

# ROMA speaks



## Complaints in rural communities: The role of the Ontario Ombudsman and Integrity Commissioner

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# Office of the Ontario Ombudsman

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# Complaint handling

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## Early Resolutions

Individual complaints  
Quickly resolved

## Investigations

Individual complaints  
More difficult issues

## Special Ombudsman Response Team

Systemic investigations

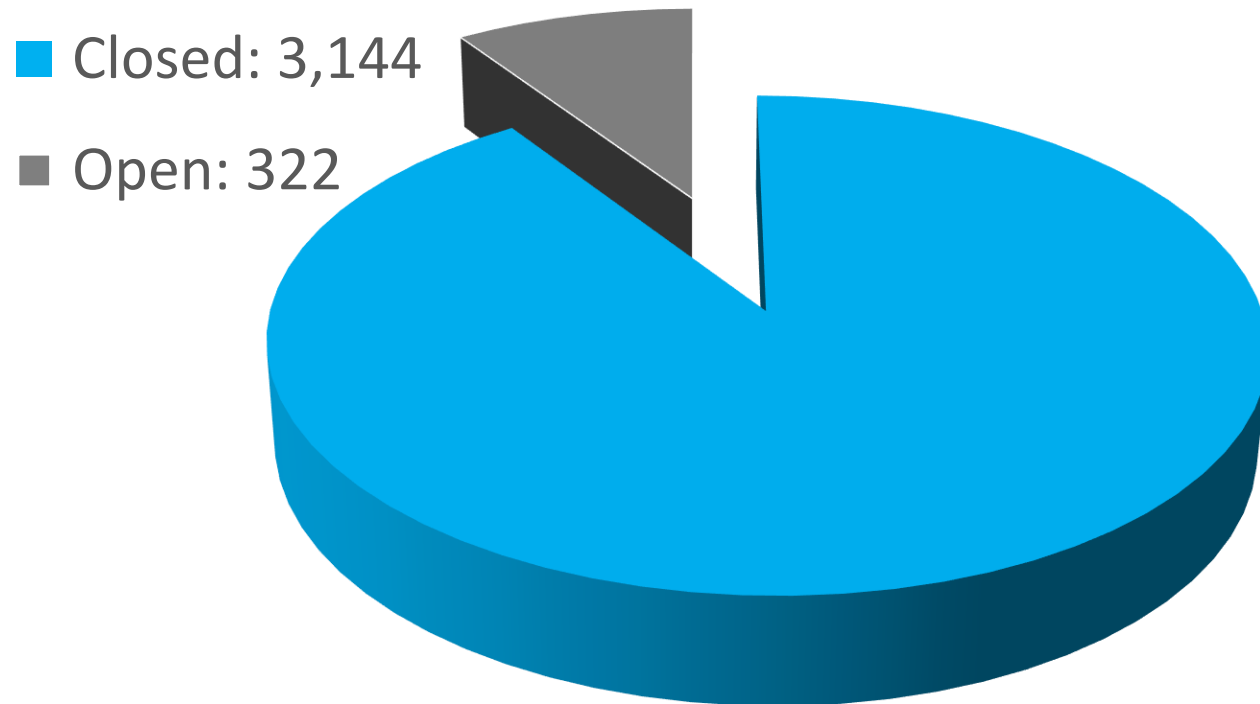
## Legal

Complex issues  
Research  
Training



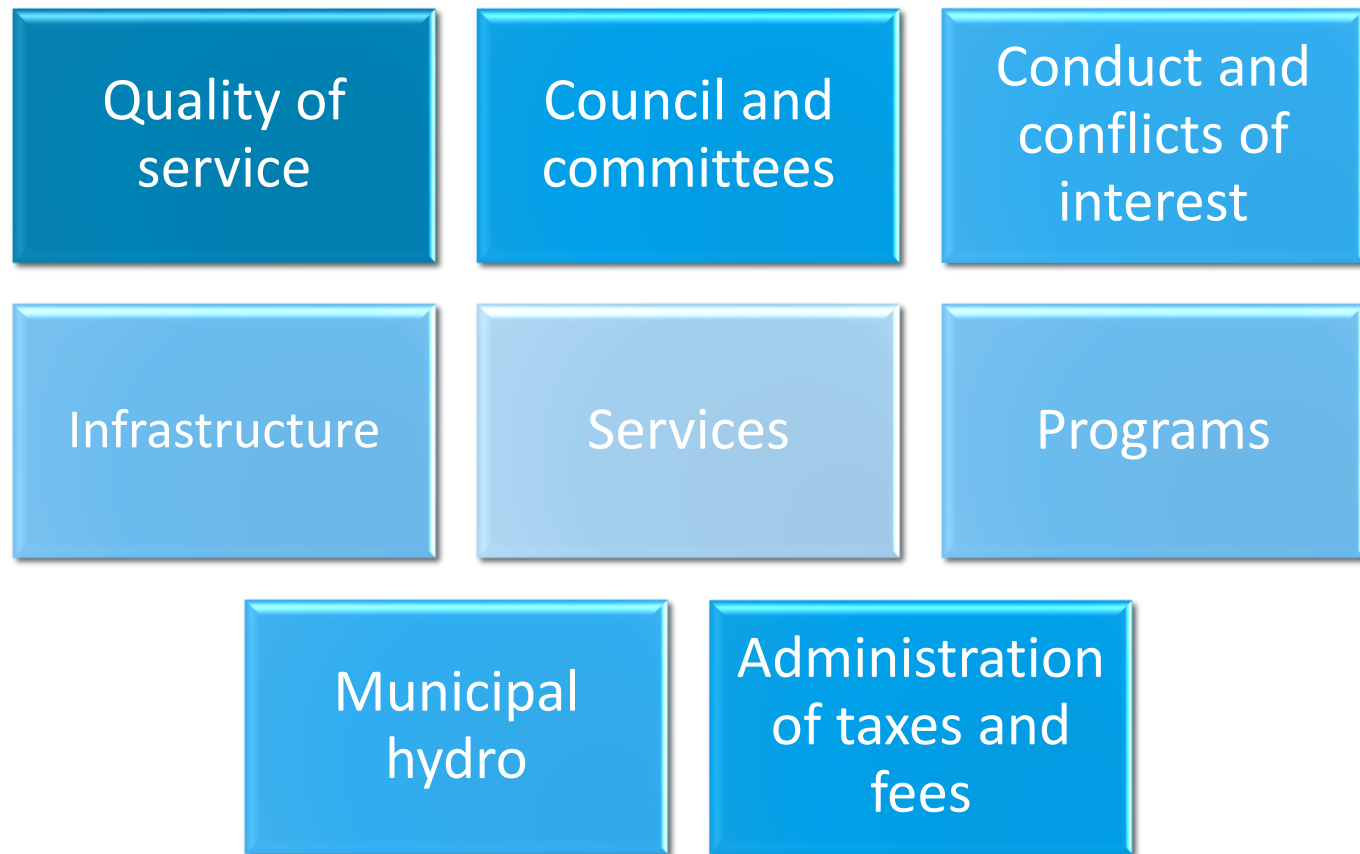
# Municipal complaints since January 1, 2016

