessing psychiatric services through the WSIB.

RESULT: After we stepped in, the man received access to psychiatric help and was permitted to designate a representative on his file to speak for him.



HEALTH

Overview and trends in cases

The Ombudsman oversees the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care, as well as the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) and various funding programs for drugs and medical devices. In 2023-2024, we resolved and proactively flagged issues related to these bodies, and followed up on the Ombudsman's recommendations in two major systemic investigations regarding the oversight of long-term care home inspections and ambulance services (see more under **Investigations**).

Several notable areas of health care are not within the Ombudsman's direct jurisdiction, such as hospitals, long-term care homes, home and community care support services and local public health units. Even so, our Office regularly receives complaints and inquiries about them (in 2023-2024, we received **503** cases about hospitals, **85** about long-term care homes, **61** about home and community care support services, and **39** about public health units). We often refer such cases to the office of the Patient Ombudsman, which handles matters related to patient care.

OHIP access and renewals

In 2023-2024, our Office received **62** complaints about the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), compared to 96 the previous year. Many of these were about eligibility and health card renewals.

For example:

- A 79-year-old woman was unable to renew her health card because the name on her card didn't match her other official documents. We worked with the Ministry of Health to facilitate the woman's legal

name change, after which she was able to renew her health card and receive OHIP coverage for an upcoming surgery.

- A man was unable to renew his health card because there was information missing from his birth certificate. We contacted the OHIP Eligibility Review Committee to explain the issue, and his case and his new health card were expedited.
- A man who was born in the United Kingdom but had been a Canadian citizen for almost 50 years was unable to renew his health card because he didn't have his original citizenship certificate. After we stepped in, officials urgently reviewed his file. He received a new health card and was fully reimbursed for costs he had personally incurred for OHIP-covered services.

Drug programs

We received **47** cases in 2023-2024 about Ontario's drug programs, compared to 29 in 2022-2023. These included **14** about the Exceptional Access Program and **25** about the Trillium Drug Program. Many were about decisions not to reimburse or fund patients for specific drugs, communication issues, or delays.

For example:

- A woman urgently sought our help in obtaining coverage for a life-saving drug. We ensured she received immediate short-term coverage for the medication, and guided her through the external review process for long-term coverage.
- We stepped in when a woman had trouble reaching senior officials at the Trillium Drug Program, resulting in her receiving the correct information about how to submit documents for further review.

Investigations

Oversight of long-term care homes during COVID-19



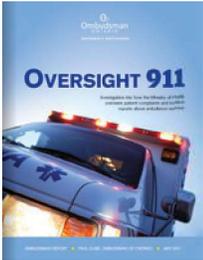
Report: *Lessons for the Long Term*, released September 2023

Investigation update: This investigation, launched in June 2020, focused on the Ministry of Long-Term Care's inspections and enforcement activity during the first wave

of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ombudsman made **76** recommendations to improve the process and ensure the safety of long-term care residents and staff. The Ministry accepted all of the recommendations, including that it provide our Office with updates on its progress every six months.

In March 2024, we received the first update. Among other things, the Ministry's Inspections Branch has implemented a new strategy to maintain a full complement of inspectors, a better system for tracking the timeliness of its inspections, and a stronger process for sourcing personal protective equipment for inspectors. The Inspections Branch Director is also now required to document reasons for decisions. We will continue to work with the Ministry and report on its efforts to fulfil the recommendations.

Oversight of complaints about ambulance services



Report: *Oversight 911*, released May 2021

Investigation update: The Ombudsman made **53** recommendations in the wake of this investigation, aimed at improving how the Ministry of Health receives and reviews

complaints and reports about ambulance services in Ontario. The Ministry has worked on 30 of these and continues to update us on its progress. For example, in the past year, it made changes to require investigators to ensure that land and air ambulance services fulfill their remediation and compliance plans before closing investigations.

The Ministry has also continued its efforts to increase its investigative staff, develop a new case management system, and improve its complaint process, public communications and investigator training.

We received **11** new cases in 2023-2024 about the Ministry's Emergency Health Services Branch, including about delays in responding to requests for investigations of the conduct of local ambulance services, or in providing reports. We continue to work closely with the Ministry to address these issues.

Case summaries

Action reaction

A woman reached out to us after contacting the Ministry of Long-Term Care's Action Line with concerns about her mother's death in a long-term care home. She felt the Ministry had failed to respond to her concerns about the medical care given to her mother, who suffered an infection and dehydration in the home before she died.

RESULT: After we raised the case with Ministry officials, they agreed to review the specific issues the woman raised, and conducted an inspection to address her concerns.

Service for a smile

A woman whose daughter had to have an emergency root canal procedure – at a cost of \$700 – sought our help in obtaining coverage through Healthy Smiles Ontario, a provincial program that covers dental care for eligible children and youth who are 17 and under. The child's dentist had not enrolled her in the program before the surgery, and the mother had waited for months for word on her application for reimbursement.

RESULT: We were able to connect the mother with program officials, who agreed to expedite their review of her claim. She told us: "I really appreciate you following up and being persistent on this."



ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Overview and trends in cases

Cases in this topic area relate to fuel and electricity, as well as natural resources and the environment. They involve municipal hydro companies and conservation authorities, as well as the Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Mines, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

In 2023-2024, we heard complaints and inquiries about an array of issues related to these organizations – including hydro billing, increased cottage fees at provincial parks, and animal welfare. We also dealt with concerns from Indigenous communities and individuals about hunting and fishing rights.

Our staff connected many of these people with the appropriate public officials to discuss their issues, and often worked with public sector organizations to address gaps in processes and policies.

Municipal hydro

Millions of Ontarians receive electricity from hydro companies that are majority-owned or controlled by one or several municipalities. Municipalities are responsible for overseeing the service delivery, governance, and operation of these corporations.

We received **125** cases about municipal hydro in 2023-2024, up from 90 in the previous year. These were largely related to billing and payment issues. For example:

- A man complained that he was being charged a commercial hydro rate on his residential unit. We made sure he received a refund and that he was billed at the much lower residential rate thereafter.

- A woman was charged an extra fee by her hydro company after a bank error left her with insufficient funds in her account to pay her hydro bill. After we reached out to her hydro provider, it refunded the fee.

Parks, conservation, environment and natural resources issues

We received **142** cases about the provincial ministries in this category in 2023-2024. We resolved many of these by facilitating communication between ministries and complainants, and by sharing best practices for transparent decision-making.

Conservation authorities

We dealt with **10** cases related to conservation authorities, which are community-based watershed management agencies responsible for protecting people and property from flooding and other hazards. These complaints involved things like permit approval processes, delayed decisions, and inaccessible public meetings. For example:

- We intervened after receiving complaints about a conservation authority's approval of a permit to alter a regulated flood plain. As noted in last year's Annual Report, we found the authority had appropriately followed applicable legislation and its own processes, but we referred residents to Ontario's *Environmental Bill of Rights* as another way to pursue their concerns. We also sent a letter to the conservation authority detailing the outcome of our review and sharing best practices for providing public notice of meetings. In March 2024, we were invited to speak at a Conservation Ontario session for general managers and clerks from across the province, where we elaborated on best practices for fair public meetings and discussed how we review and investigate complaints about conservation authorities.

“ [Your letter] exceeds my expectations ... the level of detail provided will give our board important background, context and reassurance.”

– Response from a conservation authority General Manager to our best practice suggestions and resolution of related cases

- A woman sought our help after waiting more than 10 months for her local conservation authority to approve her fence permit. After we spoke with staff at the authority, they acknowledged they hadn't met their own service standards. They reached out to the woman, who told us she was very grateful, noting that we had helped resolve a nearly year-long issue in one week.

