



2022 2023



# ANNUAL REPORT



## OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN OF ONTARIO

### **We are:**

An independent office of the Legislature that resolves and investigates public complaints about services provided by Ontario public sector bodies. These include provincial government ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, corporations and tribunals, as well as municipalities, universities, school boards, child protection services and French language services.

### **Land acknowledgement and commitment to reconciliation**

The Ontario Ombudsman's work takes place on traditional Indigenous territories across the province we now call Ontario, and we are thankful to be able to work and live on this land. We would like to acknowledge that Toronto, where the Office of the Ontario Ombudsman 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 believe it is important to offer a land acknowledgement 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, we are providing educational opportunities to help our staff learn more about our shared history and the harms that have been inflicted on Indigenous peoples. We are working to establish mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous people across the province and will continue to incorporate recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission into our work. We are grateful for the opportunity to work on this part of Turtle Island.

► *Aussi disponible en français*





October 2023

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, 2022 to March 31, 2023, 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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“ This report is filled with stories of people who brought their issues to us, and how their experiences translated into better public services for others. Their stories deserve to be shared, and shared widely. They allow us to demonstrate, every day, the difference we can make.”

---

Paul Dubé, Ombudsman

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# OMBUDSMAN'S MESSAGE

## Value for all

In preparing this Annual Report, my eighth as Ombudsman, I am struck by the sheer scope of change that Ontario's public sector, including my Office, has experienced since 2016.

When I issued my first Annual Report that year, six months after my appointment, the government had just opened a huge swath of public sector bodies – municipalities, universities and school boards – to Ombudsman oversight for the first time. This was an enormous change for the better, extending our ability to promote transparency, accountability, fairness, and a respect for rights. It more than doubled the number of organizations that people could seek our help with, on top of hundreds of provincial ministries, agencies, boards, corporations, tribunals, etc.

Two years later, the government further extended our jurisdiction, to French language services and child protection services, conferring upon us the responsibility to promote and protect the rights of Francophones and vulnerable young people. We assumed that work in May 2019 – 10 months before COVID-19 changed everything for most of the next three years.

It was evident during the pandemic that people needed and relied upon their governments and public services – and our independent oversight of them – more than ever. Those years underlined the literal life-and-death nature of public services and our important role in ensuring they function properly and fairly, even (and especially) in times of crisis.



May 4, 2023 ■ Ombudsman Paul Dubé at the Queen's Park Media Studio, releasing his report on delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Now, as the crisis recedes, it is time for public services to build on the lessons learned, to repair the gaps exposed during the pandemic, and reach out to the people who may have fallen through them. For the Ombudsman's Office, it is a time to exercise the unique, twofold strengths of this institution: The expertise to help a broad diversity of Ontarians overcome the problems they encounter with public services, and the power to help improve those services for the future.

This report details the stories, trends and lessons gleaned from the **24,551** cases (complaints and inquiries) we handled in fiscal 2022-2023. It illustrates the many ways we helped Ontarians with vital issues like access to justice and obtaining essential supports and services.

As the dust clears from the disruption of two historic mandate expansions and a global pandemic, the value of an essential democratic institution like the Ombudsman in providing stronger, broader, more consistent oversight can now be clearly seen.

Since my last Annual Report, for example, we have released reports on four major investigations, all of which addressed complex organizational issues, and serve to enhance governance in ways that will help many Ontarians in future, especially the most vulnerable:

- Our systemic investigation into oversight of long-term care homes during the pandemic revealed the degree to which the Ministry of Long-Term Care's Inspection Branch was overwhelmed during the first COVID wave. I made 76 recommendations aimed at ensuring the long-term care sector is prepared for the next, inevitable public health emergency – and all were accepted.
- Our systemic investigation of delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board detailed the ordeals faced by thousands of people on both sides of the landlord-tenant relationship, due to a lack of trained adjudicators, antiquated technology and a host of other problems. I made 61 recommendations to address these issues, all of which were accepted – and the government has already committed \$6.5 million toward these improvements.
- Our probe of the troubling case of "Misty," a 13-year old Indigenous girl who went missing in a Southern Ontario city for several weeks – when she was supposed to be in foster care supervised by two children's aid societies (CASs) – exposed serious gaps in services for at-risk children in the North, as well as in communication

between agencies. I made 58 recommendations in that case, and stressed the need for CASs to incorporate learnings from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls into their training and decision-making. All were accepted.

- Our review of the near-tragic circumstances of "Brandon," a boy in the care of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, who endured deplorable living conditions and neglect in a family member's home for years, exposed serious problems with the CAS's supervision. It has accepted all 18 of my recommendations, and it and other CASs are using the case as a training tool.

## Progress in new areas

**Children and youth:** It is particularly heartening to see the progress made in just four short years by our dedicated Children and Youth Unit, which led the "Misty" and "Brandon" investigations and has done tremendous work in promoting the rights of young people in care.

In addition to modeling methods of youth-focused, trauma-informed approaches to cases that deal with vulnerable young people directly, our Children and Youth Unit also makes special efforts to reach and hear concerns from groups that are overrepresented in the child welfare system – through our Indigenous Circle, Black Children, Youth and Families Table, and 2SLGBTQIA+ Outreach teams. The Unit's expertise in cases involving the use of physical restraints in child protection settings has also borne fruit, as our staff closely consulted with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services in its development of new standards and regulations.

**Indigenous services:** I am also proud to be making progress on the development and implementation of our Indigenous Services Plan, which is our commitment to constitutionally recognized First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples within Ontario. It is a top priority for me to raise awareness and seek to engage with these communities in

all aspects of our jurisdiction, including, but not limited to, children and youth in care, justice, housing, health care, education, corrections and natural resources.

Indigenous peoples have a special constitutional relationship with the Crown and provincial governments. In addition to providing assistance to individuals from Indigenous communities, my team and I aspire to play a helpful role in informing nation-to-nation and government-to-government discussions. In recent months, we have had several meaningful conversations and meetings to begin building these important relationships.

**French language services:** In 2019, the responsibility for monitoring compliance with the *French Language Services Act (FLSA)*, as well as the position of Commissioner of French Language Services, were transferred to the Ombudsman. The objective was to bring the experience and expertise of the Ombudsman's Office to issues involving the *FLSA*. At that time, I committed to ensuring that:

- The French Language Services Commissioner would be proactive, visible, accessible, and actively engaged with the community;
- The Commissioner would have a high profile within the Francophone community;
- The Commissioner would operate collaboratively but independently of government, individual complainants, and interest groups;
- We would build a skilled and passionate French Language Services Unit;
- We would make the Commissioner's role an integral part of the Ombudsman's public service model;
- We would handle complaints effectively, prioritizing direct contact with complainants in the resolution of their issues;
- The FLS Unit and the Commissioner would have the resources required to do impactful work, be supported

by the entire Ombudsman organization, and benefit from a deep pool of expertise;

- The Commissioner and the FLS Unit would have an impact in promoting French language services by monitoring compliance with the *FLSA*, identifying issues of non-compliance, and contributing to improvements;
- The FLS Unit would do thorough investigations and publish impactful reports with evidence-based solutions to problems; and
- The Commissioner would table separate Annual Reports devoted to our work under the *FLSA*.

We have honoured all of those commitments and accomplished meaningful results in the promotion and protection of French language services. I am particularly proud of the many constructive changes to which our FLS Unit has contributed. These include the development of bilingual Amber Alerts, simultaneous translation of government press conferences during the pandemic, and the inclusion of accents on drivers' licences and health cards. They are a testament to the dedication of the French Language Services Unit and the resolute support provided by our entire organization.

This has been a milestone year in French language services, as the "active offer" of services in French is now required under the *French Language Services Act*. This change recognizes the rights of Franco-Ontarians and reflects several of the improvements our Office has called for since 2019.

Applying the ombudsman approach – engaging directly with Franco-Ontarians, encouraging them to come forward with their issues, promoting their rights, conducting impartial, independent reviews, making evidence-based recommendations and recommending improvements – has been effective, and I am optimistic that we will continue to see improvements in response to our recommendations in this area. Among other things, we are following up on changes resulting from our Office's



investigation of cuts to French-language programs at Laurentian University, and the Interim Commissioner has launched a new investigation into the apparent lack of French in the government's outdoor advertising. More information will be provided in our next Annual Report on French language services – watch for it in December.

**Municipalities:** Another not-quite-so-new area where our work and expertise continues to pay dividends is the municipal sector. This report details many stories of how we helped individual residents with by-law enforcement issues and the like, as well as vulnerable people seeking fairness from housing authorities and utilities. Meanwhile, as the government has added more accountability mechanisms to municipalities – integrity commissioners, codes of conduct and closed meeting investigators are now all mandatory – our Office has played a critical role in providing consistent guidance to municipalities across the province.

For this Ombudsman, the only thing more satisfying than resolving complaints is preventing them – and one way we do that is through communications products that inform people and agencies of their rights and obligations. For example, we distributed a new edition of our popular Open Meeting Guide to every municipal clerk and elected council member after the October 2022 elections, and we introduced additional guides for municipal codes of conduct and integrity commissioners this summer.

**School boards and more:** Our voice has been heard at the school board level as well: The government's new education legislation makes integrity commissioners mandatory for school boards, too – something my Office has long called for. We have made further suggestions to the government to help make these new accountability officers successful, and will of course be there to help anyone who encounters issues with them in future.

I anticipate more constructive results from our newest, ongoing investigation into the plight of adults with developmental disabilities who are being inappropriately housed in hospitals.



May 25, 2023 ■ Ombudsman Paul Dubé and staff speak to members of the public at our booth at Newcomer Day, Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto.

I am also hopeful that our recommendations and submissions to the government about improving de-escalation training for police across the province will be incorporated into pending legislative changes this fall.

## Stronger together

A recap of the year would not be complete without a nod to my ombudsman colleagues across Canada and around the world with whom I have the privilege and pleasure of collaborating. I am honoured to represent the growing North American ombudsman community as its Regional President on the International Ombudsman Institute's World Board of Directors. In addition, I am proud to have served this year as President of the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman (CCPO).

The work that ombudsman offices do as democratic institutions is not solely to promote optimal public services and government administration. The Ombudsman's role in "the promotion and protection of human rights, good



June 7, 2023 ■ Ten of the 13 members of the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman at their annual meeting, held at our Office this year. Back row, from left: Yukon Ombudsman Jason Pedlar, British Columbia Ombudsperson Jay Chalke, Nova Scotia Deputy Ombudsman John House, Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé, Alberta Ombudsman Kevin Brezinski, Northwest Territories Ombud Colette Langlois; front row, from left: Newfoundland and Labrador Citizens' Representative Bradley Moss, New Brunswick Ombud Marie-France Pelletier, Prince Edward Island Ombudsperson Sandy Hermiston, Manitoba Ombudsman Jill Perron.

governance and the rule of law" was recognized by the United Nations in a resolution in 2020. Several organizations that measure and track the quality of democracy have noted a marked deterioration over the past decade, as more democracies are declining, and some are sliding into autocracy. Even Canada's Chief Justice has warned that the global rise in misinformation threatens national institutions and processes that underpin democracy.

Across the globe, we have seen that actions to abolish oversight, to undermine freedom of the press, weaken courts and concentrate power in the hands of the executive can undermine liberal democracy from within. While legislatures oversee a range of government functions, and courts uphold the rule of law, liberal democracy relies on the independent oversight exercised by roles like the Ombudsman, Auditor General, Electoral Officer, et al.

The role of Ombudsman in strengthening democracy by overseeing government and the public sector has been

recognized, since 2019, in a unique international set of standards, referred to as the Venice Principles. They are intended to protect ombudsmen around the world who are facing threats, and emphasize that the Ombudsman is an important element in states based on democracy, the rule of law, good administration, and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This past June, then-Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell spoke about this in an address to my fellow CCPO members that resonated with us deeply – so much so that I have included an excerpt at the end of this Message. I and my peers around the world and across Canada will remain vigilant and support strong, independent ombudsman institutions everywhere.

## A strong foundation

Finally, I want to recognize the enormous behind-the-scenes efforts that enable the Ombudsman's Office to have the impact that it does. This past year in particular, our Human Resources, IT and Facilities professionals have managed tremendous post-pandemic challenges, from transitioning us from fully remote to hybrid work, to executing an ambitious recruitment plan. We recently surpassed 90% of our full staffing complement of **186** for the first time since our 2016 mandate expansion, bolstering our ranks of talented Early Resolution Officers and Investigators and enabling us to serve even more Ontarians, even more efficiently. We have reorganized our executive team and are in the course of developing a strategic plan and benchmarks that I look forward to sharing in upcoming Annual Reports. We are also strategically reviewing our extensive communications and outreach efforts to ensure as many Ontarians as possible are aware of and can benefit from our fast, free and confidential services.

This report is filled, as usual, with examples of exactly that – the stories of people who brought their issues to us, and how their experiences translated into better public services for others. Their stories deserve to be shared, and shared widely. They allow us to demonstrate, every day, the difference we can make.





June 6, 2023 ■ Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell (centre, blue suit), welcomes the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman at her residence at Queen's Park.

“ I am pleased to have the opportunity to show my support for the important work you do. I know it can be incredibly complex, but it is fundamental to the health of our democracy. [...]

[Y]ou have taken on a daunting challenge: You mediate between large public systems and individuals' often deeply personal experiences. In the process, you ask: 'How can fairness be achieved for everyone?' [...]

We have seen attacks on democracies themselves – with misinformation and disinformation that destabilize the very grounds on which we establish whether people are, in fact, being treated fairly. [...]

You provide a voice for some of the most vulnerable in our society, so that they can be heard. You are a voice for our fundamental rights. A voice for fairness. And a voice for accountability. All of which are critical to maintaining the trust that our democracy is built upon.

Although the stories that emerge from your work can involve difficult, sometimes devastating experiences, they are nonetheless inspiring.

They show that here in Canada, we have the capacity and capability to take a long, hard look in the mirror, and to make positive, systemic change. You give us confidence that those in need can find ways to be treated fairly, now and in the future.”

---

— Hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, speaking to Ombudsman Paul Dubé and other members of the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsmen at Queen's Park, June 6, 2023.





# 2022-2023 AT A GLANCE



- 1** June 13, 2023: A member of the Ombudsman's Children and Youth Unit staff speaks to delegates during the Annual Chiefs Assembly of the Chiefs of Ontario, in Thunder Bay.
- 2** May 17, 2023: Ombudsman Paul Dubé and Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay attend the annual flag-raising for the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, hosted by Toronto Pflag at City Hall, Toronto.
- 3** June 12, 2022: Ombudsman staff at our booth at the annual conference of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, Niagara Falls.
- 4** June 17, 2023: Ombudsman Children and Youth staff at our booth at Youth Pride Durham, Whitby.
- 5** May 30, 2023: Ombudsman staff attend the Canadian Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement's annual conference, Halifax.
- 6** May 25, 2023: Ombudsman Paul Dubé meets with Ombudsman and State Comptroller of Israel, Matanyahu Englman, Toronto.
- 7** April 27, 2023: Ombudsman staff at our booth at the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association conference, Thunder Bay.





**8** June 25, 2023: Ombudsman Paul Dubé and staff march in the Toronto Pride Parade. **9** May 8, 2023: Ombudsman Paul Dubé, President of the International Ombudsman Institute's North American region, alongside IOI North America directors Nadine Mailloux, Montreal Ombudsman (left) and Diane Welborn, Dayton and Montgomery County Ombudsman (right), Vienna, Austria. **10** May 25, 2023: Ombudsman staff at our booth at Newcomer Day, Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto. **11** August 10, 2022: Ombudsman Paul Dubé releases his 2021-2022 Annual Report during a press conference at Queen's Park. **12** April 27, 2023: Ombudsman staff at our booth at the annual Ontario Small Urban Municipalities conference, London, Ont. **13** May 8, 2023: Ombudsman Paul Dubé with the Ombudsman of Ukraine, Dmytro Lubinet, during the annual meeting of the World Board of the International Ombudsman Institute, Vienna, Austria. **14** October 18, 2022: Laura Pettigrew, General Counsel (left), and Diana Cooke, Director of Children and Youth, speak about inclusive investigative report writing at the Forum of Canadian Ombudsmen's annual conference, Ottawa. **15** May 4, 2023: Ombudsman Paul Dubé prepares to release his report on delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board, Queen's Park Media Studio, Toronto.