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# Types of complaints

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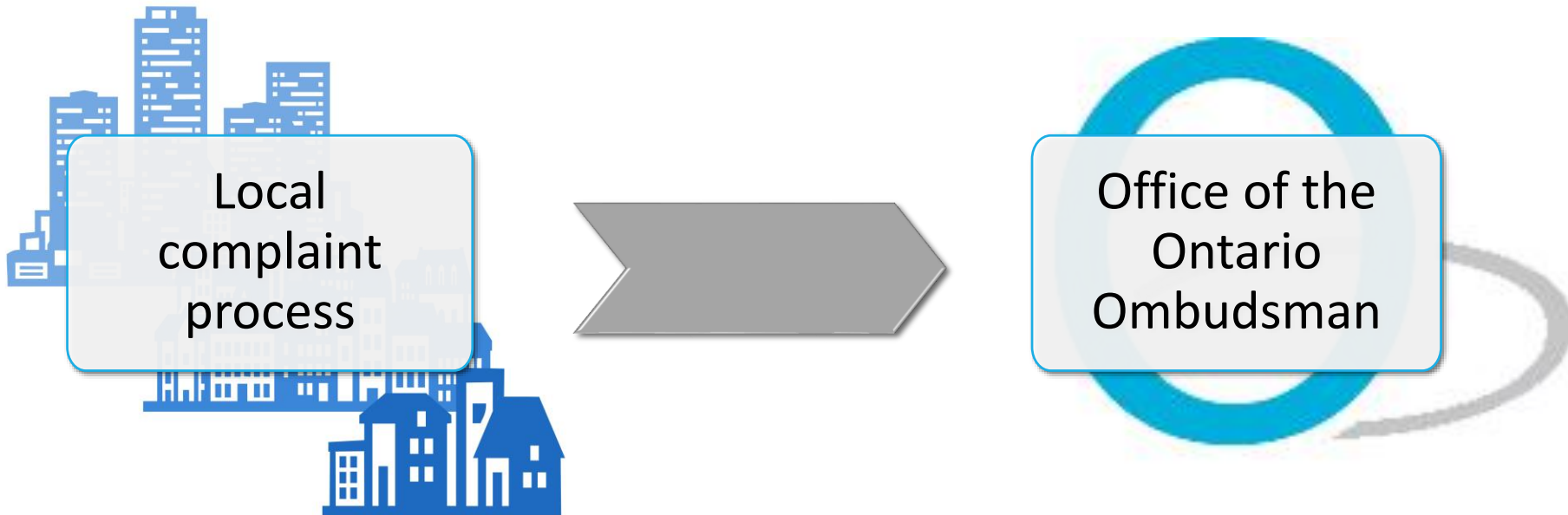
# Example

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# Process

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# Tips for municipal complaint resolution policies

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- General complaint policy approved by council and publicly posted, and staff trained on policy
- Distinguish between requests for service, complaints, inquiries, suggestions, and compliments
- Distinguish from any code of conduct applying to council, committee and local board members
- Establish separate process for monetary claims
- Provide staff contact and referral information where appropriate e.g. for code of conduct complaints







Helpful  
Tips

# Complaints policy

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- Specify whether anonymous complaints will be accepted
- Encourage complaint resolution at lowest level
- Include timeline for responding to complaints
- Official with ultimate responsibility for responding to complaint
- Keep record of every complaint received, any interaction between complainant and staff, and the result
- Clear delegation to staff to confirm scope of authority to address complaints





Helpful  
Tips

# Complaints policy

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- Where the competence or conduct of staff is subject of a complaint – ensure someone impartial responds
- All relevant information should be considered, and individuals should have opportunity to comment before a final decision is made
- Provide a written explanation concerning any decisions made in response to a complaint
- Advise complainant of where they can go next if they remain dissatisfied
- Prohibit retaliation for anyone attempting to use or using the policy
- Complaints should be treated in confidence
- Address how frivolous and vexatious complaints will be dealt with





Helpful  
Tips

# Complaints policy

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- Useful to set out examples of remedies that may be available: Changes in policy or practices, financial or remedial action as appropriate
- Complaint policy should cross reference the municipality's accessibility policy and accommodations
- Provide means for complainants to provide feedback about their experience with complaints process
- Complaint statistics (volume, issue, result, etc.) should be collected, analyzed, and reported on publicly
- Policy should indicate that complainant may contact the Ontario Ombudsman if they are dissatisfied with the municipality's final response to their complaint



# Integrity Commissioner's decision

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**REVIEW**

The word "REVIEW" is written in large, bold, green, 3D-style capital letters. A magnifying glass with a silver frame and a black handle is positioned over the word, with its lens centered on the letter 'V'. The magnifying glass is slightly tilted, and its shadow is cast on the surface below the letters.

# We would consider if the Commissioner:

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- Acted in accordance with relevant legislation
- Considered issues before them
- Followed a fair practice
- Obtained and considered relevant information
- Provided sufficient reasons to support their decision based on the available evidence



# Review an Integrity Commissioner's process

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# Review an Integrity Commissioner's process

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