Sewage spreading

As noted in last year's Annual Report, we continue to receive complaints about how the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks controls the spreading of untreated sewage. These include concerns about the odour and effects on surrounding land, wildlife and waterways. Since we first raised this issue, the Ministry has made several improvements to its policies and procedures. These include posting site applications on the Environmental Registry for public comment, and requiring that applicants notify neighbours and the municipality when a site is being considered for hauled sewage disposal, so they can make submissions in response.

Raccoon review

We received **65** complaints from concerned residents about the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's investigation of a Kawartha Lakes raccoon rescue and rehabilitation facility, during which almost 100 raccoons were seized. Complainants expressed concern about the care of the animals and the way the Ministry executed its search warrant. Although our review did not examine the

Ministry's decision to investigate the facility, we made inquiries about the process it followed. We confirmed there were experts on site to ensure the welfare of the raccoons during the seizure, and that veterinarians were supporting their ongoing care.

Case summaries

Billing blunder

A low-income senior complained that her utility provider had been incorrectly applying her Ontario Electricity Support Program credit to her water bill for more than five years. Because of this error, the woman was being asked to repay approximately \$1,800.

RESULT: We inquired with the utility company, which recognized its billing error and agreed to waive half of the amount owed. We also spoke with the municipality, as it was taking over the responsibility for water billing, which confirmed that any amounts owed by residents due to this hydro provider's billing errors would be free of penalties.

Powerful help

A woman whose medical condition makes her reliant on an electric wheelchair, bed and lift was facing having her hydro disconnected because of an outstanding bill of \$15,000. Given her vulnerable situation, we prioritized her case, working closely with the hydro company.

RESULT: The company arranged for a manager to assist the woman with applying for a payment program for customers with medical issues, and Ombudsman staff provided her with referrals to other energy credit programs.

Water clarity

A landlord complained to us that his municipality had put his tenant's unpaid water and wastewater charges on his property tax bill, without notifying him in advance. He told us he was frustrated because he could not obtain detailed information about the water account – which was in the tenant's name – and his requests to have the tenant's water disconnected over the unpaid bills were ignored.

RESULT: We made inquiries and learned the municipality had no written policies regarding water billing and that its general practice was to add arrears to a property owner's tax account without advance notification. We discussed best practices with the municipality regarding consistent, fair and transparent billing practices to prevent similar situations in future. It has taken over responsibility for water billing and has since adopted a policy outlining its collection processes.



CERTIFICATES & PERMITS

Overview and trends in cases

Every year, our Office helps resolve issues with birth certificates, death certificates, and similar government-issued documents. Many of the complaints and inquiries we receive are about ServiceOntario, which provides service related to all types of identity documents, and the Office of the Registrar General, which issues birth, marriage and death certificates. In 2023-2024, we received **187** cases about ServiceOntario – a decline from the previous year’s 245 – and **109** about the Registrar General, an increase from 66 in 2022-2023.

Document delays

We often hear from people who are experiencing long delays in processing applications for birth certificates, Ontario photo ID cards, and other official documents. These delays can affect access to other services, from health care to passports. Our staff often help by clarifying application processes, or escalating concerns to officials who can address the delay.

For example:

- A couple still had not received the birth certificate for the child they adopted through an Ontario children’s aid society (CAS). Our staff discovered that the CAS never received the paperwork sent by ServiceOntario. The family received the certificate shortly after the paperwork was sent again and returned.
- A woman who had lost all of her identification had waited months for a replacement birth certificate, which she needed for a new passport so she could travel overseas to visit a dying relative. After we contacted the Registrar General, it issued the woman a new birth certificate within a week.

- An Ontario woman living in the United Kingdom who had applied to the Registrar General for a copy of her deceased mother's birth certificate couldn't get any information about the status of her application. We spoke with that office and confirmed that the document would be sent to her shortly. The woman told us: "The day you sorted it for me was actually my birthday ... the best birthday gift I could've received."

First Nations birth certificates

Our Office received a complaint from a First Nations community about administrative barriers to obtaining birth certificates, which are generally required for people to access government services and programs. We were told that these barriers included an online registration process that was sometimes difficult to access for those without reliable Internet service, and the wording of instructions on forms. Some communities and individuals do not have access to a nearby ServiceOntario to request help.

These concerns are consistent with information shared with our Office's Indigenous Circle during their outreach to First Nations communities. We have made inquiries with the territorial organization representing the communities that contacted us, as well as with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery to obtain more information and determine what can be done to address these concerns.

Gender markers

We helped several non-binary and transgender people who complained to us about difficulties in updating their names and gender markers on identity documents.

In some cases, people who have changed their names or gender on documents in other jurisdictions can use these documents to make equivalent changes in Ontario. Our staff can facilitate this process through contact with the Registrar General and ServiceOntario.



Cases related to driver's licences can be found in the **Transportation** chapter of this report. Cases related to health cards can be found in the **Health** chapter.

For example:

- A non-binary person had documentation from Quebec which reflected their gender identity, but they were unsure how to obtain equivalent documentation in Ontario. We confirmed with the Registrar General that it would accept the Quebec documents, and facilitated further communication. The complainant told us: "Everything has been done and this case can finally be closed. Thank you for your civil service."
- A transgender woman who transitioned while living in the United Kingdom wanted to change the name and gender on her Ontario birth certificate before moving back to Canada. She sought our help after the Registrar General told her she could only apply for a name change after living in Ontario for at least 12 months. We made inquiries about this process, and confirmed that after she met the 12-month residency requirement, the Registrar General would expedite her name change application.
- We helped a transgender youth who was estranged from his parents and was told he could not change his name without their signatures. We confirmed that the Registrar General could also accept such authorization from a children's aid society that has care of a youth. Ultimately, the teen reconciled with his parents and had his name changed, but he told us he appreciated the information.

Case summaries

Writing wrongs

A man came to us for help when a problem with his birth certificate prevented him from applying for federal employment insurance (EI). He was told there were inconsistencies with his parents' names on his documents – but he couldn't get further details from ServiceOntario.

RESULT: Our inquiries with the Office of the Registrar General revealed that the problem stemmed from the man's original handwritten birth certificate, in which the last letter of his mother's surname appeared to be different from what appeared on his printed documents. The issue was corrected and the man was able to apply for EI. ServiceOntario also used this case to provide guidance to staff about how to handle similar situations.

At long last

We heard from a man who was waiting for a new long-form birth certificate for his son. He had been told to send the Registrar General some information that was missing from his initial application, but after he did so, he got no confirmation that it arrived. When we checked with Registrar General officials, they suggested the man submit the information online to speed up the process.

RESULT: Once he sent the information, his son's birth certificate was printed and sent out on the same day. He told us: "I can't thank you enough. Thank you thank you thank you. It's like Christmas morning."

Married name mishap

A bride whose name was misspelled on her marriage certificate sought our help after waiting in vain for ServiceOntario to send her a form to request a correction. We discovered that the original handwritten marriage certificate had the correct spelling, but her name had been incorrectly typed into the Registrar General's system.

RESULT: We provided this information to the woman so she could include it in her request for a correction. She told us: "You're a lifesaver, you really are."