# ABOUT

# OUR OFFICE

## What is an ombudsman?

The institution of the parliamentary ombudsman, developed in Scandinavia more than 200 years ago, promotes transparency, accountability, fairness and a respect for people's rights. "Ombudsman" is a gender-neutral Swedish term that means "officer" or "commissioner," and refers to a person who represents or protects the interests of the public at large.

## Ontario Ombudsman

Established in 1975, the Ontario Ombudsman is a parliamentary ombudsman – an Officer of the Legislature, independent of the government and political parties. We enhance governance by promoting fairness, accountability and transparency in public services as well as government and public sector administration.

The *Ombudsman Act* stipulates that complaints to our Office are confidential and investigations are conducted in private. Our services are free of charge.

## The role of the Ombudsman

The role of the Ombudsman is to impartially and objectively review complaints from people who feel they have not received fair treatment in their dealings with public sector bodies, to resolve them wherever possible

and to investigate where warranted and make evidence-based recommendations to improve service to the public. In our case, these include complaints about:

- Ontario government departments and public sector agencies
- Municipalities
- School boards
- Universities
- French language services
- Child protection services

The Ombudsman's role was captured by Justice Brian Dickson of the Supreme Court of Canada in 1984 in a description that is no less true today:

*The traditional controls over the implementation and administration of governmental policies and programs—namely, the legislature, the executive and the courts—are neither completely suited to nor entirely capable of providing the supervision a burgeoning bureaucracy demands. The inadequacy of legislative response to complaints arising from the day-to-day operation of government is not seriously disputed.*

*The demand on members of legislative bodies is such that they are naturally unable to give careful attention to the workings of the entire*

*bureaucracy. Moreover, they often lack the investigative resources necessary to follow up properly any matter they do elect to pursue... The Ombudsman represents society's response to these problems of potential abuse and of supervision. His unique characteristics render him capable of addressing many of the concerns left untouched by the traditional bureaucratic control devices. He is impartial. His services are free, and available to all. Because he often operates informally, his investigations do not impede the normal processes of government.*

*Most importantly, his powers of investigation can bring to light cases of bureaucratic maladministration that would otherwise pass unnoticed. The Ombudsman "can bring the lamp of scrutiny to otherwise dark places, even over the resistance of those who would draw the blinds": Re Ombudsman Act (1970), 72 W.W.R. 176 (Alta. S.C.), per Milvain C.J., at pp. 192-93. On the other hand, he may find the complaint groundless, not a rare occurrence, in which event his impartial and independent report, absolving the public authority, may well serve to enhance the morale and restore the self-confidence of the public employees impugned.*

In addition to the thousands of individual cases we resolve every year, our extensive systemic investigations and resulting recommendations have prompted widespread government reforms, benefiting millions of Ontarians through improved services, reduction of waste, and even saving lives. These include process improvements at the Landlord and Tenant Board, enhanced de-escalation training for police, additional

screening of newborn babies for preventable diseases, better access to drug funding, overhauls of lottery ticket retailing and property tax assessment, new training for child protection workers, more supports for adults with developmental disabilities, and additional measures to ensure the safety of children – including Indigenous children – in care. Our Office also handles thousands of complaints about municipalities and school boards, promoting accountability and transparency at the local government level.

## Our affiliations

Our Office works collaboratively with many other provincial, national and international oversight bodies to share insights, strategies and best practices. Participation in organizations related to our jurisdiction optimizes our knowledge and skills and enables us to better serve Ontarians. 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. The IOI has six regional chapters: Africa, Asia, Australasia and Pacific, Europe, North America, and Caribbean and Latin America. 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. Ombudsman Dubé served as CCPO president for 2022-2023.



May 8, 2023 ■ Ombudsman Paul Dubé (back row, far left) and the rest of the International Ombudsman Institute's World Board, at their annual meeting, Vienna, Austria.

**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. Our Office participates in FCO conferences and workshops, including its "ombudsman essentials" training program which is delivered in partnership with Osgoode Professional Development.

**International Association of Language Commissioners (IALC):** The French Language Services Commissioner (interim) 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.

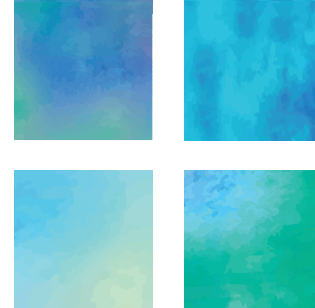
**United States Ombudsman Association (USOA):** The USOA fosters the development of professional ombudsman offices across the U.S., Canada and elsewhere.

**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):** Our Office regularly participates in discussions and knowledge sharing with members of NACOLE, which 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 (when COVID-19 restrictions permit). 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 lowest level possible. To do so, we often make informal 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 informally, 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

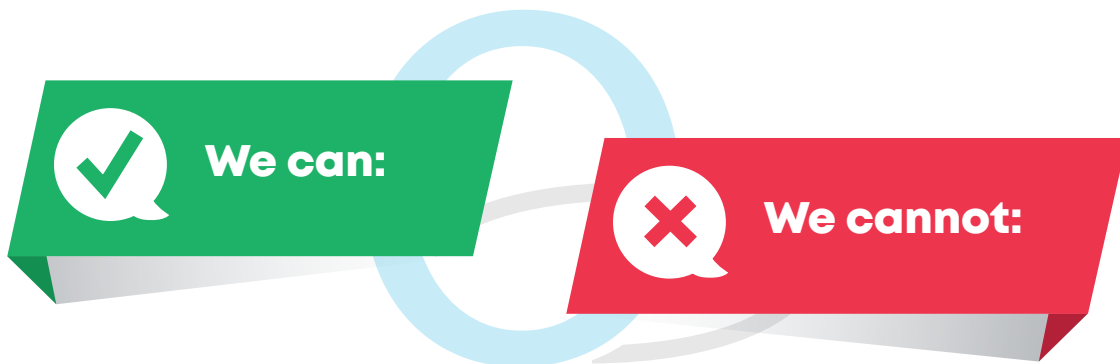
The Ombudsman provides his findings to the organization in question for a response before they are finalized. His findings and recommendations are published in investigation reports and/or in our Annual Reports, and shared publicly on our website, via social media, news media and our newsletter. Copies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



## RESULTS

We communicate the outcome of individual investigations and most reviews and informal 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.





- Review and investigate complaints about provincial government organizations, administrative tribunals, municipalities, universities, school boards, child protection services and French language services.
  - Help you connect with the appropriate officials, if you have not already tried to resolve your complaint.
  - Refer you to others who can help, if the matter is not within our jurisdiction.
  - Attempt to resolve your problem through communication with the organization(s) involved, if your efforts to do so have failed, and the matter is within our jurisdiction.
  - Determine whether or not the organization's actions or processes were fair.
  - Flag trends in complaints to government officials and recommend best practices and/or ways to improve administrative fairness.
  - Assist public sector officials with general questions about our processes or best practices.
  - Conduct a formal investigation, if the Ombudsman determines it is warranted, and make recommendations for constructive change.
- Overturn decisions of elected officials or set public policy.
  - Redo the work of other investigative bodies or accountability mechanisms.
  - Take sides in disputes.
  - Provide legal advice or representation.
  - Act as an advocate for a person or public body; we advocate for fairness.
  - Take complaints about:
    - Individual elected officials at the municipal, provincial or federal levels
    - The Premier, Cabinet and its decisions, and political staff
    - Judges and the provincial and federal courts
    - Legal disputes
    - Private companies or individuals
    - Local, provincial or federal police services or conduct (except some Ontario Provincial Police administrative matters)
    - The federal government and its departments and agencies
    - Federally regulated industries (banks, insurance companies, etc.)
    - Self-regulating professions (e.g., lawyers, doctors, nurses)
    - Student associations and student unions
    - Local public health units
    - Hospitals and long-term care homes (except those designated under the *French Language Services Act*)





# VALUES, MISSION AND VISION



## OUR VALUES

- **F**air treatment
- **A**ccountable administration
- **I**ndependence, impartiality
- **R**esults: Achieving real change



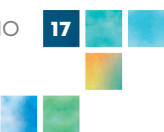
## OUR MISSION

We strive to be an agent of positive change by enhancing fairness, accountability and transparency in the public sector, and promoting respect for French language service rights as well as the rights of children and youth.



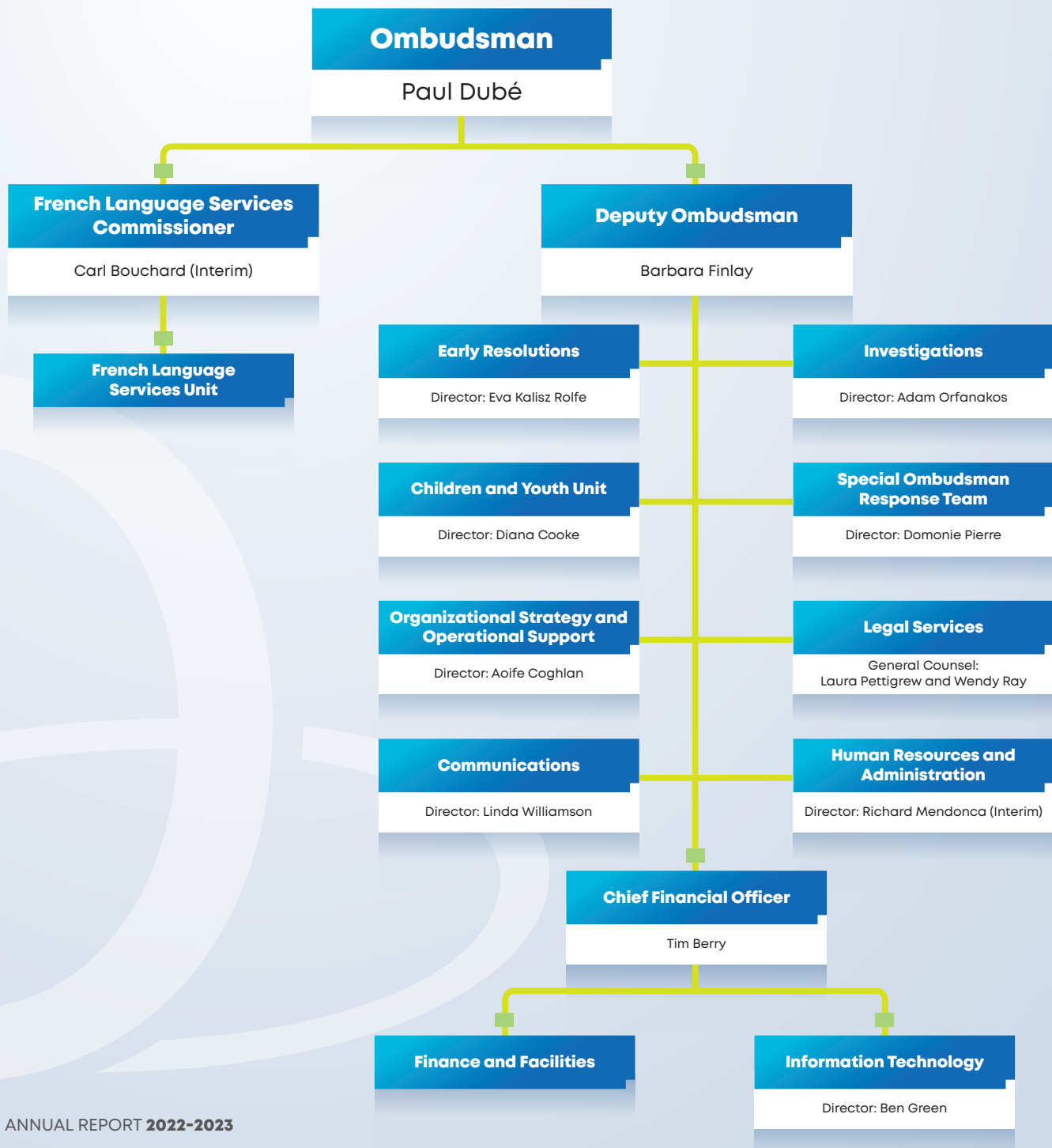
## OUR VISION

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



# WHO

# WE ARE





“ I am passionate about language rights, which directly translates to my interest in our mandate of protecting the language rights of Franco-Ontarians. We are making a difference in the lives of Francophones in Ontario.”

— Katherine, Investigator, French Language Services Unit

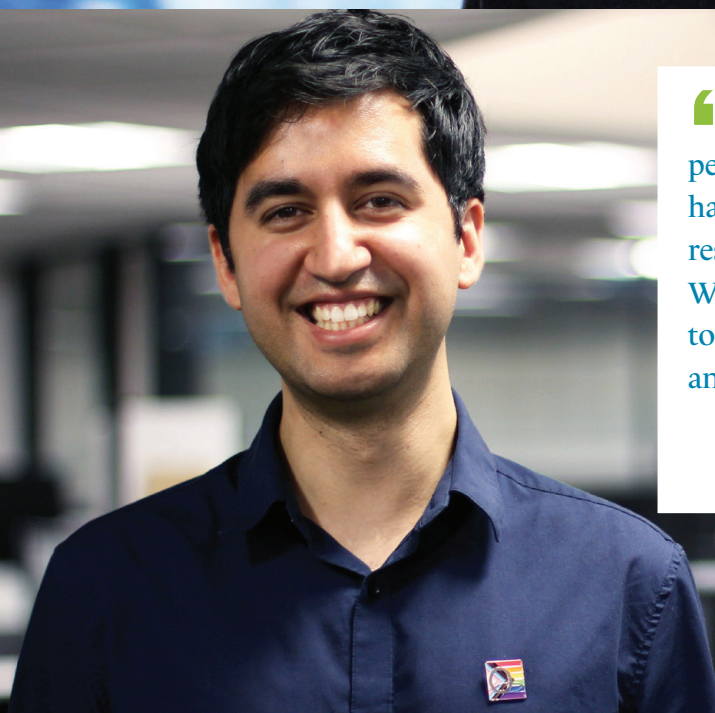
“ My job is to ensure people are treated the same as everybody else, and with procedural fairness. Maybe they’ve exhausted everything else, or they don’t know that there are additional steps they can take to solve their problems, and I’m able to help them. The government can be a black box to people – I can help by shining a light.”

— Victor, Early Resolution Officer, Generalist Unit



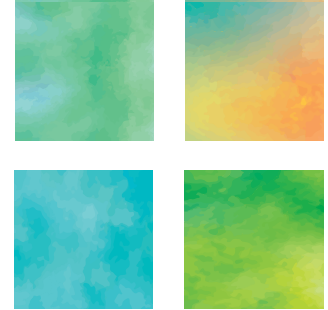
“ Our Office provides a critical service for the people of Ontario. The Children and Youth Unit has a special role to play, because we take and resolve complaints from young people in care. We want them to know that they have the right to contact our Office, and that we’ll help them and give them an opportunity to be heard.”

— Maxim, Early Resolution Officer, Children and Youth Unit





# ABOUT THIS REPORT



Cases discussed in this report were received between **April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023**. Significant events and developments occurring between March 31, 2023 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.** Each topic chapter discusses the main complaint trends and significant cases of the past year.

## GOOD TO KNOW



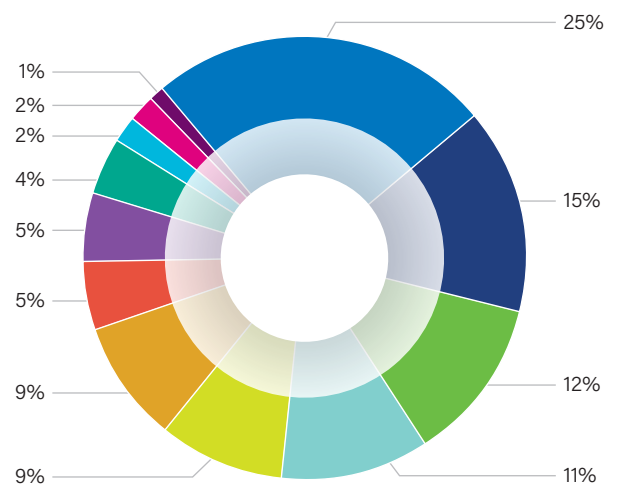
Watch for “Good to know” boxes throughout this report for explanatory notes.

Our Office recognizes people of all **gender expressions**, 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**.

## CASES BY SUBJECT

- |                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| ■ Law & Order      | ■ Health                   |
| ■ Municipalities   | ■ Transportation           |
| ■ Money & Property | ■ Certificates & Permits   |
| ■ Social Services  | ■ Employment               |
| ■ Children & Youth | ■ French Language Services |
| ■ Education        | ■ Energy & Environment     |





## 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**  
Delays

**4**

Legislation and/or regulations

**5** Communication

**6** Enforcement of rules or policies

**7**  
Broader public policy matters

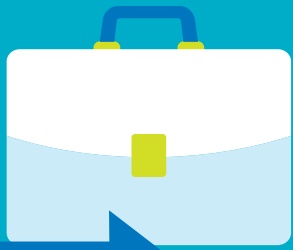
**8**  
Procedures

**9**  
Internal complaint processes

**10**  
Funding

# 2022-2023

# HIGHLIGHTS



## 24,551 TOTAL CASES RECEIVED

44%

resolved  
within one  
week

54%

resolved  
within two  
weeks



41%  
received online



53%  
received by phone



6%  
by mail or fax

## OUTREACH WITH STAKEHOLDERS

111

events

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

138

stakeholder  
consultations  
and requests  
answered



## REPORTS ON INVESTIGATIONS

*Lessons for the Long Term,*  
September 2023



76

recommendations  
accepted

*Administrative Justice Delayed,  
Fairness Denied,* May 2023



61

recommendations  
accepted

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



58

recommendations  
accepted

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



18

recommendations  
accepted

**Municipal closed meeting  
investigations**

39

reports and letters  
issued in fiscal  
2022-2023



# 2022-2023

# HIGHLIGHTS

## TOP 10 CASE TOPICS



3,524  
Correctional facilities



2,909  
Municipalities and municipal meetings



2,043  
Tribunals Ontario



1,678\*  
Children and youth in care



922  
Ontario Disability Support Program



794  
School boards



471  
Family Responsibility Office



441  
Universities and colleges



296\*\*  
French language services



245  
ServiceOntario

185,646

website visitors from 191 countries

712,900

pageviews



1,910

print media articles



2,200

broadcast media stories



## COMMUNICATIONS



112,965

people

Facebook reach



70,951

people

Instagram reach



527,088

Twitter impressions



6,200

YouTube views

\*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 2023.

# YEAR

# IN REVIEW



## LAW & ORDER

### Overview

This 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. The largest number relate to the correctional system. We also receive hundreds of cases about administrative tribunals and aspects of the justice system and policing that are within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

In 2022-2023, we received **3,880** cases relating to the Ministry of the Solicitor General, **3,524** of which were about correctional facilities. We received **2,590** cases about Ministry of the Attorney General organizations, **2,043** of which were about Tribunals Ontario (as in previous years, the bulk of these were about the Landlord and Tenant Board, the subject of an investigation detailed in the **Money & Property** section of this report).

Municipal police services and police services boards, as well as judges and court decisions, are outside of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction – however, wherever possible, we refer people to the appropriate avenues to address their complaints about them.



## Trends in cases – policing

The Ombudsman does not directly oversee police services (we referred some **260** complaints about them to the appropriate bodies), but our Office's mandate does include several aspects of police oversight. These include the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the Special Investigations Unit, and some administrative aspects of the Ontario Provincial Police. Legislation passed in 2019 – called the *Comprehensive Ontario Police Services (COPS) Act, 2019* – will make significant changes to policing and police oversight, but has not yet been fully brought into force.

Among other changes, the *COPS Act* will give the Ombudsman jurisdiction over a new body for complaints about police called the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency, which will replace the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIRPD). We will also oversee the Office of the Inspector General of Police, which saw a new Inspector General appointed in February 2023. The Act will also address changes to police de-escalation training that the Ombudsman recommended in 2016 (see more under **Investigations – policing**). The government indicated in early 2023 that it intends to bring the Act fully into force in late 2023 or early 2024.

### *Ombudsman's submission to the Ministry – special constables*

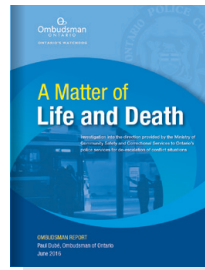
In February 2023, the Ombudsman made a submission to the Ministry of the Solicitor General as part of its consultation on new regulations under the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019* regarding special constables. He proposed that the province's 3,000 special constables, who work for police services, transit agencies, universities and community housing corporations, be required to meet consistent standards for the use of de-escalation techniques, and that the Ministry establish an independent mechanism to handle complaints about them.

“ I welcome this effort to develop a regulatory framework for special constables. However, my review has identified further gaps that the government should address to ensure accountability and transparency in the oversight of special constables.”

– Ombudsman Paul Dubé, submission to the Ministry of the Solicitor General, February 2023

## Investigations – policing

### Police de-escalation training



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

**Investigation update:** A decade after the 2013 fatal shooting of 18-year-old Sammy Yatim by a police officer on a Toronto streetcar, very little has changed with how police in Ontario are taught to

de-escalate crisis situations.

The Ombudsman made 22 recommendations in his 2016 report to improve de-escalation training and update the police use-of-force model. His recommendations were accepted, but to date, none have been implemented, and the *COPS Act* of 2019 is still not fully in force. He has continued to call on the Ministry of the Solicitor General to specifically address de-escalation through a regulation that requires officers to de-escalate situations before using force, wherever possible.

In August 2023, the Ministry invited public input on proposed new regulations under the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*. These include a regulation that would address mandatory training on use of force and de-escalation techniques, along the lines of what the Ombudsman recommended. Our Office is monitoring these developments closely.

### **Ombudsman's submission to the Ministry - use of force**

In October 2022, the Ombudsman made a submission as part of the Ministry's consultation regarding use of force by police services. He again reiterated the recommendations from his 2016 report, *A Matter of Life and Death*, including that the Ministry develop a consistent provincial standard for de-escalation techniques. He made five proposals in his submission, focusing on the need for a regulation requiring the use of de-escalation techniques before force wherever possible, and for a reporting process to learn from successful de-escalation cases and develop best practices.

**“ I remain concerned by the lack of progress of the Ministry of the Solicitor General in addressing important shortcomings with regard to de-escalation. [...] I hope that the Ministry will take this opportunity to reconsider its use of force and de-escalation strategy.”**

— Ombudsman Paul Dubé, submission to the Ministry of the Solicitor General, October 2022

## **Trends in cases – correctional services**

Correctional facilities continued to be the top source of complaints and inquiries to our Office in 2022-2023, with **3,524** cases – consistent with 3,691 in the previous fiscal year, and substantially below the pre-pandemic peak of 6,000 in 2019-2020.

The most common inmate concerns were access to general medical care and specific cultural resources, as well as lockdowns and segregation (solitary confinement) and the use of force by correctional officers.

Ombudsman staff liaise regularly with relevant officials in the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the correctional system to discuss individual cases, complaint trends, and potential systemic issues. These discussions help us resolve complaints quickly and provide valuable feedback to the Ministry about its operations.

In June 2023, Ontario notified the federal government that it, like other provinces across Canada, would end the widely criticized practice of holding federal immigration detainees in provincial correctional facilities, as of next summer. The Ombudsman welcomed the decision.

### **Medical issues**

Problems with medication, access to specialists, and mental health issues continue to be the most common topics of complaint from people housed in provincial correctional facilities. Our staff prioritize cases where an inmate's safety or well-being might be at risk.

For example:

- We helped an inmate get an appointment with a psychiatrist and receive needed pain medications after he had been waiting more than a month for both.
- An inmate called us for help after he had a seizure, fell, and suffered a concussion. We spoke with health care staff and made sure he was scheduled to see a neurologist.
- Even after submitting seven requests, an inmate with extreme tooth pain still hadn't seen a dentist. We reached out to health care staff at the correctional facility, and the inmate was able to get his tooth pulled.

## Hunger strikes

In March and April 2023, we received complaints from inmates at Central East Correctional Centre and Niagara Detention Centre, about a number of concerns that prompted hunger strikes at those facilities. Among the topics of complaint were overcrowded dorms, frequent lockdowns, the removal of additional cable TV channels that had been provided to them during the pandemic, insufficient access to fresh air and exercise and inadequate access to hygiene supplies and clean laundry.

We made inquiries with senior staff at both facilities, who informed us of steps taken to address these concerns. These included implementing rotating lockdowns to ensure that inmates are still able to leave their cells even when staffing levels are low, increasing the number of protective custody dorms to reduce overcrowding, installing basketball hoops in the main yard, and increasing inmates' laundry access. We also made inquiries to confirm that inmates were being regularly provided with hygiene supplies and that the TV programming changes were consistent with Ministry policy. We continue to make inquiries and monitor how the facilities are dealing with overcrowding and lockdowns.

## Deaths in custody

In January 2023, the Chief Coroner of Ontario released a report and recommendations related to a dramatic increase in deaths in the province's correctional facilities. It noted 186 non-homicide deaths and 8 homicides between 2014 and 2021. Our Office is monitoring the issue of inmate deaths in custody to ensure that they are properly and thoroughly investigated and that family members are able to receive detailed and timely information regarding the investigations into the deaths of their loved ones. In one case where a family member complained to us about a lack of communication from the jail about an inmate's death, we discovered that one of her concerns was not covered by any of the three investigations that had been ordered. We also spoke with the Ministry's new Family Support Liaison, who helps inmates' next of kin navigate the circumstances following a death in custody.

## Mail and communications

People in custody rely heavily on the mail to communicate with their legal representatives and loved ones. We often hear from inmates about problems in sending or receiving documents, as well as issues with other communications, such as phone privileges. A few examples:

- We received a complaint about calls from a correctional facility repeatedly dropping after just two minutes. We alerted staff at the facility, who discovered this had been happening for two weeks without their knowledge. They fixed the issue with their phone provider and gave inmates phone credits for the dropped calls.
- An inmate had twice completed the necessary forms to appeal his conviction and provided them to jail staff to send, but the appeal court never received them. After we made inquiries, the inmate met with the facility superintendent and his appeal forms were sent.

- An inmate told us his lawyer had dropped off documents for him a month earlier, but he never received them. We spoke to facility staff, who originally said they couldn't locate the file. Upon further review, they found it and made efforts for the inmate to view it.
- An inmate complained to us after he was unable to call his elderly father, who had recently been admitted to hospital. We immediately spoke with senior staff at the correctional facility, and they were able to co-ordinate contact between the inmate and his father.

## Cultural issues

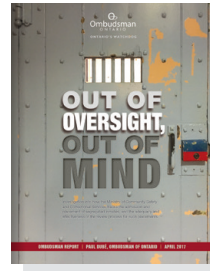
We often help inmates who complain about a lack of access to cultural and spiritual programming and services, including religious diet accommodations and access to spiritual ceremonies. We also address issues about access to Native Inmate Liaison Officers or worship leaders.

For example:

- We stepped in when Indigenous inmates complained that lockdowns at their facility had limited their access to smudging and other cultural services. As a result of our inquiries, staff were reminded to make smudging available to eligible inmates on a daily basis, and to give them the option of a dry smudge program if regular smudging was not available.
- An inmate complained he was not allowed to smudge, even though other inmates at the same facility could. Staff at the facility looked into it and told us they discovered the inmate hadn't specified a particular spirituality when he arrived there. As a result of our intervention, the inmate met with a Native Inmate Liaison Officer and was given access to smudging services.

## Investigations – correctional services

### Tracking of inmates in segregation



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

**Investigation update:** The Ombudsman's investigation into the tracking and monitoring of inmates in segregation (the Ministry of the Solicitor General's term for solitary confinement), was prompted by the

disturbing case of a young Indigenous man who was held in segregation for more than four years. The Ombudsman made 32 recommendations, including a more precise definition of "segregation" and better tracking of inmates' time in segregation across facilities.

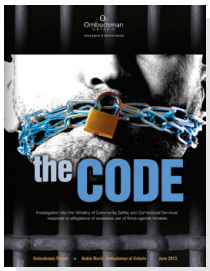
The Ministry has implemented **29** of the Ombudsman's recommendations, including implementing a new definition of "segregation." Ministry officials continue to provide our Office with regular updates on their progress on the others.

Among those that have not been implemented is the Ombudsman's call for independent panels to review segregation placements. He reiterated this recommendation in a 2021 submission to the Ministry (noted in last year's Annual Report). Another improvement still to be addressed is better integration of the Ministry's paper and digital systems. The Ministry continues to provide the Ombudsman with regular updates on its progress on these recommendations.

**Individual cases:** Our Office also continues to follow up on individual cases in which inmates with serious mental health conditions are held in segregation. Although by law, inmates with a serious diagnosed mental illness cannot

be held in segregation, some may have safety or security concerns that prevent them from being housed with other inmates. In those cases, we speak with local facility staff and follow up with the Ministry to ensure the inmates continue to have access to programming and applicable mental health supports.

## Use of force in correctional facilities



**Report: *The Code*, released June 2013**

**Investigation update:** Ten years after our Office released this report on the use of force by provincial correctional officers, the Ministry of the Solicitor General has implemented **42** of its 45

recommendations. These were aimed at addressing excessive use of force against inmates, and the pervasive “code of silence” that our investigation revealed amongst some correctional officers at the time.

Among the new policies resulting from this report were a code of conduct to address the code of silence, better training on excessive use of force, and improved processes for documenting injuries to inmates. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the installation of video cameras at some facilities, but the Ministry hopes to complete this by the end of 2023. More than half of the operational and senior managers within correctional facilities have also received the new training.

Ombudsman staff continue to meet with Ministry officials regularly to bring forward cases of concern, as well as monitor how the Ministry reviews and investigates use-of-force incidents.

**Individual cases:** In 2022-2023, we received **104** complaints alleging excessive use of force by correctional

officers, compared to 84 the previous year. In such cases, we follow up to check on the inmate’s health, to ensure that they have received proper medical attention where warranted and to ensure the facility has done the required investigation and fulfilled its reporting requirements. For example, we discovered several cases this past year where inmates were not given the written results of these investigations, contrary to Ministry policy. After we flagged this to senior officials, they reminded regional directors that they must let inmates know, in writing, whether or not their complaints were substantiated.

## Other trends in cases

### Administrative tribunals

Complaints to our Office about Tribunals Ontario – a cluster of 13 administrative tribunals that collectively deals with some 100,000 cases each year – significantly increased again in 2022-2023, climbing to a record high of **2,043** (up from 1,110 the previous year and 935 in 2020-2021). The vast majority of these – **1,894** cases – were about the Landlord and Tenant Board, which was the subject of a systemic investigation and report by the Special Ombudsman Response Team. (For more on this investigation and the Ombudsman’s May 2023 report, see the **Money & Property** section of this report.)