APPENDIX

STATISTICAL CHARTS

DISPOSITION OF CASES, 2023-2024

27,030
CASES RECEIVED IN FISCAL 2023-2024



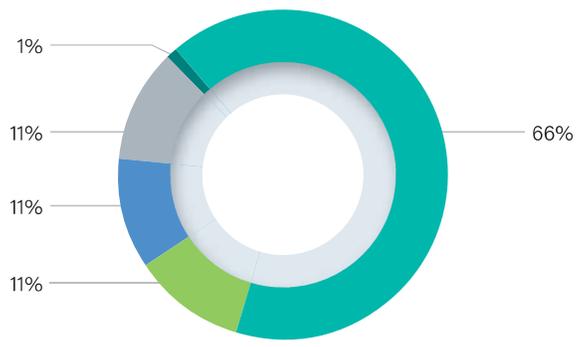
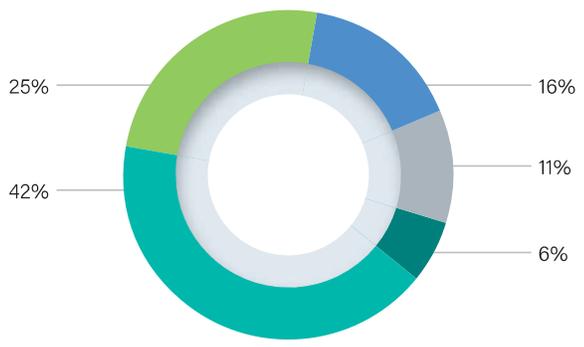
171
 consultations or questions

653
 information submissions

CASES CLOSED 2023-2024

17,754
 cases within the Ombudsman's authority

8,076
 cases outside the Ombudsman's authority



- INQUIRIES MADE OR REFERRAL GIVEN
- RESOLVED WITH OMBUDSMAN INTERVENTION AND/OR BEST PRACTICES SUGGESTED
- CLOSED AFTER OMBUDSMAN'S REVIEW
- DISCONTINUED BY COMPLAINANT
- RESOLVED WITHOUT OMBUDSMAN INTERVENTION

- PRIVATE
- PROVINCIAL OUTSIDE AUTHORITY*
- FEDERAL
- BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR OUTSIDE AUTHORITY**
- OUTSIDE ONTARIO

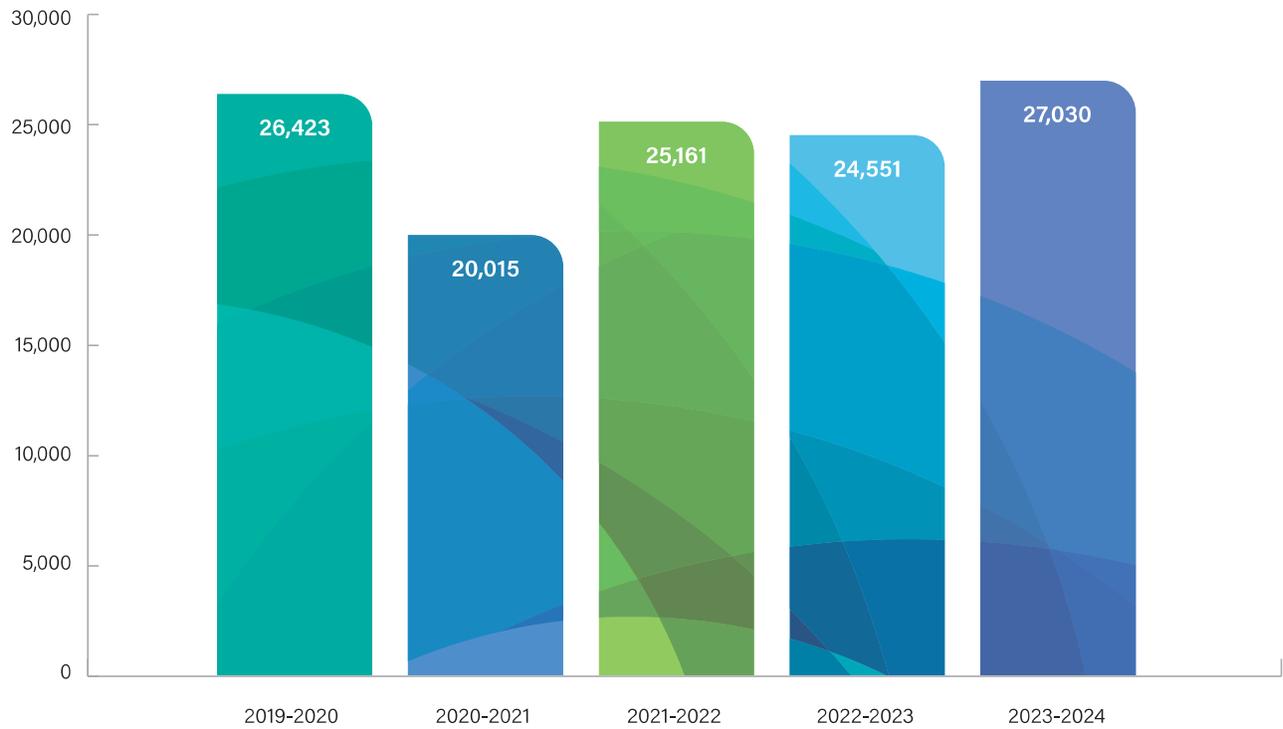
% OF CASES CLOSED IN A WEEK / 2 WEEKS

44%
 Closed in 1 week

57%
 Closed in 2 weeks

*E.g., complaints about officials and bodies outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.
 **E.g., complaints about hospitals, long-term care homes, public health units, municipal police.

TOTAL CASES RECEIVED, FISCAL YEARS 2019-2020 - 2023-2024



HOW CASES WERE RECEIVED, 2023-2024



**We were not able to accept complaints in person, due to COVID-19 restrictions, until January 2024.*

CASES BY PROVINCIAL RIDING, 2023-2024*

AJAX	128
ALGOMA—MANITOULIN	192
AURORA—OAK RIDGES—RICHMOND HILL	70
BARRIE—INNISFIL	151
BARRIE—SPRINGWATER—ORO—MEDONTE	161
BAY OF QUINTE	122
BEACHES—EAST YORK	115
BRAMPTON CENTRE	79
BRAMPTON EAST	54
BRAMPTON NORTH	71
BRAMPTON SOUTH	117
BRAMPTON WEST	93
BRANTFORD—BRANT	188
BRUCE—GREY—OWEN SOUND	156
BURLINGTON	112
CAMBRIDGE	117
CARLETON	73
CHATHAM-KENT—LEAMINGTON	148
DAVENPORT	105
DON VALLEY EAST	106
DON VALLEY NORTH	87
DON VALLEY WEST	65
DUFFERIN—CALEDON	90
DURHAM	152
EGLINTON—LAWRENCE	112
ELGIN—MIDDLESEX—LONDON	140
ESSEX	436
ETOBICOKE CENTRE	93
ETOBICOKE NORTH	70
ETOBICOKE—LAKESHORE	141
FLAMBOROUGH—GLANBROOK	91
GLENGARRY—PRESCOTT—RUSSELL	161
GUELPH	109
HALDIMAND—NORFOLK	129
HALIBURTON—KAWARTHA LAKES—BROCK	200
HAMILTON CENTRE	205
HAMILTON EAST—STONE CREEK	116
HAMILTON MOUNTAIN	81
HAMILTON WEST—ANCASTER—DUNDAS	90
HASTINGS—LENNOX AND ADDINGTON	145
HUMBER RIVER—BLACK CREEK	105
HURON—BRUCE	124
KANATA—CARLETON	93
KENORA—RAINY RIVER	81
KIIWETINOONG	31
KINGSTON AND THE ISLANDS	153
KING—VAUGHAN	106
KITCHENER CENTRE	104
KITCHENER SOUTH—HESPELER	70
KITCHENER—CONESTOGA	76
LAMBTON—KENT—MIDDLESEX	147
LANARK—FRONTENAC—KINGSTON	148
LEEDS—GRENVILLE—THOUSAND ISLANDS AND RIDEAU LAKES	135
LONDON NORTH CENTRE	139
LONDON WEST	112
LONDON—FANSHAWE	144
MARKHAM—STOUFFVILLE	98
MARKHAM—THORNHILL	55
MARKHAM—UNIONVILLE	55
MILTON	100
MISSISSAUGA CENTRE	108
MISSISSAUGA EAST—COOKSVILLE	102

MISSISSAUGA—ERIN MILLS	104
MISSISSAUGA—LAKESHORE	98
MISSISSAUGA—MALTON	98
MISSISSAUGA—STREETSVILLE	90
MUSHKEGOWUK—JAMES BAY	45
NEPEAN	96
NEWMARKET—AURORA	149
NIAGARA CENTRE	161
NIAGARA FALLS	225
NIAGARA WEST	88
NICKEL BELT	139
NIPISSING	157
NORTHUMBERLAND—PETERBOROUGH SOUTH	142
OAKVILLE	88
OAKVILLE NORTH—BURLINGTON	98
ORLÉANS	171
OSHAWA	198
OTTAWA CENTRE	173
OTTAWA SOUTH	130
OTTAWA WEST—NEPEAN	109
OTTAWA—VANIER	224
OXFORD	128
PARKDALE—HIGH PARK	113
PARRY SOUND—MUSKOKA	164
PERTH—WELLINGTON	98
PETERBOROUGH—KAWARTHA	172
PICKERING—UXBRIDGE	150
RENFREW—NIPISSING—PEMBROKE	144
RICHMOND HILL	85
SARNIA—LAMBTON	126
SAULT STE. MARIE	141
SCARBOROUGH CENTRE	105
SCARBOROUGH NORTH	61
SCARBOROUGH SOUTHWEST	141
SCARBOROUGH—AGINCOURT	64
SCARBOROUGH—GUILDWOOD	97
SCARBOROUGH—ROUGE PARK	87
SIMCOE NORTH	158
SIMCOE—GREY	220
SPADINA—FORT YORK	155
ST. CATHARINES	121
STORMONT—DUNDAS—SOUTH GLENGARRY	98
SUDBURY	168
THORNHILL	79
THUNDER BAY—ATIKOKAN	137
THUNDER BAY—SUPERIOR NORTH	117
TIMISKAMING—COCHRANE	223
TIMMINS	58
TORONTO CENTRE	182
TORONTO—DANFORTH	86
TORONTO—ST. PAUL'S	130
UNIVERSITY—ROSEDALE	128
VAUGHAN—WOODBIDGE	89
WATERLOO	107
WELLINGTON—HALTON HILLS	92
WHITBY	132
WILLOWDALE	54
WINDSOR WEST	222
WINDSOR—TECUMSEH	136
YORK CENTRE	106
YORK SOUTH—WESTON	91
YORK—SIMCOE	114

*All cases where a postal code was available, including those related to municipalities, universities and school boards, but excluding correctional facilities.

TOTAL CASES RECEIVED FOR PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND SELECTED PROGRAMS, 2023-2024*

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS		4
MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL		2,094
ALCOHOL AND GAMING COMMISSION OF ONTARIO	40	
CHILDREN'S LAWYER	31	
COURT ADMINISTRATION	138	
HUMAN RIGHTS LEGAL SUPPORT CENTRE	15	
LEGAL AID CLINIC	18	
LEGAL AID ONTARIO	87	
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN AND TRUSTEE	199	
TRIBUNALS ONTARIO	1,457	
MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES		2,042
DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES - PASSPORT PROGRAM	17	
DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES PROGRAMS	74	
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE	440	
MINISTRY FUNDED SERVICE PROVIDER - COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES	69	
ONTARIO AUTISM PROGRAM	110	
ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM	978	
SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMS - CHILDREN	21	
SPECIAL SERVICES AT HOME	79	
YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRES - DIRECT OPERATED	120	
YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRES - MINISTRY FUNDED	82	
MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURALISM		9
MINISTRY OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES		476
COLLEGES OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY	292	
ONTARIO STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	160	
PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES BRANCH	15	
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, JOB CREATION AND TRADE		8
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION		142
MINISTRY OF ENERGY		32
ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD	19	
MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT, CONSERVATION AND PARKS		46
ONTARIO PARKS	17	
MINISTRY OF FINANCE		193
FINANCIAL SERVICES REGULATORY AUTHORITY	16	
LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO	26	
MUNICIPAL PROPERTY ASSESSMENT CORPORATION	19	
ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING	76	
MINISTRY OF FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS		1
MINISTRY OF HEALTH		377
ASSISTIVE DEVICES / HOME OXYGEN PROGRAMS	19	
EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES	11	
HEALTH PROFESSIONS APPEAL AND REVIEW BOARD	25	
MINISTRY FUNDED SERVICE PROVIDER	19	

TOTAL CASES RECEIVED FOR PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND SELECTED PROGRAMS, 2023-2024*

MINISTRY OF HEALTH (CONT'D)		377
NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT	11	
ONTARIO HEALTH	34	
ONTARIO HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN - OHIP	62	
ONTARIO PUBLIC DRUG PROGRAMS	47	
MINISTRY OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS		2
MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE		4
MINISTRY OF LABOUR, IMMIGRATION, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT		427
BETTER JOBS ONTARIO	15	
EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES BRANCH	24	
FAIR PRACTICES COMMISSION	14	
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY BRANCH	16	
ONTARIO LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD	23	
SKILLED TRADES ONTARIO	16	
WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE APPEALS TRIBUNAL	57	
WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD	218	
MINISTRY OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS		2
MINISTRY OF LONG-TERM CARE		29
LONG-TERM CARE INSPECTIONS BRANCH	23	
MINISTRY OF MINES		3
MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING		24
MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND FORESTRY		93
MINISTRY OF NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT		4
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC AND BUSINESS SERVICE DELIVERY		337
CONSUMER PROTECTION ONTARIO	22	
REGISTRAR GENERAL	109	
SERVICEONTARIO	187	
MINISTRY FOR SENIORS AND ACCESSIBILITY		5
MINISTRY OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL		4,701
ANIMAL WELFARE SERVICES	23	
CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES	4,444	
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CORONER	16	
ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE	130	
OPP - CHIEF FIREARMS OFFICE	18	
PRIVATE SECURITY AND INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES BRANCH	14	
PROBATION AND PAROLE	38	
MINISTRY OF TOURISM, CULTURE AND SPORT		8
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION		718
DRIVER LICENSING	146	
DRIVETEST	274	
METROLINX/GO TRANSIT	61	
TRANSPORTATION - MEDICAL REVIEW	72	
VEHICLE LICENSING	31	
TREASURY BOARD SECRETARIAT		6

*Total figures are reported for each provincial government ministry including agencies and programs falling within its portfolio. Each government agency or program receiving 10 or more cases is also included. Cases related to French language services are not included.