We also saw an increase in complaints about other tribunals – for example, complaints about the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) increased to **93** from 78 the previous year. Delay was the most common topic of complaint, and we resolved many cases by facilitating communication with tribunal officials. We raised this with senior HRTO officials, and learned that 60% of the 9,000 cases in its system were considered backlogged, primarily due to a shortage of adjudicators during the pandemic. We are actively monitoring the HRTO’s efforts to clear this backlog, which include hiring more adjudicative

staff, offering new opportunities for mediation on cases filed prior to 2020, creating dedicated groups to focus on common issues, and planning upgrades to its outdated case management system.

## Firearms registration backlog

We received more than **100** cases about Ontario's Chief Firearms Office (CFO) prior to October 2022, when the federal government's ban on the sale, purchase and transfer of handguns came into effect. Complainants were experiencing long delays in transferring the ownership or registration of their firearms before the deadline. Officials with the CFO told us they were dealing with more than 10,000 applications, on the heels of a backlog that was compounded by COVID-19 (noted in our 2020-2021 report). The CFO subsequently hired additional staff to manage the volume of requests, and we continue to monitor these efforts.

## Case summaries

### Dangerously close

An inmate sought our help because he was housed on the same range with another inmate who was facing charges for stabbing him – and, he told us, was now extorting him for access to the canteen, food and phone calls. We alerted senior staff at the facility, and the two inmates were separated shortly thereafter. Information about their history was also added to their respective records to avoid it happening again.

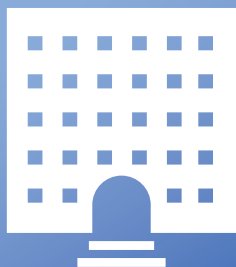
### Issues overlooked

An inmate told us a correctional officer threw him to the ground and started punching and kneeling him – leaving the inmate with swollen arms and a broken hand. We confirmed that the inmate had received medical treatment, including medication and multiple x-rays. However, we discovered that although the facility investigated the incident, it had not properly addressed concerns identified during the investigation. We escalated the case to senior Ministry officials, who in turn spoke with regional directors about following proper investigative processes.

### Added grief

A woman whose common-law spouse had died while they were living in a homeless shelter complained to us that the Chief Coroner's Office had buried him even though she had requested to claim the body. When we spoke to the Coroner's Office, we were told that the woman hadn't taken the appropriate steps to claim the body – but that officials had also missed an email with information to contact her directly. When they couldn't reach her, they contacted the man's father instead, who gave directions for burial. Other errors were also discovered, including that the Regional Supervising Coroner did not review the entire file before signing off. As a result of our inquiries, the Regional Supervising Coroner apologized to the woman. The Chief Coroner's Office thanked us for our intervention and agreed to make improvements to avoid similar situations in future.





## MUNICIPALITIES

### Overview

Municipalities consistently generate a high volume of complaints and inquiries to our Office – not surprisingly, because there are 444 of them across the province. The Ombudsman oversees all aspects of municipal administration (except for complaints within the jurisdiction of the Toronto Ombudsman), and also investigates complaints about closed meetings in most municipalities (except in those that have appointed their own closed meeting investigators).

Our work in this area exemplifies the benefits of informal case resolution. In 2022-2023, we received **2,814** cases about general municipal issues. Since the Ombudsman was first given full oversight of municipalities in 2016, we have handled close to 25,000 cases – and resolved almost all of them by making referrals and dealing with local officials, without need for formal investigation.

The Ombudsman has only deemed formal investigations necessary six times since 2016. However, those investigations continue to benefit Ontarians, as we frequently refer municipalities to the Ombudsman's recommendations and reports, which cover such topics as by-law enforcement, hiring practices, trespass policies and procurement and auditing processes. (All of these reports can be found on our website, and hard copies can be requested from our Office.)

Complaints about closed meetings, by contrast, often require formal investigation – but they are limited to narrow legal questions about how the council, local board or committee decided to meet behind closed doors and whether this was justified. The Ombudsman's decisions in scores of cases (we have been the default closed meeting investigator for most municipalities since 2008) provide a rich resource for municipal officials and the public seeking to understand the open meeting rules. They can be found in the dedicated portal on our website called **Open Meetings: Case Digest**.



August 14, 2022 ■ Ombudsman Paul Dubé and staff at our booth at the annual conference of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Ottawa.

In the interest of promoting transparency, accountability and consistency in municipal administration, we work proactively with municipal officials to address and avert complaints. Our staff speak at and attend municipal conferences throughout the year, where we field questions, provide information on best practices, and share our reports, guides and other resources like our popular “tip cards” for municipalities. These cover topics like best practices for integrity commissioners, municipal codes of conduct and complaint protocols, and can be obtained from our Office or downloaded from our website.

## Trends in complaints – general municipal issues

The most common complaints we receive about municipalities relate to councils and committees, by-law enforcement and infrastructure. We have also worked with dozens of municipalities and members of the public to resolve questions and issues related to integrity commissioners and other accountability officers.

### Councils and committees

We received **278** complaints about municipal councils and committees in 2022-2023, down from 422 the previous year. The Ombudsman does not have the authority to overturn political decisions made by municipal councils. Instead, we share best practices or make recommendations to help ensure that council’s processes are administratively fair and comply with local by-laws and policies.

For example, a woman complained to us about a council decision allowing a developer to use trees to block sound from train tracks, rather than the “sound wall” set out in the subdivision agreement. We learned that the matter was still ongoing, so we referred the woman to speak directly with her councillor. She did so, and the council later rescinded its decision.

We also reviewed complaints about the **City of Brampton’s** controversial decisions to cancel ongoing third-party audits into a proposed university in Brampton and the procurement of several requests for proposals. In a letter to the municipality in May 2023 (which was published by the city), our Office encouraged council to revisit its decision to cancel the audits and ensure that third-party investigators have real and perceived independence. We also reiterated the Ombudsman’s conclusion – from his 2017 investigation of Brampton’s procurement practices (our Office’s very first formal



investigation of a municipality) – that the city should consider appointing an auditor general. He continues to stand by that proposal.

## Accountability officers

The Ombudsman can review complaints about municipal accountability officers, including integrity commissioners, municipal ombudsmen, auditors general, and lobbyist registrars, but only after they've completed their process or declined to review a complaint. We received **61** complaints about local accountability officers in 2022-2023.

All municipalities are required to appoint an integrity commissioner, or make the services of one available, to provide education to members of council and local boards, and the public, and to address complaints about the ethical conduct of members. If an integrity commissioner finds that the code of conduct was breached, they can recommend council impose a penalty (a reprimand or up to 90 days suspension of pay), or remedial measures (like an apology or removal from committees). Commissioners can also conduct inquiries into whether a council or local board member has contravened the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act (MCIA)*. In the wake of an inquiry, the commissioner has the option to apply to a judge under that Act (the court has the authority to impose additional penalties if they find a contravention, including declaring the member's seat vacant).

Given how prevalent they are, it is understandable that we receive more complaints about integrity commissioners than any other type of accountability officer. The most common concerns raised to our Office about integrity commissioners are:

- **Delay:** Concerns about the time taken by the commissioner to complete an inquiry, including cases where the municipality has failed to set any timelines in their complaint or inquiry protocol.
- **Communication:** Cases where the commissioner does not inform the complainant of the outcome of their

review or inquiry, or fails to provide reasons to support their decision.

- **Process issues:** Integrity commissioners have discretion to determine their own procedures, but they should comply with any requirements set by the municipality in a complaint or inquiry protocol.

We also receive complaints about integrity commissioners failing to comply with the strict legislative requirements associated with *MCIA* complaints. Unlike complaints under a code of conduct, complaints about pecuniary conflicts of interest can generally only be made within six weeks of the applicant becoming aware of the alleged contravention, and must be accompanied by a statutory declaration. The commissioner's inquiry must be completed within 180 days, and the commissioner is required to publish written reasons if they decide not to apply to a judge.

This past year, we reminded some municipalities of their obligations to have these important accountability mechanisms. For example:

- Two residents complained to us that their municipality did not have a code of conduct or an integrity commissioner. After we explained to municipal officials that these were required by law, they quickly took steps to put them in place.

## GOOD TO KNOW



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.

- The Ombudsman wrote to council for the **City of Niagara Falls** in February 2023, in light of complaints that the integrity commissioner did not have authority to investigate complaints about local board members. The city had also barred non-residents from making a complaint and charged a \$500 fee to file a complaint with the integrity commissioner. The Ombudsman explained that the law requires all municipalities to appoint an integrity commissioner, or make the services of an integrity commissioner available to address complaints about local board members, and urged the city to eliminate the fee and residency requirement. The council subsequently voted to extend the code to apply to local board members, but left the \$500 fee and the residency requirement in place. Our Office will continue to monitor this situation and stands by the Ombudsman’s position that all municipalities should remove such unnecessary and heavy-handed barriers to making complaints.

“ Although some municipalities have chosen to implement a complaint fee, my Office has publicly denounced this practice, as it penalizes complainants for exercising their statutory rights, and may prevent legitimate complaints from being brought forward due to concerns about financial cost. Charging a fee to complain is entirely inconsistent with the primary intent of the integrity commissioner scheme, which is to foster democratic legitimacy and public trust at the local level.”

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– Letter from Ombudsman Paul Dubé to council for the City of Niagara Falls, February 21, 2023

## By-law enforcement

We received **397** cases about by-law enforcement in 2022-2023. Some people were concerned about municipalities failing to enforce local by-laws, while others complained that by-law enforcement officials targeted them in an unfair manner. Some examples:

- A couple living in a rural area told us the municipality was ignoring their complaints about a construction company operating next door. The municipality told us the company did landscaping, which is allowed under a local by-law. But when it sent staff out to inspect, they found it was a construction company after all, and ordered it to cease operations.
- We heard from a psychiatrist who operates a small part-time practice from home. The municipality ordered him to comply with a costly backflow prevention program that is intended to apply to manufacturing and industrial operations. After we spoke with municipal staff, they agreed to review the program and whether it should apply to the psychiatrist’s home business.
- A woman complained to us that her municipality charged her a clean-up fee for logs and tree branches that she said were dumped on her property without consent. However, municipal officials told us they had done an investigation that confirmed the branches came from a tree on the woman’s property. We arranged for city staff to speak with the woman to explain.

## Housing

Housing programs and services are facilitated across the province through district social services administration

boards (DSSABs) and service managers, often upper-tier municipalities. We received **327** complaints about housing in 2022-2023, many of which involved concerns about delays at the service manager level.

For example:

- A man told us he waited for a decision on his housing application for over a year. After we reached out to the local housing department, the man received a call from their staff, and help with obtaining community care benefits.
- We helped a mother living in an emergency shelter re-establish contact with her social worker at the local housing provider who had not contacted her for more than two months.
- A woman was living in a shelter with her family after being evicted from a subsidized housing unit for non-payment of rent. When we looked into her complaint, we discovered the shelter case worker had provided her with confusing and incomplete information about the documentation she had to submit to continue to receive family shelter benefits. She was given an extension to submit the proper paperwork, and a supervisor at the housing authority agreed to update their policies and procedures to be more clear in future.
- A man who uses a mobility scooter told us his building's elevator was broken, but the municipal housing provider had denied his request to move to a ground floor unit. The denial letter did not set out the criteria for a move, or any appeal process. After we spoke with them, housing authority staff contacted the man to help him appeal the decision; in the meantime, the elevator was repaired.



May 11, 2023 ■ Senior Counsel Robin Bates speaks to municipal officials and staff in Simcoe County on how we work with municipalities.

## Infrastructure, water and sewer services

Municipal infrastructure includes such key services as potable water, storm water and wastewater systems, snow clearing, roads and bridges. We received **133** complaints about infrastructure in 2022-2023, as well as **63** about municipal water and sewer services.

For example:

- After his water bill was adjusted due to a faulty meter, a man complained that the municipality credited his account instead of refunding his money. Staff told us this was a normal practice for adjustments over \$1,000, but agreed to issue a cheque in this case.
- The family of an elderly man sought our help after a pipe split under his home and he received a \$570 water bill. The company that bills on behalf of the municipal utility had refused their request to reduce the bill, but after we made inquiries, it agreed to do so.
- A man complained that his municipality ignored his repeated requests that it install a street sign near his home. He told us the lack of a sign made it difficult for emergency services to find his home. After we made inquiries, the municipality not only installed a sign, it also improved its complaints process to ensure cases are assigned to an appropriate staff member.
- A visually impaired man complained to us about several broken auditory signals and worn-down sidewalk tactile warning patterns at intersections in his municipality. Municipal staff told us their policy is that auditory signals should be fixed or replaced within 24 hours of a complaint, and they have a program in place to upgrade all of the tactile warning patterns. They provided the man with contact information so he can reach out directly to them in future.

## Investigations

### Hiring process for Regional Municipality of Niagara’s Chief Administrative Officer



Report: *Inside Job*, released November 2019

**Investigation update:** In last year’s Annual Report, we noted that the Regional Municipality had implemented all but one of the Ombudsman’s 16 recommendations in

this investigation, which revealed problems in the municipality’s hiring process for its Chief Administrative Officer in 2016, as well as with an investigation of the matter by a local ombudsman.

As of September 2022, the municipality has fully implemented all of the recommendations, and the Ombudsman considers the matter closed.

“ I wish to thank regional council for implementing the recommendations in my report. I also wish to acknowledge the excellent co-operation that my investigative team received from regional staff as the recommendations in my report were implemented.”

— Ombudsman Paul Dubé, letter to Niagara Regional Chair Jim Bradley, September 7, 2022



“As a team, we implemented all of the Ombudsman’s recommendations, ensuring we took every step necessary to prevent this type of controversy from occurring again. I want to thank Mr. Dubé, and his staff, for the exceptional report and recommendations, as well as their commitment to work with us as we implemented policies to make the Region more open, fair and transparent.”

– Statement from Niagara Regional Chair Jim Bradley,  
September 13, 2022

## Trends in cases – open meetings

Anyone who thinks a meeting of a municipal council, committee or local board was wrongly closed to the public can make a complaint. Municipal meetings must be open unless they meet certain narrow exceptions set out in section 239 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

The Ombudsman is the investigator for these complaints in **266** of Ontario’s 444 municipalities, as of March 31, 2023 (the highest number since the open meeting complaint system was established in 2008). In fiscal 2022-2023, we received **95** complaints about closed meetings, **81** of which were within the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction (we referred the rest to the investigators appointed by the subject municipalities).

We reviewed **79** meetings of **47** different municipalities and local boards, and issued **17** reports and **22** letters on our findings. The Ombudsman found **21** of the meetings were illegal (27%, down from 38% in 2021-2022), and



Our popular handbook, *Open Meetings: Guide for Municipalities*, can be downloaded from our website or ordered from our office, along with numerous other resources on municipal governance.

called out **24** procedural violations. We also made **28** best practice recommendations to help municipalities improve transparency.

All of these reports and letters can be found on our website and in our searchable online database of decisions, called **Open Meetings: Digest**.

Our Office also publishes a pocket-sized handbook filled with information about the open meeting rules and how the Ombudsman has interpreted them in numerous

investigations, called **Open Meetings: Guide for Municipalities**. The latest edition (our fifth since 2008) was published on our website in late 2022. As we do after every municipal election, we sent printed copies to every council member and clerk across the province in early 2023. Copies are also available from our Office upon request.

## Who must hold open meetings?

The open meeting rules apply to municipal councils, local boards, and committees of either of them. Although definitions of these bodies are set out in the *Municipal Act* and several court decisions, their members and other municipal officials are not always aware that they have to follow the open meeting rules.