TOP 10 PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS BY CASE VOLUME, 2023-2024*

		NUMBER OF CASES
1	TRIBUNALS ONTARIO	1,457
2	ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM	978
3	FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE	440
4	COLLEGES OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY	292
5	DRIVETEST	274
6	WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD	218
7	OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN AND TRUSTEE	199
8	SERVICEONTARIO	187
9	ONTARIO STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	160
10	DRIVER LICENSING	146

**Excluding correctional facilities and youth justice centres.*

TOP 10 CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES BY CASE VOLUME, 2023-2024

		NUMBER OF CASES
1	CENTRAL EAST CORRECTIONAL CENTRE	721
2	CENTRAL NORTH CORRECTIONAL CENTRE	529
3	TORONTO SOUTH DETENTION CENTRE	371
4	MAPLEHURST CORRECTIONAL COMPLEX	357
5	OTTAWA-CARLETON DETENTION CENTRE	325
6	HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DETENTION CENTRE	314
7	NIAGARA DETENTION CENTRE	278
8	QUINTE DETENTION CENTRE	190
9	SOUTH WEST DETENTION CENTRE	162
10	KENORA JAIL	150

CASES RECEIVED ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES, 2023-2024 • TOTAL: 3,595

ADDINGTON HIGHLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	13
ADELAIDE METCALFE, TOWNSHIP OF	1
ADJALA-TOSORONTIO, TOWNSHIP OF	8
AJAX, TOWN OF	2
ALFRED AND PLANTAGENET, TOWNSHIP OF	3
ALGONQUIN HIGHLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	6
ALNWICK/HALDIMAND, TOWNSHIP OF	7
AMHERSTBURG, TOWN OF	6
ARMOUR, TOWNSHIP OF	1
ARNPRIOR, TOWN OF	3
ARRAN-ELDELSLIE, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
ASHFIELD-COLBORNE-WAWANOSH, TOWNSHIP OF	3
ASSIGINACK, TOWNSHIP OF	5
ATHENS, TOWNSHIP OF	1
ATIKOKAN, TOWN OF	4
AUGUSTA, TOWNSHIP OF	7
AURORA, TOWN OF	4
AYLMER, TOWN OF	3
BALDWIN, TOWNSHIP OF	2
BANCROFT, TOWN OF	4
BARRIE, CITY OF	22
BAYHAM, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
BELLEVILLE, CITY OF	8
BILLINGS, TOWNSHIP OF	6
BLACK RIVER-MATHESON, TOWNSHIP OF	21
BLANDFORD-BLENHEIM, TOWNSHIP OF	3
BLIND RIVER, TOWN OF	3
BLUEWATER, MUNICIPALITY OF	6
BONFIELD, TOWNSHIP OF	1
BONNECHERE VALLEY, TOWNSHIP OF	1
BRACEBRIDGE, TOWN OF	1
BRADFORD WEST GWILLIMBURY, TOWN OF	1
BRAMPTON, CITY OF	44
BRANT, COUNTY OF	11
BRANTFORD, CITY OF	34
BRETHOUR, TOWNSHIP OF	1
BRIGHTON, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
BROCK, TOWNSHIP OF	2
BROCKVILLE, CITY OF	9

BROOKE-ALVINSTON, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
BRUCE, COUNTY OF	8
BRUDENELL, LYNDDOCH AND RAGLAN, TOWNSHIP OF	2
BURLINGTON, CITY OF	21
BURPEE AND MILLS, TOWNSHIP OF	4
CALEDON, TOWN OF	13
CALLANDER, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
CALVIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
CAMBRIDGE, CITY OF	21
CARLETON PLACE, TOWN OF	2
CARLING, TOWNSHIP OF	4
CARLOW/MAYO, TOWNSHIP OF	2
CASSELMAN, MUNICIPALITY OF	11
CAVAN MONAGHAN, TOWNSHIP OF	3
CENTRAL ELGIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	8
CENTRAL FRONTENAC, TOWNSHIP OF	1
CENTRAL HURON, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
CENTRAL MANITOULIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
CENTRE WELLINGTON, TOWNSHIP OF	3
CHAMBERLAIN, TOWNSHIP OF	1
CHAMPLAIN, TOWNSHIP OF	3
CHAPLEAU, TOWNSHIP OF	3
CHARLTON AND DACK, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
CHATHAM-KENT, MUNICIPALITY OF	34
CHATSWORTH, TOWNSHIP OF	2
CLARENCE-ROCKLAND, CITY OF	4
CLARINGTON, MUNICIPALITY OF	7
CLEARVIEW, TOWNSHIP OF	2
COBALT, TOWN OF	1
COBOURG, TOWN OF	11
COCHRANE, TOWN OF	20
COLEMAN, TOWNSHIP OF	1
COLLINGWOOD, TOWN OF	2
CORNWALL, CITY OF	15
CRAMAHE, TOWNSHIP OF	9
DAWN-EUPHEMIA, TOWNSHIP OF	1
DEEP RIVER, TOWN OF	1
DESERONTO, TOWN OF	2
DORION, TOWNSHIP OF	2

Note: Municipalities that were not the subject of any cases are not listed. This does not include cases about municipal police, public health units, or library boards.

CASES RECEIVED ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES, 2023-2024

DOURO-DUMMER, TOWNSHIP OF	4
DRUMMOND/NORTH ELMSELEY, TOWNSHIP OF	1
DRYDEN, CITY OF	13
DUFFERIN, COUNTY OF	2
DURHAM, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	66
DUTTON-DUNWICH, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
DYSART ET AL, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
EAST GWILLIMBURY, TOWN OF	1
EAST HAWKESBURY, TOWNSHIP OF	1
EAST ZORRA -TAVISTOCK, TOWNSHIP OF	3
ELGIN, COUNTY OF	1
ELIZABETHTOWN-KITLEY, TOWNSHIP OF	3
ELLIOT LAKE, CITY OF	9
ENNISKILLEN, TOWNSHIP OF	1
ERIN, TOWN OF	7
ESPANOLA, TOWN OF	1
ESSA, TOWNSHIP OF	4
ESSEX, COUNTY OF	3
ESSEX, TOWN OF	10
FARADAY, TOWNSHIP OF	2
FAUQUIER-STRICKLAND, TOWNSHIP OF	2
FORT ERIE, TOWN OF	11
FRENCH RIVER, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
FRONT OF YONGE, TOWNSHIP OF	1
FRONTENAC ISLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	1
FRONTENAC, COUNTY OF	1
GANANOQUE, TOWN OF	1
GAUTHIER, TOWNSHIP OF	1
GEORGIAN BAY, TOWNSHIP OF	1
GEORGIAN BLUFFS, TOWNSHIP OF	4
GEORGINA, TOWN OF	10
GILLIES, TOWNSHIP OF	8
GODERICH, TOWN OF	1
GORE BAY, TOWN OF	3
GRAVENHURST, TOWN OF	8
GREATER MADAWASKA, TOWNSHIP OF	5
GREATER NAPANEE, TOWN OF	2
GREATER SUDBURY, CITY OF	61
GREENSTONE, MUNICIPALITY OF	4

GREY HIGHLANDS, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
GREY, COUNTY OF	8
GRIMSBY, TOWN OF	3
GUELPH, CITY OF	6
GUELPH/ERAMOSA, TOWNSHIP OF	1
HALDIMAND COUNTY	10
HALTON HILLS, TOWN OF	2
HALTON, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	24
HAMILTON, CITY OF	119
HASTINGS HIGHLANDS, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
HASTINGS, COUNTY OF	19
HAVELOCK-BELMONT-METHUEN, TOWNSHIP OF	4
HAWKESBURY, TOWN OF	2
HEARST, TOWN OF	1
HIGHLANDS EAST, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
HILLIARD, TOWNSHIP OF	1
HILTON, TOWNSHIP OF	1
HORNEPAYNE, TOWNSHIP OF	1
HUDSON, TOWNSHIP OF	1
HUNTSVILLE, TOWN OF	4
HURON EAST, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
HURON SHORES, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
HURON-KINLOSS, TOWNSHIP OF	2
HURON, COUNTY OF	6
IGNACE, TOWNSHIP OF	7
INGERSOLL, TOWN OF	1
INNISFIL, TOWN OF	10
IROQUOIS FALLS, TOWN OF	6
JOCELYN, TOWNSHIP OF	10
KAPUSKASING, TOWN OF	4
KAWARTHA LAKES, CITY OF	51
KEARNEY, TOWN OF	1
KENORA, CITY OF	4
KILLALOE, HAGARTY AND RICHARDS, TOWNSHIP OF	3
KINCARDINE, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
KING, TOWNSHIP OF	14
KINGSTON, CITY OF	16
KINGSVILLE, TOWN OF	7
KIRKLAND LAKE, TOWN OF	5

CASES RECEIVED ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES, 2023-2024

KITCHENER, CITY OF	14
LA VALLEE, TOWNSHIP OF	1
LAIRD, TOWNSHIP OF	1
LAKE OF BAYS, TOWNSHIP OF	1
LAKESHORE, TOWN OF	6
LAMBTON SHORES, MUNICIPALITY OF	19
LAMBTON, COUNTY OF	12
LANARK HIGHLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	7
LANARK, COUNTY OF	65
LARDER LAKE, TOWNSHIP OF	2
LAURENTIAN HILLS, TOWN OF	2
LAURENTIAN VALLEY, TOWNSHIP OF	2
LEAMINGTON, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
LEEDS AND GRENVILLE, UNITED COUNTIES OF	7
LEEDS AND THE THOUSAND ISLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	7
LENNOX & ADDINGTON, COUNTY OF	5
LINCOLN, TOWN OF	2
LONDON, CITY OF	81
LOYALIST TOWNSHIP	8
MACDONALD, MEREDITH & ABERDEEN ADDITIONAL, TOWNSHIP OF	2
MACHIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
MADOC, TOWNSHIP OF	7
MAGNETAWAN, MUNICIPALITY OF	11
MANITOUWADGE, TOWNSHIP OF	9
MARATHON, TOWN OF	1
MARKHAM, CITY OF	19
MARKSTAY-WARREN, MUNICIPALITY OF	7
MATACHEWAN, TOWNSHIP OF	3
MCDOUGALL, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
MCGARRY, TOWNSHIP OF	5
MCMURRICH/MONTEITH, TOWNSHIP OF	1
MCNAB/BRAESIDE, TOWNSHIP OF	3
MEAFORD, MUNICIPALITY OF	6
MELANCTHON, TOWNSHIP OF	1
MERRICKVILLE-WOLFORD, VILLAGE OF	1
MIDDLESEX CENTRE, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
MIDDLESEX, COUNTY OF	3
MIDLAND, TOWN OF	5
MILTON, TOWN OF	13

MINDEN HILLS, TOWNSHIP OF	15
MISSISSAUGA, CITY OF	45
MISSISSIPPI MILLS, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
MONTAGUE, TOWNSHIP OF	1
MORRIS-TURNBERRY, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
MULMUR, TOWNSHIP OF	1
MUSKOKA LAKES, TOWNSHIP OF	9
MUSKOKA, DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY OF	10
NEW TECUMSETH, TOWN OF	15
NEWBURY, VILLAGE OF	1
NEWMARKET, TOWN OF	11
NIAGARA FALLS, CITY OF	24
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, TOWN OF	2
NIAGARA, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	53
NIPIGON, TOWNSHIP OF	2
NIPISSING, TOWNSHIP OF	5
NORFOLK COUNTY	11
NORTH BAY, CITY OF	11
NORTH DUMFRIES, TOWNSHIP OF	2
NORTH DUNDAS, TOWNSHIP OF	2
NORTH FRONTENAC, TOWNSHIP OF	3
NORTH GLENGARRY, TOWNSHIP OF	2
NORTH GRENVILLE, MUNICIPALITY OF	6
NORTH KAWARTHA, TOWNSHIP OF	1
NORTH MIDDLESEX, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
NORTH PERTH, MUNICIPALITY OF	7
NORTH STORMONT, TOWNSHIP OF	1
NORTHEASTERN MANITOULIN AND THE ISLANDS, TOWN OF	1
NORTHERN BRUCE PENINSULA, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
NORTHUMBERLAND, COUNTY OF	2
NORWICH, TOWNSHIP OF	26
OAKVILLE, TOWN OF	20
OIL SPRINGS, VILLAGE OF	1
OLIVER PAIPOONGE, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
ORILLIA, CITY OF	2
ORO-MEDONTE, TOWNSHIP OF	2
OSHAWA, CITY OF	30
OTONABEE-SOUTH MONAGHAN, TOWNSHIP OF	5
OTTAWA, CITY OF	149

CASES RECEIVED ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES, 2023-2024

OWEN SOUND, CITY OF	8
OXFORD, COUNTY OF	2
PAPINEAU-CAMERON, TOWNSHIP OF	1
PARRY SOUND, TOWN OF	1
PEEL, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	69
PELEE, TOWNSHIP OF	7
PELHAM, TOWN OF	7
PEMBROKE, CITY OF	2
PENETANGUISENE, TOWN OF	1
PERRY, TOWNSHIP OF	1
PERTH EAST, TOWNSHIP OF	4
PERTH, TOWN OF	3
PETAWAWA, TOWN OF	6
PETERBOROUGH, CITY OF	22
PETERBOROUGH, COUNTY OF	2
PETROLIA, TOWN OF	2
PICKERING, CITY OF	13
PICKLE LAKE, TOWNSHIP OF	1
PLYMPTON-WYOMING, TOWN OF	2
PORT COLBORNE, CITY OF	12
PORT HOPE, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
POWASSAN, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
PRESCOTT AND RUSSELL, UNITED COUNTIES OF	8
PRESCOTT, TOWN OF	2
PRINCE EDWARD, COUNTY OF	3
PRINCE, TOWNSHIP OF	1
PUSLINCH, TOWNSHIP OF	1
QUINTE WEST, CITY OF	7
RAMARA, TOWNSHIP OF	5
RED LAKE, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
RED ROCK, TOWNSHIP OF	3
RENFREW, COUNTY OF	11
RENFREW, TOWN OF	1
RICHMOND HILL, CITY OF	11
RIDEAU LAKES, TOWNSHIP OF	12
RUSSELL, TOWNSHIP OF	9
SABLES-SPANISH RIVERS, TOWNSHIP OF	8
SARNIA, CITY OF	7
SAUGEEN SHORES, TOWN OF	6
SAULT STE. MARIE, CITY OF	17