This past year, for example, the Ombudsman found that the **City of Kawartha Lakes'** Off-Road Vehicle Task Force, the **City of Cornwall's** Municipal Grants Review Committee/Working Group, and the **Hamilton Waterfront Trust** were required to hold open meetings, but the **Niagara Falls** Hydro Holding Corporation board of directors, and the **City of Hamilton's** Working Group of the Physician Recruitment and Retention Steering Committee were not.

## Electronic meetings

More than three years after the province amended the open meeting rules to permit municipalities to meet electronically – a necessity in the face of the global pandemic – many municipalities have implemented the Ombudsman's best practices to ensure electronic meetings are open to the public, and complaints about them have declined.

Some recent case examples:

- The **City of Sault Ste. Marie** broke the rules when it failed to provide the public with information about how to watch virtual meetings.

## GOOD TO KNOW



Meetings of school board trustees are also subject to open meeting rules – and public complaints. Read about how we reviewed complaints about closed school board meetings in the **Education** chapter of this report.

- The **Saugeen Municipal Airport Commission** complied with the rules, but could have averted complaints by providing a phone number in its meeting notices for people who might need assistance accessing its meetings.
- The **Township of McKellar** had technical issues that rendered four of its virtual meetings illegal – including one where sound and connectivity issues were so bad that the public was effectively locked out.

## Informal gatherings

If a quorum of members gathers and materially advances the business or decision-making of a council, committee, or local board, the gathering may fit the *Municipal Act's* definition of a “meeting” – whether members meant it to or not. The Ombudsman reviewed complaints about five gatherings of municipal council members in 2022-2023, but found none of them broke the rules. For example:

- In the **Township of Adjala-Tosorontio**, this was because the newly elected council members who gathered in November 2022 had yet to take office.
- In the **City of London**, the Ombudsman found no evidence that members of council met privately to discuss filling a vacant seat.

- In the **Town of Wasaga Beach**, council members who went to a ground-breaking ceremony did not advance business.

## Exceptions to the rules

The most common question in the complaints we review about closed meetings is whether the meeting fits within the exceptions set out in s. 239 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. In most cases, it does. Illegal meetings are usually the result of a municipality discussing a matter behind closed doors that doesn't fit within any of the exceptions.

Some examples:

- The **Town of Wasaga Beach** erred when it cited the exception for security of the property (s. 239(2)(a)) to close a meeting, because the discussion had nothing to do with potential threats, loss, or damage to municipal property.
- The **Municipality of Arran-Elderslie** wrongly cited the "personal matters" exception (239(2)(b)) when it discussed the general duties, salary and other details for its vacant Community Development Coordinator position, because no personal matters of any identifiable individuals were discussed.
- The **Town of Pelham's** discussion about the potential development of a local airport under the "acquisition of land" exception (239 (2)(c)) was too speculative to fit the exception.
- The **City of Brockville** was not entitled to cite the "litigation" exception (239(2)(e)) when it discussed an employee's performance and conduct, as there was no ongoing litigation and any concern about future litigation was speculative.
- Meetings held by the **Saugeen Municipal Airport Commission** did not fit the "solicitor-client privilege" exception (239(2)(f)) because no legal advice was discussed.
- **Bruce County's** discussion about where to locate the Nuclear Innovation Institute did not fit the exception for "information supplied by another level of government" (239(2)(h)) because it doesn't apply to information supplied by another municipality.
- When the **Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands** discussed a study report for an internet broadband project, the "third party information" exception (239 (2)(i)) did not apply because the report belonged to the municipality.
- The **City of Cornwall** should not have used the "education or training" exception (239 (3.1)), as the discussion did not involve providing general information to educate or train members.

## Matters of procedure

Our reviews often result in recommendations that municipalities amend their procedure by-laws and/or follow best practices to improve their transparency and ensure they consistently follow the open meeting rules.

The Ombudsman routinely calls on municipalities to ensure they provide adequate notice of meetings – including special ones. For example:

- He recommended the **City of Brockville** amend its procedure by-law because it failed to provide notice to the public for special meetings, and that the **City of Cornwall** amend its by-law to include notice requirements for committee meetings.
- When **Prince Township** held an emergency meeting without attempting to notify the public first, the Ombudsman found it contravened its procedure by-law by failing to make "a reasonable effort" to provide notice.

When they go into closed session, municipalities must first pass a resolution in open session, stating the fact of the closed meeting and the general nature of the matter to be discussed. The resolution should also include the exception cited. Afterwards, they should report back in open session on the general nature of the discussion.

They must also take minutes (the Ombudsman recommends also making audio or video recordings of all meetings, open and closed), and not take votes in closed session, unless the matter is procedural or to provide direction to staff.

In recent cases:

- The **Town of Amherstburg** failed to record minutes in closed session.
- The **Municipality of Casselman** broke the rules when it voted in closed session to approve an offer to purchase property, because the wording of the resolution did not reflect a direction to staff.
- **Bruce County's** minutes failed to include a full description of the subjects discussed in closed session, making it difficult to determine what took place when attendees could not recall the meetings.

“ I can assure you that this Mayor and Council are taking advice and guidance from the provincial Ombudsman seriously and we are ensuring that transparency and accountability are always at the forefront of every decision and component of business we conduct for this Township,’ stated Mayor Enzo Palumbo. [...] Prince Township vowed to ensure that all procedural processes are followed precisely and accordingly to the *Municipal Act* and that all meetings of Council are posted appropriately and timely onto the Township’s website or other means of communications with the public.”

— Media statement issued by Prince Township, February 9, 2023

## Case summaries

### Permit me

A woman complained to us about how her municipality handled her request to convert a shipping container into a garden shed. She said after she chose not to proceed with a building permit application because of the cost, she received a notice from the municipality that the container needed to be removed. She received no response to the complaints she submitted via the municipality’s website. We spoke to the municipality’s Chief Administrative Officer, who acknowledged that the municipality had not responded to the woman’s complaints, contrary to its customer service standards. As a result of our inquiries, municipal staff contacted the woman to apologize for the delay and explain why the shipping container had to be removed from her property. Staff also agreed to assist her if she wished to reapply for a building permit.

### Home again

A woman reached out to us because her family’s subsidized housing unit was uninhabitable after a fire. She told us that their tenant insurance was going to run out but the unit was not ready to be occupied. Since her tenant support agent could not give them a firm date when they could move back in, the family was facing homelessness. In response to this urgent situation, we quickly contacted the upper-tier municipality responsible for housing and had a manager reach out to the woman to provide immediate assistance. A few weeks later we heard back from her that they had picked up the keys to their repaired unit and could move back home.



## All's well that ends well

Three residents told us that construction near their homes had caused their wells to dry up. The municipally-owned corporation responsible for water services gave them temporary water tanks, but informed them that the tanks would be removed. The residents felt that their well water remained unsafe. Our Office reached out to the utility provider, which agreed to leave the temporary water tanks on the residents' properties. As a result of our intervention, the utility provider also hosted a town hall meeting for residents and sent them the results of safety tests on their well water. Some whose water was deemed safe had their supply reconnected to their wells. The utility provider also installed monitoring devices to ensure the water levels in these wells remained consistent. In case any new issues arose, we facilitated contact between residents and a project manager at the utility provider.

“ Calling this office and receiving such timely, high quality service is much appreciated.”

## Every vote counts

Shortly before the day of the October 2022 municipal election, several voters in one municipality complained to us that their mail-in ballots arrived too late. Municipal clerks are responsible for local elections, and in this municipality, the clerk confirmed that Canada Post had delivered some mail-in ballots too late for voters to return them by mail in time to be counted. To ensure they still had the opportunity to vote, the municipality allowed them to drop off these ballots at City Hall and a second location on election day. We shared this information with the complainants and explained that the municipality had addressed the delays by providing affected voters with an alternative way to use their mail-in ballots.

“ [The Ombudsman employee I spoke to] was professional, informative, patient, efficient – she took the time to listen to me, document my issue, outline the process to me and also provided me with ... next steps.”



## MONEY & PROPERTY

### Overview and trends in cases

Provincial ministries, agencies and corporations that deal with financial and property matters are included in this category, such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ontario Cannabis Store, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC), and the Landlord and Tenant Board. This chapter also includes cases about the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT), which handles money and property matters for people who are unable to do so themselves.

Complaints and inquiries about the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), which is part of Tribunals Ontario, continued to climb in 2022-2023 – to a new high of **1,894** cases, from the previous year's 964. We continued to hear from people who had issues with the Board's backlog, its online portal and virtual hearings; we resolved many of these cases while working to finalize the Ombudsman's report into delays at the Board (released in **May 2023** – see more under **Investigations**).

Cases remained relatively low for other organizations in this category in 2022-2023 – for example, **18** complaints about the Ontario Cannabis Store, **12** complaints about the LCBO, and **17** complaints about MPAC.

### Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT)

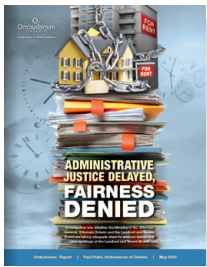
We received **177** cases about the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT), up from 167 the previous year and 116 in 2020-2021. Complaints about the OPGT come from individuals who are under financial guardianship, or from their concerned family members. Common complaints include difficulty reaching caseworkers, or disagreements about caseworker decisions. Our staff often escalate these concerns within the OPGT.

Some case examples:

- A man sought our help after his sister, an OPGT client, died. We helped him get in touch with his sister’s caseworker in order to close her estate.
- We made sure a woman’s caseworker contacted her bank to confirm she was able to get a replacement bank card.
- We helped OPGT improve its communication between a man and his wife’s caseworker after he complained to us that he wasn’t getting answers.

## Investigations

### Delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board



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

**Investigation update:** This investigation probed the systemic causes and impacts of severe case backlogs at the Landlord and Tenant Board, which began prior to the

COVID-19 pandemic and continued to get worse. In all, the Special Ombudsman Response Team reviewed more than **4,800** complaints from people on both sides of the landlord-tenant relationship. In his May 2023 report, the Ombudsman made **61** recommendations to the Board and Tribunals Ontario, as well as the Ministry of the Attorney General. All were accepted.

The Ombudsman found that tens of thousands of Ontarians were denied fast, fair access to justice and suffered hardship because of the Board’s backlogs, staff shortages and antiquated technology. With the added

pressures of pandemic lockdowns, remote work, virtual hearings and a pause on eviction orders, the Board was “fundamentally failing in its role of providing swift justice to those seeking resolution of residential landlord and tenant issues,” he noted.

The report detailed numerous cases of tenants who endured harassment, unsafe living conditions, and improper attempts to force them from their homes, as well as those of landlords coping with tenants’ abuse, criminal conduct, and facing financial ruin. For example:

- A tenant who complained of criminal harassment by her landlord in September 2020 was denied an expedited hearing. The hearing was set for November 2021, then adjourned to February 2022.
- A 74-year-old landlord applied in December 2019 to evict a tenant who assaulted him and damaged property; an order wasn’t issued until January 2021.
- A woman who rented out the upper half of her home and lived in the basement sought to evict the tenants in December 2021 because she was dying of cancer. In March 2022, she was told to start the process over again because of an error in her application, but she died two months later.

“ I cannot express enough how significant your help and support has been. I shall remember it.”

- Two tenants on disability support who are legally blind and suffered in an unsafe, vermin-infested apartment for years sought an expedited hearing in November 2020. They were denied and told they filed the wrong form. They had moved before the matter was finally heard in June 2021.

Among the inefficiencies the investigation identified were:

- A shortage of qualified adjudicators, compounded by a lengthy, cumbersome appointment and training process;
- A complex application process that sometimes forced applicants to start over for errors;
- Antiquated systems that could not triage or expedite urgent cases or track adjudicators' orders, caseloads and term expiry dates; and
- A lack of French-speaking adjudicators.

In addition to their work on the systemic investigation, Ombudsman staff continued to resolve individual cases and work proactively with officials to address issues. These included concerns about the Tribunals Ontario portal, launched in late 2021 to allow applicants and their representatives to file applications online. We helped many people who had trouble with this system.

Tribunals Ontario and the Ministry of the Attorney General have pledged to report back to the Ombudsman on their progress in implementing his recommendations. The government also announced an investment of \$6.5 million to hire 40 more adjudicators and more staff at the Board. The Ombudsman urged the government to act quickly to increase the Board's capacity and hire the necessary support staff, noting that training and recruitment could result in further delays. Our Office will closely monitor the Board's efforts to implement the recommendations and will report on its progress in future Annual Reports.

“ We appreciate the work of the Ombudsman’s Office in conducting a comprehensive review of the LTB and recommending areas for improvement. [...] Over the past three years, we have taken action and implemented a number of strategies to address delays and provide better and more timely service. [...] There remains more work to do. With the new resources we’ve been allocated by the Government of Ontario and plans we have underway, many of the report’s recommendations are being addressed. We are confident that significant inroads into the backlog will be made this fiscal year. We will continue to work with the Ombudsman’s Office and the Ministry of the Attorney General to address the report’s recommendations.”

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— Statement by Sean Weir, Executive Chair of Tribunals Ontario, and Harry Gousopoulos, Executive Director of Tribunals Ontario, May 4, 2023

“ I want to thank [the complainants] for coming forward and letting us tell their stories. [...] We helped many of these people resolve their individual issues, but their stories also helped us identify numerous solutions to help the Board return to its proper function. This is an important function of my Office: We do not just report on problems; we recommend workable solutions, based on the evidence we find and our expertise in government systems.”

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— Ombudsman Paul Dubé, speaking at press conference for the release of *Administrative Justice Delayed, Fairness Denied*, May 4, 2023



## Case summaries

### Capacity concerns

A woman sought our help after her husband, who recently had an aneurysm, underwent a capacity assessment to determine his ability to make decisions about his property and personal care. We learned that she had made an application for guardianship of her husband, but her lawyer had not submitted all the required documentation to the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT). After we made inquiries with the OPGT, a manager offered to speak with the woman to answer her questions.

### Guardian angels

A community support worker contacted us with concerns about a 97-year-old neighbour. She suspected the elderly woman was being taken advantage of by a man who apparently had control over her finances and vehicle. The worker told us she had reported these concerns to the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT) several years ago, but never heard back. We checked with OPGT officials, who said they were investigating the situation – and shortly after, we confirmed that the OPGT had become the elderly woman’s guardian of property.

### Waiting to be heard

A single mom of a child with a disability contacted us in desperation. She had purchased a new house, but the tenants living there refused to move out, and owed more than \$20,000 in rent. As the woman waited for a hearing with the Landlord and Tenant Board, she had to stop therapy for her daughter and was maxing out her credit cards to cover both the mortgage on the house and her own rented residence. Her request for a faster hearing had been denied. After we raised this case with LTB officials, the Board revisited the woman’s request and she was granted an expedited hearing.

“ It wouldn’t have happened without your great support! I really appreciate what you did – that was beyond professionalism, enthusiasm and willingness to support people stuck in certain situations.”

“ The service I received was quick and efficient. Everything was perfect, and even went beyond my expectations.”



## SOCIAL SERVICES

### Overview and trends in cases

Social services and benefits are delivered across the province through programs within the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, such as the Family Responsibility Office (FRO), the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), and the Ontario Autism Program (OAP). Municipalities and district social services administration boards also administer social assistance through Ontario Works (OW).

We help hundreds of people every year as they try to navigate these systems, assisting to clarify their status for particular programs, helping them receive payments owed to them, or facilitating communication to resolve their issues. The most common problems we see in this area are related to customer service and delays. In 2022-2023, we saw increases in complaints related to several of the Ministry's programs. We proactively flagged these trends and worked closely with officials to resolve individual cases.

Persistent problems with a lack of resources and adequate placements for adults with complex special needs also prompted the Ombudsman to launch a new investigation in this area – focusing on those who are inappropriately placed in hospitals.