SCHREIBER, TOWNSHIP OF	1
SCUGOG, TOWNSHIP OF	4
SEGUIN, TOWNSHIP OF	3
SELWYN, TOWNSHIP OF	1
SEVERN, TOWNSHIP OF	4
SHUNIAH, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
SIMCOE, COUNTY OF	22
SIOUX LOOKOUT, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
SMITHS FALLS, TOWN OF	7
SMOOTH ROCK FALLS, TOWN OF	2
SOUTH BRUCE PENINSULA, TOWN OF	9
SOUTH BRUCE, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
SOUTH DUNDAS, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
SOUTH FRONTENAC, TOWNSHIP OF	5
SOUTH GLENGARRY, TOWNSHIP OF	3
SOUTH HURON, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
SOUTH RIVER, VILLAGE OF	3
SOUTH STORMONT, TOWNSHIP OF	1
SOUTHGATE, TOWNSHIP OF	2
SOUTHWEST MIDDLESEX, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
SOUTHWOLD, TOWNSHIP OF	2
SPRINGWATER, TOWNSHIP OF	3
ST. CATHARINES, CITY OF	24
ST. CLAIR, TOWNSHIP OF	5
ST. THOMAS, CITY OF	10
ST.-CHARLES, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
STORMONT, DUNDAS & GLENGARRY, UNITED COUNTIES OF	6
STRATFORD, CITY OF	25
STRATHROY-CARADOC, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
STRONG, TOWNSHIP OF	5
TARBUTT, TOWNSHIP OF	1
TAY VALLEY TOWNSHIP	7
TAY, TOWNSHIP OF	2
TECUMSEH, TOWN OF	5
TEHKUMMAH, TOWNSHIP OF	6
TEMAGAMI, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
TEMISKAMING SHORES, CITY OF	3
THAMES CENTRE, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
THE ARCHIPELAGO, TOWNSHIP OF	1
THE BLUE MOUNTAINS, TOWN OF	6

CASES RECEIVED ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES, 2023-2024

THE NATION MUNICIPALITY	2
THE NORTH SHORE, TOWNSHIP OF	2
THOROLD, CITY OF	13
THUNDER BAY, CITY OF	21
TILLSONBURG, TOWN OF	2
TIMMINS, CITY OF	9
TINY, TOWNSHIP OF	20
TORONTO, CITY OF	561
TRENT HILLS, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
TRENT LAKES, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
TUDOR & CASHEL, TOWNSHIP OF	1
TWEED, MUNICIPALITY OF	6
TYENDINAGA, TOWNSHIP OF	4
UXBRIDGE, TOWNSHIP OF	5
VAL RITA-HARTY, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
VAUGHAN, CITY OF	22
WAINFLEET, TOWNSHIP OF	1
WARWICK, TOWNSHIP OF	1
WASAGA BEACH, TOWN OF	14
WATERLOO, CITY OF	11
WATERLOO, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	33
WELLAND, CITY OF	21
WELLINGTON NORTH, TOWNSHIP OF	1
WELLINGTON, COUNTY OF	9
WEST ELGIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	7
WEST GREY, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
WEST LINCOLN, TOWNSHIP OF	2
WEST NIPISSING, MUNICIPALITY OF	12
WEST PERTH, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
WHITBY, TOWN OF	22
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE, TOWN OF	10
WHITEWATER REGION, TOWNSHIP OF	3
WILMOT, TOWNSHIP OF	5
WINDSOR, CITY OF	52
WOLLASTON, TOWNSHIP OF	6
WOODSTOCK, CITY OF	4
WOOLWICH, TOWNSHIP OF	4
YORK, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	48
CASES WHERE NO MUNICIPALITY WAS SPECIFIED	32

SHARED CORPORATIONS INCLUDING CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES	
ALECTRA	47
BLUEWATER POWER DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION	2
CENTRAL LAKE ONTARIO CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	1
EARTH POWER (ERTH CORPORATION)	1
ELEXICON ENERGY	6
ENOVA POWER CORP.	3
ENTEGRUS POWERLINES	3
ESSEX POWER CORPORATION	1
GRANDBRIDGE ENERGY	2
GRAND RIVER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	1
LAKEFRONT UTILITIES INC.	1
LOWER THAMES VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	1
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONSERVATION	1
NEWMARKET-TAY POWER DISTRIBUTION LTD	1
NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	1
NIAGARA PENINSULA ENERGY INC.	2
NICKEL DISTRICT CONSERVATION AUTHORITY ("CONSERVATION SUDBURY")	1
NOTTAWASAGA VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	3
QUINTE CONSERVATION	1
SYNERGY NORTH	2
CASES WHERE NO CORPORATION OR AUTHORITY WAS SPECIFIED	3
SHARED LOCAL BOARDS	
ALGOMA DISTRICT SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	2
DISTRICT OF COCHRANE SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	9
DISTRICT OF NIPISSING SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	6
DISTRICT OF PARRY SOUND SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	4
DISTRICT OF SAULT STE. MARIE SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	12
DISTRICT OF TIMISKAMING SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	7
KENORA DISTRICT SERVICES BOARD	7
RAINY RIVER DISTRICT SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	1
THUNDER BAY SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	8
WEST PARRY SOUND RECREATION AND CULTURAL CENTRE BOARD	1
CASES WHERE NO BOARD WAS SPECIFIED	2

CASES RECEIVED ABOUT CLOSED MUNICIPAL MEETINGS, 2023-2024 • TOTAL: 99

CASES ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES WHERE OMBUDSMAN IS THE INVESTIGATOR*	89
CASES ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES WHERE ANOTHER INVESTIGATOR HAS BEEN APPOINTED**	10

*Not all cases result in investigations; multiple cases may relate to the same meeting. **These cases were referred accordingly.

SUMMARY OF COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS

MUNICIPALITY	MEETINGS & GATHERINGS REVIEWED	ILLEGAL MEETINGS	PROCEDURAL VIOLATIONS FOUND	BEST PRACTICES SUGGESTED
ADJALA-TOSORONTIO, TOWNSHIP OF	3	0	5	2
ALBERTON, TOWNSHIP OF	1	1	0	1
AMHERSTBURG, TOWN OF	1	0	0	0
BROCKTON, MUNICIPALITY OF	1	1	0	1
CALLANDER, MUNICIPALITY OF	4	0	0	2
CALVIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	2	2	0	1
CASSELMAN, MUNICIPALITY OF	1	1	0	0
DEEP RIVER, TOWN OF	1	0	0	0
DOURO-DUMMER, TOWNSHIP OF	1	0	0	1
ELLIOT LAKE, CITY OF	2	1	0	0
GRIMSBY, TOWN OF	1	0	1	0
HALIBURTON, COUNTY OF	1	1	0	2
HAMILTON WATERFRONT TRUST	1	1	0	0
HAMILTON, CITY OF	2	0	0	5
HUNTSVILLE, TOWN OF	1	0	1	2
KAWARTHA LAKES, CITY OF	1	0	0	0
LONDON, CITY OF	2	2	0	1
MIDLAND, TOWN OF (HURONIA AIRPORT TASK FORCE)*	1	1	1	2
MORLEY, TOWNSHIP OF	1	1	0	1
NIAGARA CENTRAL DOROTHY RUNGELING AIRPORT COMMISSION	5	1	6	3
PENETANGUISHENE, TOWN OF (HURONIA AIRPORT TASK FORCE)*	1	1	1	2
SABLES-SPANISH RIVERS, TOWNSHIP OF	2	0	2	1
TINY, TOWNSHIP OF (HURONIA AIRPORT TASK FORCE)*	1	1	1	2
WEST ELGIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	1	1	0	0

*Note: This was a joint meeting, but we found each municipality contravened the rules.