#### Family Responsibility Office (FRO)

As the agency responsible for enforcing court-ordered child and spousal support payments across the province, the FRO was consistently one of the top sources of complaints to our Office for many years, reaching more than 1,000 cases in 2015-2016 and in 2016-2017. Since then, the Ministry made several improvements, and we saw a decline in FRO cases – to 350 last year and 381 in 2020-2021. In 2022-2023, however, we received **471** cases, an increase of 34%.

Our Office works closely with FRO officials to resolve individual complaints, which most commonly are about the type of enforcement action the FRO has taken. For example:

- A woman sought our help because she was owed more than \$4,000 in support payments. When we raised the case with the FRO, officials discovered they had failed to register a writ against the support payor's property. As a result of our inquiries, the FRO reached out to the support payor and the woman received the money she was owed.
- We heard from a man who was no longer obligated to pay ongoing child support, but still owed \$15,000 in arrears. He told us he was having trouble making ends meet because the FRO was garnishing 50% of his pension income, even though he had sent them his required payments. We spoke to FRO staff and discovered they hadn't received the man's payments. They also determined they had overcharged him, and ultimately refunded him **\$856**.
- A woman who was owed **\$3,000** in support contacted us because she could not reach FRO staff. Her ex-partner had a new job, and she wanted to let them know so they could start the process to garnish his wages. We reached FRO officials, who said they would act on this information and monitor the case to ensure the woman started receiving support payments.

## Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)

The income and employment supports provided to Ontarians who have disabilities include dental care and prescription coverage, as well as specific disability-related costs. ODSP has also consistently been one of the top sources of complaint to our Office. We received **922** complaints and inquiries about ODSP in 2022-2023 – up 22% from 755 in 2021-2022 (which in turn was a 37%

increase over the previous year). Although our Office cannot address policy decisions, such as the amount of funding provided to recipients (an issue that was a topic of political debate this past year), we can help resolve cases about poor communications, delays, eligibility, or other administrative issues.

For example:

- We helped make sure a man received a shelter allowance of \$500 so he could pay his rent, after he moved and his file was held up while being transferred between ODSP offices.
- A family sought our help after they moved and didn't receive shelter allowance payments from ODSP for nearly two years. It turned out ODSP officials failed to update the family's address. After we escalated the issue, they received **\$4,400** in missed payments.
- A woman who had waited six months for a decision about her ODSP application was frustrated because she needed ODSP approval to be eligible for legal aid during a court custody matter. We intervened, and her application was approved within days.
- The ODSP told a man he had been overpaid close to \$6,000, but due to our intervention, this was determined to be incorrect and the overpayment was removed from his file.

## Ontario Autism Program (OAP)

This past fiscal year, the government launched AccessOAP, a new body to help families of children and youth on the autism spectrum manage their OAP benefits. Families continue to transition to this new service. We received **73** cases about the OAP, a slight decrease from 88 the previous year. Complaints and inquiries largely related to long waits for core clinical services, as well as concerns about whether the Ministry met its public commitment to have 8,000 children enter core clinical services by late

2022. Although our Office cannot address policy decisions regarding the OAP, we assist families with individual issues wherever possible, and we meet regularly with senior Ministry officials to flag complaint trends and discuss developments related to the program. We heard from many families who were struggling due to long wait times and delays in receiving services.

We also continued to hear from families who experienced financial hardship due to delays in receiving interim one-time funding – a program that was introduced in 2020 and ended at the end of the last fiscal year. For example:

- A mother had submitted the appropriate forms for one-time funding for her daughter multiple times, but was told her application was incomplete. After we contacted OAP officials, they discovered the woman's complete application had been submitted more than six months earlier, and they ensured she received **\$5,000** for her daughter's therapy.
- A woman who had been waiting two years to receive funding for her grandson told us she couldn't reach anyone at the OAP. After we raised the case with OAP staff, they worked with the woman to obtain some information that was missing in her application, and ultimately provided her with **\$22,000** in funding.

## Ontario Works (OW)

Ontario Works is a social assistance program administered by municipal service managers and district social services administration boards. It provides funding for food, shelter, and other living costs to people in financial need and falls within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction over municipalities and local boards. OW also saw a substantial increase in complaints and inquiries to our Office: We received **368** cases about Ontario Works in 2022-2023, a 75% jump from 210 the previous year. Most cases related to decisions about eligibility for benefits, issues with caseworkers, or questions about processes.

Some examples:

- Our intervention helped a woman get temporary child care funding when she secured part-time work and her funding was cancelled.
- We helped several people figure out what documents they had to submit to OW to ensure they received the benefits they were entitled to, such as banking information or other income verification documents.
- We confirmed with OW officials that they had interpretation services available, after a man complained to us that he was unable to deal with them in a South Asian language.

## Services for adults with developmental disabilities

Complaints and inquiries in this area were consistent with previous years, and generally came from families and caregivers struggling to access services and supports, or to obtain assessments and residential or program placements.

We are aware of some positive changes, including updated guidelines for the Passport program that resulted in increased per-person funding (cases related to this program declined to **15** from 26 the previous year). In some, we were able to assist adults with developmental disabilities by escalating their situations to senior Ministry officials.

Some examples:

- A 22-year-old man with complex needs had begun to be aggressive and self-injure at home, and his family was desperate. We spoke with senior Ministry staff, who made sure the family was connected with additional services and supports until the man received an appropriate residential placement.



- A 50-year-old man with both developmental disabilities and complex mental health challenges was discharged from his residential placement with nowhere to go. We escalated the case to senior officials at the Ministry, who ensured services and supports were arranged. We continued to monitor the case until the man was moved into a residential placement, where he is reportedly doing well.
- A mother sought our help because her adult son with developmental disabilities had been housed in a hospital for more than a year. She was worried because he wasn't able to leave the hospital ward because of a staffing shortage, and his mental health was deteriorating. We ensured that appropriate housing options were being considered, resulting in the son obtaining a fully funded residential placement in the community.

In many other cases, however, adults with complex special needs and their families continue to be in crisis, unable to access adequate or appropriate care, support, resources or placements. These recurring, persistent issues affecting vulnerable Ontarians are indicative of serious systemic problems, which our Office continues to investigate and follow up on. (For more, see **Investigations.**)

## Investigations

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

Launched: March 2023

**Investigation update:** This new and ongoing investigation is focused on the plight of adults with developmental

disabilities who are inappropriately housed in hospitals due to a lack of supports and services in the community. At issue is whether the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health are taking adequate steps to ensure that these individuals are transitioned to appropriate community residential services.

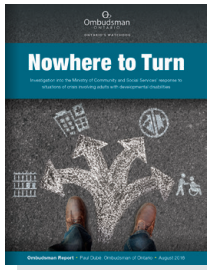
Investigators are examining what obstacles, including access to appropriate French language services, are preventing the transfer of these individuals out of hospital, and how the ministries are addressing them. The investigation is being conducted by the Special Ombudsman Response Team, which specializes in systemic investigations, with assistance from our French Language Services Unit.

The investigation will also include a review of the progress by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services in implementing the recommendations in the Ombudsman's 2016 report, *Nowhere to Turn* – five of which specifically dealt with people who are identified as “alternate level of care” patients in hospitals (for more, see separate update on *Nowhere to Turn*).

“It is particularly concerning that vulnerable individuals with complex needs are in hospital – often for long periods – despite having no medical need to be there. They are often kept in restraints, and their condition deteriorates the longer they remain in hospital settings, according to those who have complained to us.”

— Ombudsman Paul Dubé, press release announcing investigation, March 27, 2023

## Services for adults with developmental disabilities in crisis



Report: *Nowhere to Turn*, released August 2016

**Investigation update:** This investigation examined troubling cases of adults with developmental disabilities whose families were in crisis and could not find suitable services or placements for them.

As a result, many were being housed in hospitals, long-term care homes, shelters, or even jails, and some suffered abuse and neglect. The investigation focused on the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services' response to such cases, which accepted all 60 of the Ombudsman's recommendations.

We have received more than 2,600 complaints related to this issue – **1,000** since the report was released in 2016. We continue to work to resolve individual cases, and have regular meetings with senior Ministry officials to discuss ongoing complaint trends and flag the most egregious and urgent cases. In 2022-2023, we received some **100** cases about families in crisis. Many families told us about loved ones who have languished in inappropriate placements for years. We work to resolve these cases individually wherever possible – and in March 2023, the Ombudsman launched a new investigation focused specifically on adults with developmental disabilities who are inappropriately housed in hospitals (see separate update for more).

All but **9** of the Ombudsman's recommendations from *Nowhere to Turn* have been addressed. Those that remain outstanding include several that require interministerial collaboration. We will continue to monitor the government's progress closely until all 60 recommendations have been implemented.

## Case summaries

### Seal of disapproval

A man who pays family support through the Family Responsibility Office (FRO) complained to us that the FRO was garnishing too much from his federal disability payments, leaving him unable to pay his rent. We raised the case with FRO staff, noting that a recent court order set out how much it could take from disability benefits. They initially said they disregarded the order because it was lacking an official court seal, but agreed to review the case. Once they did, they discovered the man had overpaid by close to **\$4,000**, and they confirmed they would not take further payments from him until this credit runs out.

### Suspended payment

A woman was owed thousands of dollars in support payments by a former spouse who was living in British Columbia. She told us she was concerned that the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Unit of the Family Responsibility Office (FRO), which handles interprovincial cases, was not enforcing a court order against the man. In response to our inquiries, the FRO issued an order suspending the man's driver's licence for lack of payment. The woman soon received more than **\$5,700** in lump sum payments, and the support payor agreed to make weekly payments of **\$500** thereafter to make up the money he owed.

### Funding frustration

The mother of an 11-year-old with autism and developmental disabilities contacted us when she wasn't able to access funding under the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) or the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities program (ACSD), even though she believed her child was eligible for both. When we intervened, staff at both programs followed up on the mother's applications, and the funding was confirmed: A one-time allotment of **\$5,500** from the OAP, and **\$350** per month from the ACSD program.



## CHILDREN & YOUTH

### Overview

Our dedicated Children and Youth Unit works to promote, protect and monitor the rights of children and youth living in Ontario's residential care system ("in care"), or those receiving services from a children's aid society (CAS).

Under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* (CYFSA), children and youth in care – those living in foster homes, group homes, treatment placements and youth justice facilities – have a legislated right to contact, speak with, and receive visits from the Ombudsman's Office. They must be permitted to call us for any reason and speak with us privately.

In January 2023, the government extended similar rights to students living in residence at provincial schools for the deaf, blind and deaf-blind, as well as those living at schools for students diagnosed with a severe learning disability (known as "demonstration schools"). We created new Braille and low-vision materials to help make these students aware of how to reach us.

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 or concerned professionals about issues affecting an individual or a group of young people.

Our staff have specialized expertise in the child welfare system and are able to provide guidance on the best way to resolve issues brought to our attention. Our involvement may include reviewing an agency's response, or conducting our own review or investigation. We are able to resolve almost all cases without formal investigation.

However, our investigations can have an impact well beyond the individuals and agencies involved. The Ombudsman released reports on two formal investigations by the Children and Youth Unit this past year – in December 2022 and April 2023. Not only did all of the

## GOOD TO KNOW



A breakdown of complaints and inquiries by children's aid society can be found in the Appendix.

involved agencies accept his recommendations, we understand others have incorporated them into their practices and training. As well, in July 2023, the Ministry proposed several legislative and regulatory amendments that will, if implemented, incorporate lessons learned from these cases. We will report on these developments in more detail in our next Annual Report.

### *Specialized teams and outreach*

Our staff interact directly with young people in care via in-person and virtual presentations at foster homes, group homes, and through CASs. After each presentation, we follow up with every young person privately to ask if they have any concerns they wanted to share with us. We also give presentations to those who provide or oversee care to children and youth, such as CAS frontline workers and foster parent association members.

In addition to our regular general outreach to children and youth in care, the Children and Youth Unit has three specialized teams that prioritize outreach to groups of young people who are over-represented in Ontario's child welfare system: The **Indigenous Circle**; the **Black Children, Youth and Families Table**; and the **2SLGBTQIA+ Outreach Team**. We are also in the process of creating a specialized team to lead outreach to residential students at provincial and demonstration schools.

Another dedicated team analyzes and conducts outreach regarding the mandatory Death and Serious Bodily Harm

reports filed with our Office (for more information and this year's statistics, see **Trends in Cases**).

### *Proactive work*

To proactively discuss important issues and case trends, as well as the Ombudsman's recommendations and best practices, we meet monthly with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services' Out of Home Care Team. We are also in regular contact with 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, and Youth in Transition workers.

A key focus of recent meetings with the Ministry has been its new standards for the use of physical restraints, effective July 1, 2023. These require any residential placement that uses physical restraints to inform young people that they have the right to speak to our staff in private if they have any concerns about the use of restraints. We see this and other changes in the new standard as a positive reflection of our Office's work.

## Trends in cases

The Children and Youth Unit received **1,491** complaints and inquiries in 2022-2023, down from 1,651 the previous year. There were **1,212** cases from adults (service providers, family members, support workers, police, etc.), and **279** from young people. We also received **187** cases about youth justice centres, an increase from 141 in 2021-2022.

The majority of cases – **1,218** – related to children's aid societies. Residential licensees (group homes and foster homes) were the subject of **131** cases, and there were **18** about secure treatment facilities.

The most frequent concerns raised by young people were about their placements, not receiving requested support from a children's aid society (such as financial assistance



or access to Voluntary Youth Services Agreements, which allow 16- and 17-year-olds who have left home because of concerns about their safety to access child protection services), poor access to services that respect their identity and culture, and the use of physical restraints.

Adults – usually family members – commonly complained about inadequate support or responses from children’s aid societies to their concerns. We also heard from concerned neighbours, workers and other whistleblowers about issues involving young people’s safety and well-being – such as being placed in hotels or CAS offices, or becoming involved in human trafficking.

Key issues we identified in our review of complaints and inquiries in 2022-2023, as well as in our interactions with children and youth and staff in presentations, were:

- A lack of awareness of young people’s rights – both among children and youth themselves, and staff who are obligated to advise them about their rights;
- Children not being interviewed privately during child protection investigations; and
- A lack of understanding about obligations to Indigenous children and families receiving child welfare services.

We address these issues directly and regularly in individual cases and in our interaction with young people, agencies, interest groups and Ministry officials.

## Death and Serious Bodily Harm (DSBH) reports

By law, children’s aid societies and licensed residential service providers are required to notify the Ombudsman’s 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. The Children and Youth Unit has a DSBH

team that reviews all of these reports weekly to identify potential systemic issues and cases that require follow-up.

For example, we follow up directly with the young person on every report of an injury as a result of a physical restraint (**73** cases this past year), and whenever we identify safety concerns. We also follow up to ensure all agencies that should have submitted reports did so.

We received **1,971** DSBH reports in 2022-2023, relating to **162** death incidents (**136** of which occurred during fiscal 2022-2023), and **1,809** incidents of serious bodily harm. In some cases, multiple agencies are required to submit reports about the same incident; our analysis determined that the reports reflected **1,597** separate incidents of bodily harm. (“Serious bodily harm” includes any injury requiring treatment beyond basic first aid, any injury from a physical restraint, and sexual assault.)

The DSBH team also meets monthly with staff from the Office of the Chief Coroner’s Child and Youth Death Review Analysis Unit to discuss any issues of concern and to identify any cases that weren’t reported to us. Death investigations are conducted by the Coroner, but once they are complete, we can make further inquiries or investigate any outstanding concerns about the services provided by a CAS or licensed residential service provider.

## Youth justice centres

Youth justice centres are separate from the adult correctional system, and as such, are the responsibility of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, not the Ministry of the Solicitor General. They house young people in “open” or “secure” detention (prior to trial) and custody (after sentencing).

The most common issues raised in the **187** cases we received in 2022-2023 were staff conduct, health care, and disciplinary consequences. We prioritize cases where a young person’s safety or well-being is at risk. Our inquiries in several cases prompted the centres to take action.

Some examples:

- A youth in a custody facility told us a staff member kicked him and continued to punch him while he was on the ground. After we made inquiries with senior staff at the centre and reviewed video of the incident, an investigation was launched at the facility level, and the staff member was suspended.
- A youth complained to us that he was held in the secure de-escalation unit of his youth centre for an extended time after an altercation with staff. Our review revealed he spent about 19 hours in the secure unit, which is not consistent with Ministry policy. After our inquiries, the Ministry investigated the matter. We confirmed that staff at the centre were retrained regarding placements in this unit.
- After we made inquiries about a youth who said he was assaulted by facility staff, the facility determined that the staff person did not use proper techniques in the altercation, and advised us that he would be sent for additional training.

In several cases, we were able to resolve day-to-day issues, for instance:

- We helped a youth arrange to have his brother and cousin added to the list of people he was allowed to call from the youth centre.
- When we flagged the case of one youth who was suffering painful blisters from the shoes issued by his youth centre, the facility acknowledged the problem and provided him with different shoes and a set of insoles.

We also prompted a youth centre to change a rule that penalized young people for asking to use the washroom during school hours. Several young people at the facility told us there was a rule – posted in the classrooms – that said anyone who asked to use the washroom during class would lose several behaviour

incentive “points,” resulting in a penalty such as having to spend extra time in their rooms. In light of our inquiries with senior staff, young people are now allowed to use the washroom during classes without penalty.

## Investigations

### Services provided to missing and at-risk Indigenous girl



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

**Investigation update:** The Ombudsman launched this investigation after concerns were raised about a vulnerable Indigenous girl (called “Misty”

in the report to protect her identity) who went missing in a Southwestern Ontario city in the summer of 2020. He found the three agencies entrusted with her care – Johnson Children’s Services (a foster care agency), Anishinaabe Abinoojii Family Services (the Indigenous CAS near her home community), and the CAS in the city where she went missing – failed to ensure her safety.

Misty, who was 13 at the time, went missing seven times while in the foster agency’s care, including once for 19 days. During these absences, there is evidence she was physically and sexually assaulted, used hard drugs, and suffered an overdose.

The Ombudsman made **58** recommendations to the three agencies, aimed at improving their services, training and practices to better protect young people. “It is particularly pressing that agencies in southern

Ontario such as Johnson Children's Services educate themselves and their staff on the learnings from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and consider the risk factors unique to Indigenous children in their decision-making around their care," he wrote in the report.

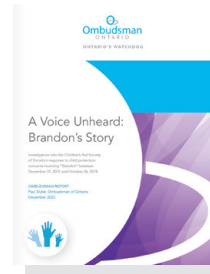
All of the Ombudsman's recommendations were accepted by the agencies, and we will report on their progress in implementing them in future Annual Reports.

“ We are committed to implementation and will continue to work closely with the Ombudsman's Office. Through engagement with our First Nations and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, we will take necessary remedial actions that best serve our children, families, and communities.”

— Sean Spencer, executive director of Anishinaabe Abinoojii Family Services, as quoted by APTN, April 14, 2023

“ Please do keep up the good work - you are excellent at what you do.”

## Toronto CAS response to child protection concerns



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

**Investigation update:** This report details how the Children's Aid Society of Toronto failed to protect the interests of a boy (named "Brandon" in the report to protect

his identity) between December 2015 and October 2018, when he was between the ages of 7 and 10. On October 22, 2018, police officers and paramedics found Brandon in shocking condition in a family member's filthy and infested apartment. When police learned the CAS did not intend to apprehend Brandon, they apprehended him themselves and took him to a foster home, where he has remained.

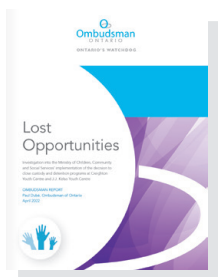
The investigation was launched in 2018 by the former Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, whose investigative function was transferred to the Ombudsman when the government closed that office in 2019. Our Children and Youth Unit completed the investigation, which revealed that the CAS's services and its response to concerns from numerous professionals involved in Brandon's life, including teachers and doctors, were often untimely and inadequate. The Ombudsman issued **18** recommendations to the CAS to "reinforce the need to keep the best interests of the child central to its service provision." It accepted all of the recommendations, including that it report back to us on its progress in implementing them.

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services also issued a directive to the CAS, effective February 16, 2023, which, among other things, compels the agency to "report on the progress of actions taken to address the findings and recommendations arising from the Ontario Ombudsman's report."

“The good news is that we’ve had an exemplary response from the Children’s Aid Society. They’ve taken this as a learning experience. They’re going to incorporate Brandon’s story into their training – as one of our recommendations called for.”

— Ombudsman Paul Dubé, as quoted in the *Law Times*, December 20, 2022

## Closures of youth justice programs in Kenora and Thunder Bay



Report: *Lost Opportunities*, released April 2022

**Investigation update:** This investigation focused on the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services’ planning and implementation of the closure of secure custody and detention

programs at Creighton Youth Centre in Kenora and J.J. Kelso Youth Centre in Thunder Bay.

The Ombudsman found the Ministry’s planning was shrouded in secrecy, which left it without valuable insight into the unique nature of these programs and the Indigenous youth they served. The planning also failed to consider the best interests of two youths in the Ministry’s care who were transferred as a result of the closures.

He made **16** recommendations aimed at improving the Ministry’s transparency, planning, and implementation of such closures in future. The Ministry accepted all of these, and in the past year, it has established a working group to address them. It has also consulted other jurisdictions, as

well as the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and a number of Indigenous groups, about how to improve its approach to closures and youth transfers.

The Ombudsman is encouraged by the Ministry’s commitment to providing meaningful responses to the recommendations and its recent steps to provide more transparency. For example, its plans for the proposed closure of a Sudbury youth centre in 2025 include earlier communication and engagement with Indigenous communities and community stakeholders. We continue to meet with the Ministry to obtain updates on its progress in implementing the recommendations from this report.

## Case summaries

### Far from home

After he suffered a traumatic brain injury, an eight-year-old boy in the care of a northern children’s aid society (CAS) was airlifted from his home community to a rehabilitation hospital in southern Ontario. Hospital staff called us when he was ready to be discharged, because they could not reach the boy’s home CAS. We escalated the case to the home CAS service director and discovered there had been a miscommunication between that agency and a southern Ontario CAS about who was responsible for finding the boy a placement that met his special needs. Once we intervened, a placement was soon found and he was able to move out of the hospital.

### Opening doors

A youth who was turning 18 called us for help when plans for her to enter a transitional housing program and complete her final semester of high school fell through.



She could not reach her CAS worker, who had gone on a sudden leave of absence, and the school told her it had no space for her. We reached a CAS supervisor, who discovered that before going on leave, the worker had registered the girl with a different school, which was holding a spot for her. The girl was pleased with the news, and soon after, a space also opened up for her at the housing program.

## Timely help

A concerned adult contacted us on behalf of a youth who had been abandoned by her family and was denied a Voluntary Youth Services Agreement by a CAS. (VYSAs are available to 16- and 17-year-olds who have left home because of concerns about their safety, and are in need of child protection services.) The agency claimed there wasn't time to process the youth's application before she turned 18. After we spoke to the youth and the CAS, its staff agreed to expedite the paperwork and offer her a VYSA, making her eligible for CAS supports after she turned 18.

## Home security

A 16-year-old complained that staff at his group home weren't helpful to him after his personal belongings, including a laptop, were stolen or damaged by other youths living in the home. When we contacted staff at the responsible agency, they confirmed another resident exploited a weakness in the home's electronic key card system. Although they don't usually financially compensate young people for damaged items, we asked if they would be flexible in this situation, given the inadequate security of the locks. The agency later confirmed it would replace the youth's laptop, and its staff would repair the locks in the home.

“ You absolutely rock! I enjoyed speaking with you too. It is so refreshing talking to someone who is smart as a whip and has all the answers. I knew you were really on top of things.”

“ I am speechless about the help I received from your Office. You have made a major difference in my life.”



## EDUCATION

### Overview

The Ombudsman's jurisdiction in the education sector includes the provincial government ministries of Education and of Colleges and Universities and their programs, as well as Ontario's 72 school boards, 10 school authorities, all publicly funded universities and colleges of applied arts and technology. We help people with a wide range of problems related to educational institutions, programs and services.

In 2022-2023, we received **794** cases about school boards – a 10% increase over 722 the previous year. Cases declined from 2021-2022 for the Ministry of Education (**107** this year, compared to 126 last), and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (**429**, down from 543), as well as for universities and colleges themselves.

COVID-19 measures in public schools and post-secondary education continued to some extent into the 2022-2023 school year, but complaints to our Office about pandemic-related issues dropped, although we saw complaints about the switch from virtual to in-person learning and benefit programs for students and families.

### Trends in cases – Early years through Grade 12

Although the volume of cases about school boards remained consistent with the previous year, the nature of complaints and issues shifted with the lifting of most COVID-19 protocols, and the return to in-person learning and activities for most students. Although we still heard some complaints about virtual learning, the most common issues were similar to those from before the pandemic, such as problems with enrolment, support services for students with special needs, student safety, and transportation services.

We continued to help caregivers of school-age children access pandemic-related benefit programs administered by the Ministry of Education (e.g., Catch Up Payments and Support for Learners). Many had questions about backlogs, eligibility issues, or lack of response from Ministry staff. Our Office spoke with senior officials at the Ministry, who acknowledged delays in processing payments due to the high volume of applications, and we shared best practices for addressing delay and ensuring adequate communication with caregivers. The Ministry created a portal so applicants could check their status or update their personal information, as well as automated responses to common questions and a help desk. It also began developing guidelines to help staff deal with complex cases (e.g., cases of possible fraud), as well as a formal appeal process. We also heard concerns from custodial parents who did not receive the benefit because someone else (e.g., a non-custodial parent) submitted an application first. We shared best practices with the Ministry about ensuring that eligible parents receive funding in a consistent, fair, and transparent manner.

Just after the end of the 2022-2023 fiscal year, in April 2023, the government introduced sweeping new education legislation, the *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023*, which was passed in June. Among many other changes, this new law requires school boards to have integrity commissioners, an important accountability and transparency measure that the Ombudsman proposed to the government in submissions in 2017 and 2021.

### **Ombudsman's submission – school board integrity commissioners**

In May 2023, the Ombudsman made a further submission, to the Standing Committee on Social Policy during its review of Bill 98, which became the *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act*. The submission proposed several amendments to strengthen the provisions requiring school boards to have codes of conduct and integrity commissioners, which the Ombudsman had repeatedly urged in the past.

The Ombudsman suggested that the proposed legislation be amended to:

- Allow for code of conduct complaints to be made by members of the public as well as board trustees;
- Expand the school board integrity commissioner's role to cover conflicts of interest under the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*; and
- Clarify that the Ombudsman can review complaints about school board integrity commissioners.

The legislation was passed and received royal assent on June 8, 2023, without the proposed amendments.

“ I am encouraged by the government's efforts in Bill 98 to enhance local governance and accountability by strengthening the trustee code of conduct framework. Bill 98 is responsive to several proposals I have previously made [...]. However, important aspects of my previous proposals remain outstanding. There might be potential for some of these to be addressed in future regulations under the *Education Act*.”

— Ombudsman Paul Dubé, submission regarding Bill 98, May 9, 2023

## **Special education, accommodations and student safety**

Our Office frequently helps families who need help accessing and navigating programs that provide accommodations and supports for students with special needs. Ontario schools are required to hold Identification, Placement and Review Committee meetings at the request

of parents or principals, identify needs and determine appropriate supports or placements, as well as develop Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for such students. We helped many parents get information about these processes, or escalate their concerns with school boards.

For example:

- A father was concerned that his child's attendance at school was being restricted to half-days because of the child's behavioural issues. We uncovered a miscommunication between the school and the parent, and helped facilitate a meeting to discuss bringing the child back to full days.
- We helped a mother whose 12-year-old child couldn't go to school due to a lack of nursing support, because the child needed to be fed by a gastric tube. After our inquiries with the school board, the school agreed to compensate the parent for the costs of travelling to the school at lunchtime so she could feed the child.
- When a school board said a 9-year-old girl could not return to school because she required nursing support – despite medical documentation saying she didn't – we intervened. After our inquiries, the child was readmitted without nursing support, and her plan of care was modified.
- A father told us he did not want his 13-year-old child to return to school, because the teen had been bullied there for years and was recently assaulted. We helped him co-ordinate a meeting with the principal to develop a plan for the student's safe return.
- A high school student contacted us after her school called police to remove her from school property. We spoke to the school principal and shared best practices with the board superintendent to increase the transparency and consistency of policies regarding calls to police. As a result, the board began developing a protocol with three other school boards.

## Enrolment

We often hear from parents who are having problems with enrolling their children in certain schools and programs, and are concerned about disruption to their schooling. In such cases, we work to connect them with the appropriate officials and processes. For example:

- We facilitated communication between a parent and a school board to allow the family's youngest child to attend the same school as two older siblings.
- We helped a mother enrol her child with a public school board, without having to repeat a grade, after transferring from a private school.
- We shared best practices with a school board to improve the transparency and consistency of its enrolment policy after receiving a complaint about a high school giving priority to students from a specific middle school.

## Closed meetings of trustees

Under the *Education Act*, all meetings of school board trustees must be open to the public, with some narrow exceptions. We received **5** complaints about closed meetings of trustees in 2022-2023, the most we have ever received on this issue. We provided complainants with information about the *Education Act's* open meeting rules, and sent letters to two school boards, all in an effort to clarify the rules.

School board meetings must follow rules that are similar to those for municipal council meetings (discussed in the **Municipalities** chapter of this report). We reviewed the boards' practices in each case.



For example, one complaint noted that the agenda for a closed meeting of trustees was not made public, and very little information was provided publicly afterwards. We determined that the board in this case did meet the requirements of the *Education Act* and its own by-laws.

We also spoke with boards about our Office's role and function, and clarified that the Ombudsman's role in overseeing school boards includes issues related to closed meetings.

## Elections for French-language school boards

Under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, municipalities must provide information in French to voters in elections for French-language public and Catholic school boards. We received **2** complaints from voters that clerks in the October 2022 election did not do so.

We first alerted the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to similar complaints after the 2018 elections. At that time, we were told municipal clerks would be reminded of their language-related obligations. In the fall of 2022, we reached out to several municipal clerks and determined that the approach to providing election materials in French varied widely from municipality to municipality.

Recognizing the impact of this inconsistency on the language rights of Francophones, the Ombudsman wrote to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to bring his attention to this matter. He noted that French-language school boards cover the entire province, and that any municipality could be home to their voters, who are entitled to receive ballots and information about how to vote in French.

“ Given the implications of this issue for French-language rights and democratic participation in municipal elections, I am bringing the matter to your attention for further consideration and review. I urge the Ministry to take concrete steps to ensure that the language obligations set out in section 9.1 of the Act are respected consistently across Ontario.”

— Letter from Ombudsman Paul Dubé to then-Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steve Clark, November 10, 2022

## Property tax designations of support for French-language school boards

In recent years, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation has been working to address a longstanding issue related to “property tax designations of support” for school boards. As we first flagged in 2020, and noted in our last two Annual Reports, some Francophone property owners noticed that the school support designations on their properties had defaulted to English public school boards, instead of their choice of the local French-language board.

The French-language boards raised concerns about the accuracy of MPAC's information, which no longer determines board funding, but does determine the number of trustees a board has, and who can vote in trustee elections. MPAC consulted with school boards across the province prior to the October 2022 elections, and it has since rolled out an easier online process to capture school support information.