CASES RECEIVED ABOUT SCHOOL BOARDS, 2023-2024 • TOTAL: 1,334

ENGLISH CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARDS	
ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	4
BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	6
BRUCE-GREY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	3
CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO	5
DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	29
DURHAM CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	14
HALTON CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	12
HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	10
HURON-PERTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
HURON-SUPERIOR CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	7
KENORA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	2
LONDON DISTRICT CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD	25
NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	7
NORTHEASTERN CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	4
NORTHWEST CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
OTTAWA CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD	15
PETERBOROUGH VICTORIA NORTHUMBERLAND AND CLARINGTON CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	10
RENFREW COUNTY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	9
ST CLAIR CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	2
SUDBURY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	9
THUNDER BAY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	6
TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	30
WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	12
WELLINGTON CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	3
WINDSOR-ESSEX CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	14
YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	19
ENGLISH PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS	
ALGOMA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	9
AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	6
BLUEWATER DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	7
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA	24
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD ONTARIO NORTH EAST	6
DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	59
GRAND ERIE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	16
GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	362
HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	16
HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	16
HASTINGS & PRINCE EDWARD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	15

KAWARTHA PINE RIDGE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	15
KEEWATIN-PATRICIA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	8
LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	4
LAMBTON KENT DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	12
LIMESTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	10
NEAR NORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	12
OTTAWA-CARLETON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	55
PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	39
RAINBOW DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	14
RAINY RIVER DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
RENFREW COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	9
SIMCOE COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	34
SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
THAMES VALLEY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	36
TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	103
TRILLIUM LAKELANDS DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	14
UPPER CANADA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	7
UPPER GRAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	14
WATERLOO REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	21
YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	40
FRENCH CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARDS	
CONSEIL DES ÉCOLES CATHOLIQUES DU CENTRE-EST	4
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE DE DISTRICT DES GRANDES RIVIÈRES	3
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE DU NOUVEL-ONTARIO	3
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE FRANCO-NORD	1
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE MONAVENIR	15
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE PROVIDENCE	3
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE DE DISTRICT CATHOLIQUE DE L'EST ONTARIEN	2
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE DE DISTRICT CATHOLIQUE DES AURELES BORÉALES	1
FRENCH PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS	
CONSEIL DES ÉCOLES PUBLIQUES DE L'EST DE L'ONTARIO	7
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE PUBLIC DU NORD-EST DE L'ONTARIO	1
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE VIAMONDE	7
CASES WHERE NO SCHOOL BOARD WAS SPECIFIED	
	42

Note: Boards that were not the subject of any cases are not listed.

CASES RECEIVED ABOUT COLLEGES OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY, 2023-2024 • TOTAL: 292

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE	15
CAMBRIAN COLLEGE	6
CANADORE COLLEGE	5
CENTENNIAL COLLEGE	33
COLLÈGE BORÉAL	1
COLLÈGE LA CITÉ	5
CONESTOGA COLLEGE	27
CONFEDERATION COLLEGE	6
DURHAM COLLEGE	18
FANSHAWE COLLEGE	21
FLEMING COLLEGE (SIR SANDFORD FLEMING COLLEGE)	23
GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE	20

GEORGIAN COLLEGE	12
HUMBER COLLEGE	24
LAMBTON COLLEGE	4
MOHAWK COLLEGE	14
NIAGARA COLLEGE CANADA	8
NORTHERN COLLEGE	7
SAULT COLLEGE	5
SENECA COLLEGE	13
SHERIDAN COLLEGE	16
ST. CLAIR COLLEGE	4
ST. LAWRENCE COLLEGE	4
CASES WHERE NO COLLEGE WAS SPECIFIED	1

Note: Colleges that were not the subject of any cases are not listed.

CASES RECEIVED ABOUT UNIVERSITIES, 2023-2024 • TOTAL: 289

ALGOMA UNIVERSITY	64
BROCK UNIVERSITY	5
CARLETON UNIVERSITY	5
LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY	4
LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY	16
MCMASTER UNIVERSITY	22
NIPISSING UNIVERSITY	10
NOSM UNIVERSITY (NORTHERN ONTARIO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE)	1
OCAD UNIVERSITY	9
ONTARIO TECH UNIVERSITY	3
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY	15
TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY*	11

TRENT UNIVERSITY	7
UNIVERSITÉ DE L'ONTARIO FRANÇAIS	1
UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH	9
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA	13
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO	24
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO	10
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR	12
WESTERN UNIVERSITY	12
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY	14
YORK UNIVERSITY	19
CASES WHERE NO UNIVERSITY WAS SPECIFIED	3

Note: Universities that were not the subject of any cases are not listed.
*Formerly Ryerson University.

CASES RECEIVED ABOUT CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES, 2023-2024 • TOTAL: 1,451

AKWESASNE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	4
ALGOMA, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	29
ANISHINAABE ABINOOJII FAMILY SERVICES	11
BRUCE GREY CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	19
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF GRAND ERIE	29
DILICO ANISHINABEK FAMILY CARE	27
DNAAGDAWENMAG BINNOOJIIYAG CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES	39
DUFFERIN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	7
DURHAM CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	68
FRONTENAC, LENNOX AND ADDINGTON, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF	23
GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF	22
HALTON CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	17
HAMILTON, CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	20
HAMILTON, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	40
HIGHLAND SHORES CHILDREN'S AID	28
HURON-PERTH CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	27
JEWISH FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICES	4
KAWARTHA-HALIBURTON CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	26
KENORA-RAINY RIVER DISTRICTS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	12
KINA GBEZHGOMI CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES	19
KUNUWANIMANO CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES	10
LANARK, LEEDS AND GRENVILLE, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF	13
LINCK (CHATHAM-KENT CHILDREN'S SERVICES)	22
LONDON AND MIDDLESEX, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	37
NIAGARA, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES	77
NIJJAANSINAANIK CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	10
NIPISSING AND PARRY SOUND, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF THE DISTRICT OF	30

NOGDAWINDAMIN FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES	16
NORTH EASTERN ONTARIO FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES	20
OGWADENI:DEO	16
OTTAWA, THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	50
OXFORD COUNTY, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	17
PAYUKOTAYNO JAMES AND HUDSON BAY FAMILY SERVICES	5
PEEL CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	29
RENFREW COUNTY, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF	9
SARNIA-LAMBTON CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	31
SIMCOE MUSKOKA FAMILY CONNEXIONS	52
ST. THOMAS AND ELGIN COUNTY, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF	12
STORMONT, DUNDAS AND GLENGARRY, THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF THE UNITED COUNTIES OF	14
SUDBURY AND MANITOULIN, THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF THE DISTRICTS OF	43
THUNDER BAY, THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF THE DISTRICT OF	11
TIKINAGAN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	36
TORONTO, CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	23
TORONTO, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	119
TORONTO, NATIVE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF	12
VALORIS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS OF PRESCOTT-RUSSELL	11
WATERLOO REGION, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF THE	45
WEECHI-IT-TE-WIN FAMILY SERVICES	10
WINDSOR-ESSEX CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	37
YORK REGION CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	43
CASES WHERE A CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY WAS NOT SPECIFIED	120

Note: Children's aid societies that were not the subject of any cases are not listed.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY, 2023-2024

Our Office's budget for the fiscal year 2023-2024 was **\$29.47 million**. Actual expenditures (unaudited) were \$28.21 million. All unspent funds were returned to the Ministry of Finance. The financial statements of the Ombudsman are audited on an annual basis, however, the annual audit occurs after the publication of the Annual Report.

	(IN \$ THOUSANDS)
OPERATING EXPENSES	
SALARIES & WAGES	18,512
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	4,185
COMMUNICATION & TRANSPORTATION	461
SERVICES	4,524
SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT	529
TOTAL ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENSES	28,211



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