## Trends in cases – Post-secondary

Cases about colleges and universities declined significantly in 2022-2023 from the previous year, when issues related to COVID-19 protocols and remote learning were more common: We received **236** cases about colleges of applied arts and technology, compared to 344 in 2021-2022; and **205** about universities, down from 361.

The most complained-about issues were admissions, accommodations, communication of policies and information, grade appeals, and requests for tuition refunds. As in previous years, we helped people connect with the right officials or intervened to resolve their matters; no formal investigations were launched. We did continue to follow up on our only formal investigation in the university sector to date – regarding Laurentian University’s cuts to French-language programs during its 2021 restructuring. An update on that investigation will be published in our separate Annual Report on French language services, later this year.

### Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP)

We received **169** cases about OSAP loans and grants in 2022-2023, down slightly from 180 the previous year. The most common issues related to delays in processing applications, or communication problems about OSAP’s requirements.

For example:

- A student who is the father of a child with a disability received less funding from OSAP than he expected, and was struggling to make ends meet. We reviewed his application and discovered that it didn’t make note of his child’s special needs. Once he provided that information, he was able to receive the funding he needed.

- A student was informed that his **\$21,000** OSAP grant would be converted to a loan if he did not provide proof of his wife’s income. He uploaded the documents and sent several messages confirming he had provided them, but OSAP changed the grant to a loan without responding to him. After we made inquiries about the case, OSAP reviewed the file, acknowledged its error, and reverted the loan back to a grant.

### Freedom of expression

Since 2019, all Ontario colleges and universities are required to have policies to protect free speech on campus, and anyone who has unresolved complaints about free speech matters can complain to our Office. In such cases, we review the university’s policy and share best practices for handling and reporting on complaints.

In one case this past year, we worked with a university to help it clarify how to make complaints about freedom of expression on campus. We also shared observations with the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities regarding potential gaps in the reporting framework used by post-secondary institutions for such complaints.

## Case summaries

### Sound the alarm

A vendor complained to us after attempting to bid on a school board’s fire alarm testing contract. The board initially provided information about the bidding process, but later told the vendor only pre-qualified organizations could submit proposals. The vendor said he would have gone through the pre-qualification process if he had been notified in time. After we spoke with the school board about this case, it apologized to the vendor, updated its website to clarify its procurement process, and advised the

vendor that it would open up bids for the alarm contract again the next year.

## Time to reconsider

A college student in an online learning program sought our help after he lost access to one of his courses. He complained that there wasn't sufficient warning that there was a time limit to complete the course. The college pointed to its fine print, which explained the time limit, and told the student he would have to take the course again at full cost. However, after we spoke with college officials, it offered the student an extension to finish his course, and made changes to more clearly identify the time limit on its pre-registration and registration webpages.

## Section connection

A Francophone student complained to us that his French-language high school couldn't provide him with a "section

23" program, which is support provided through the ministries of Education and Children, Community and Social Services to students who cannot attend school due to identified social, emotional, behavioural or mental health needs. He told us the only section 23 programs available were in English. After we raised the case with officials at the French school board, they contacted him to discuss his section 23 needs.

## Going the extra mile

A mother complained to us that her child's school bus route was far too long, averaging four hours per day. We spoke to the school board superintendent, who said a driver shortage was affecting the route, but the local transportation consortium was working to hire and train new drivers. The superintendent also offered to provide updates to the mother directly. She later advised us that her child's bus route had been shortened, and thanked us for our help.

“ I would like to thank you for your professionalism in reviewing my case and providing me guidance given my unique set of circumstances.”

“ We were getting nowhere until you helped us.”



## HEALTH

### Overview and trends in cases

The Ombudsman oversees the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care and their programs, such as those that administer inspections or fund drugs and medical devices, and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). We helped many individuals resolve issues with these bodies in 2022-2023. We also pursued two investigations of systemic issues in both ministries, following up on the Ombudsman's 2020 report about ambulance services, and completing our investigation of the oversight of long-term care homes during the pandemic (see more under **Investigations**).

Our Office does not directly oversee several areas of the health care system, including hospitals, long-term care homes, and home and community care support services. Even so, we regularly receive complaints and inquiries about them: In 2022-2023, there were **470** cases about hospitals, **51** about home and community care services, and **64** about long-term care homes. We often refer such cases to Ontario's Patient Ombudsman, who handles matters related to patient care.

As we noted in our last two Annual Reports, we also receive complaints about local public health units – such as concerns about COVID-19 directives – but these bodies are not subject to any independent oversight by our Office or the Patient Ombudsman. In the **52** cases we received about public health units this year (down from 137 in 2021-2022, when we received many COVID-related complaints), we provided referrals to complainants wherever possible. The Ombudsman remains concerned about the gap in oversight of these crucial public bodies.

### OHIP access and renewals

In 2022-2023, we received **96** complaints about the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), up from 70 the

previous year. We heard from people who had difficulty renewing their health cards, obtaining coverage, and understanding their eligibility for services.

For example:

- An MPP referred a constituent to us who was having difficulty obtaining a photo health card. She was in her 70s and had no birth certificate because she had been adopted as an infant. She was worried that doctors would reject her outdated “red-and-white” health card while she tried to get a new photo card. We contacted staff at ServiceOntario, who provided several options to help the woman register for a photo card. ServiceOntario also confirmed that the woman’s health coverage would not be cancelled and that she could continue to use her red-and-white card until her new card arrived.

## Drug programs

We received **29** complaints in 2022-2023 about publicly funded drug programs, including the Ontario Drug Benefit Program, the Trillium Drug Program and the Exceptional Access Program.

For example:

- A woman complained that she hadn’t received funding for some medications through the Trillium Drug Program. We discovered there was an issue with her mailing address, and mail sent to her had been returned. We explained this to her, and followed up to make sure the missing cheques were reissued and sent to the correct address.
- A woman told us she believed her Trillium Drug Program claim deductible had been miscalculated. After we made inquiries, program staff determined there had indeed been an error, and the woman’s deductible was reduced by almost **\$1,000**, increasing the reimbursement she received.

## Investigations

### Oversight of long-term care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic



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

**Investigation update:** The Ombudsman launched this investigation in the wake of shocking observations by Canadian Armed Forces personnel who had been sent in to support several

Ontario long-term care homes that had been hard-hit by the first wave of COVID-19.

Since other probes were also under way, including by the Auditor General and Patient Ombudsman, as well as the government’s Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission, the Ombudsman focused his investigation on the Ministry of Long-Term Care’s inspection and enforcement-related activities. He made **76** recommendations to the Ministry and government – all of which have been accepted.

We received **269** complaints and inquiries from families of long-term care residents, employees of long-term care homes and other stakeholders in the sector in connection with this in-depth, systemic investigation. The Special Ombudsman Response Team conducted more than 90 interviews and reviewed thousands of emails and documents, among other evidence.

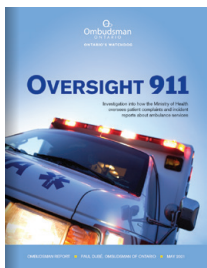
The investigation revealed that there were no inspections of long-term care homes for seven weeks in the spring of 2020, and no inspection reports issued for two months. The Ministry had no plan to ensure inspectors’ safety, and inspectors had no personal protective equipment or training in infection prevention and control. When inspections resumed, inspectors often gave homes



reduced penalties for non-compliance, or let them have months to remedy issues that were causing serious harm to residents.

The Ombudsman’s recommendations were aimed at ensuring the province is prepared for the inevitable next pandemic. They include regular training for inspectors, ensuring adequate stockpiles of personal protective equipment, and establishing clear rules on when on-site inspections are required. He also called on the government to revise legislation to improve whistleblower protection, expand the circumstances in which homes must report critical incidents, and work with the Ministry to ensure the Inspections Branch has adequate staff. The Ministry has agreed to report back to us every six months on its progress in implementing the recommendations.

## Oversight of complaints about ambulance services



### Report: *Oversight 911*, released May 2021

**Investigation update:** In this report, which was sparked by complaints about how the Ministry of Health reviews and investigates complaints about land and air ambulance services, the Ombudsman made 53

recommendations to improve oversight of these services.

The Ministry accepted all of these recommendations and reported to us on the work it has done since May 2021 to implement **29** of them. It recently developed an investigations policies and procedures protocol. It has also produced investigator training manuals, provided clearer information for complainants and implemented measures to strengthen oversight of Ornge air ambulances. These include formal reporting requirements for air ambulance

complaints and tools to identify investigation trends. The Ministry has also implemented the Ombudsman’s recommendation to make it easier for complainants to access copies of its investigation reports.

## Case summaries

### Permanent solution

A man was trying to renew a health card on behalf of his son, who has a disability and does not have a driver’s licence. The only way his card could be renewed was to visit ServiceOntario in person, or have a family doctor fill out a form exempting him from the photo and signature requirement. He pointed out that even though this form specified that his son’s disability was “permanent,” he still had to redo the form each time his health card expired. We spoke with staff at the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery about this case and the issue in general. They confirmed that they would update the information in their system and the man would not have to fill out the form again.

### Positive test result

A pregnant woman who had tested positive for an infection contacted us when she received the results from Public Health Ontario and realized that the wrong follow-up test had been done. We made inquiries with staff at the Public Health Laboratory, who determined that the woman’s doctor hadn’t included all the necessary information on the test requisition form. The woman saw a second doctor and was able to get the required test, confirming there was no risk to her pregnancy. She told us: “Thank you again for your help! Now I can breathe easy and enjoy my pregnancy!”



## TRANSPORTATION

### Overview and trends in cases

This chapter covers cases relating to programs and agencies within the Ministry of Transportation, including those that deal with driving, vehicles and highways, and public transit (Metrolinx and GO Transit). We receive complaints about customer service at all stages of the driver experience – from booking driving tests, to renewing or obtaining licences, to medical reviews, and everything in between.

In last year's Annual Report, we noted that delays in driver testing were a major source of complaints to our Office. By the end of 2022, after the Ministry provided funding for DriveTest to hire additional road test examiners and open temporary test sites, DriveTest cleared its enormous backlogs. However, we still received **375** complaints about DriveTest, even more than the 272 received in 2021-2022. We continue to resolve individual complaints about a range of issues regarding driver testing.

### Licences for drivers from outside Canada

Our Office intervened in several cases where immigrants to Ontario had difficulties obtaining driver's licences due to DriveTest centres refusing driving documents from other countries, or neglecting to take into account their driving experience. We worked closely with the Ministry of Transportation to resolve these issues, often by facilitating communication, sharing documents, or escalating concerns about complaint trends to senior officials.

For example:

- A man who had relocated from Malaysia to Quebec to Toronto contacted us, frustrated because he could only get a G2 licence in Ontario (which has some restrictions), despite his long history of driving in other

countries. After we provided the Ministry with his documentation, it determined he was indeed eligible for a full G licence.

- A man who had moved to Ontario from South Africa a few years earlier applied for an Ontario driver's licence, after his South African licence expired. He was told he would have to go through Ontario's full graduated licensing program. After we spoke to Ministry officials, they agreed to add his 10 years of driving experience to his file, which meant he was eligible for a full Ontario licence right away.
- A man whose driver's licence was from Lebanon sought our help when a DriveTest centre refused to accept it. We made arrangements for him to visit the centre again to have the licence processed correctly – but they still wouldn't accept it. After we asked DriveTest and the Ministry to review the case, they confirmed that the man's licence was actually fine, and he was able to take his G1 driving test. He told us: "It wouldn't have happened without your great support! I really appreciate what you did, that was beyond professionalism, enthusiasm and willingness to support people stuck in certain situations."

### Medical review of licences

The Ministry's Driver Medical Review Office is responsible for the delivery of medical review programs, including suspending or reinstating driving privileges for people with medical conditions. We received **71** complaints and inquiries regarding medical review of licences, which commonly involve communication issues between drivers, medical personnel and the Ministry.

For example:

- A man sought our help after the Ministry failed to respond to medical documents that he sent to

confirm that his vision was good enough to have his driver's licence reinstated. We spoke with a Ministry official who acknowledged that another agent had neglected to tell the man that more information was required. As a result of our inquiry, the Ministry contacted the man, and he told us he was grateful to have his licence reinstatement back on track.

- A woman told us the Medical Review Office did not respond after she faxed and emailed them her medical evaluation forms. The deadline to submit these forms had passed, and she was worried that her driver's licence would be suspended. We checked with the Ministry and discovered that they had not received anything from the woman. They also told us she had filled out the wrong forms. We connected her directly with officials who could explain the process to her, and she was granted a 30-day extension to submit a functional driving assessment. She ultimately passed the assessment and was approved to resume driving.

## Investigations

### Driver's licence suspensions and reinstatements



**Report: *Suspended State*, released September 2018**

**Investigation update:** Five years ago, the Ombudsman revealed serious problems in the Ministry of Transportation's processes for notifying drivers about licence suspensions due to unpaid fines.

As we noted in last year's Annual Report, the Ministry has taken varying degrees of action related to only **27** of the Ombudsman's 42 recommendations; we are closely monitoring its progress in implementing the outstanding recommendations. We also continue to monitor whether the elimination of licence plate renewal fees in 2022 has affected any of the issues highlighted in this investigation.

## Case summaries

### At your service

A mother sought our help when a DriveTest centre wouldn't let her daughter bring her certified service dog on her road test. The third party that administered testing at this centre told us that they don't allow any animals, including service animals, in vehicles. We raised this case with officials at the Ministry. Shortly thereafter, we were told that service animals are now allowed in all DriveTest vehicles, and the DriveTest website was updated to reflect this change.

### Name shame

A mother contacted us in frustration about the conduct of a driving instructor towards her son, a student driver. The student was in the process of a gender transition, and the name on his legal documents was not the same as the name he had chosen to use in daily life. The mother complained that the instructor was "deadnaming" her son, but the instructor told her he was following Ministry of Transportation policy. After we spoke with Ministry officials, they followed up with the instructor to confirm that the student could use the name of his choice. The Ministry told us that while their policy on online learning does not specifically address

the issue of preferred names, it does require course providers to avoid exclusionary language, including in relation to gender.

### Wurst case scenario

An aspiring hot dog vendor complained to us after waiting for two years for a letter from the Ministry to confirm that his custom-built propane-fueled hot dog cart did not require a vehicle identification number or licence plate. He had received no response to his calls and faxes to the Ministry. We reached a Ministry official who agreed to review the request. Soon after, he received the letter he needed in order to get the Technical Standards and Safety Authority to certify his cart.

### Tricky ticket

A woman contacted us after a difficult experience trying to resolve a traffic ticket. She had paid off the ticket in 1998, but in 2019, she was notified that there was \$26 owing on her file for a late fee she hadn't been told about, and her driver's licence would be suspended if she did not pay it. She did so, but in 2022, she received notice that her licence was cancelled – for the same ticket she had paid 15 years ago. She would now have to pay a \$275 licence reinstatement fee and redo her driving test. (Many cases similar to this were documented in the Ombudsman's 2018 investigation report, *Suspended State*.) After we asked Ministry officials to review their files, they confirmed that because the woman was never notified of the outstanding late fee, she shouldn't have to pay the reinstatement fee or redo her road test. Her licence was reinstated without further incident and she was grateful for our help.



## CERTIFICATES & PERMITS

### Overview and trends in cases

Our Office helps Ontarians resolve issues with birth certificates, death certificates, and similar government-related documents, as well as a wide range of permits issued by provincial and municipal agencies. Most of the complaints and inquiries we receive relate to ServiceOntario, which provides frontline service on all types of identity documents (including driver's licences and health cards), and the Office of the Registrar General, which issues birth and death certificates. In 2022-2023, we received **245** cases about ServiceOntario – down from 288 the previous year – and **66** complaints about the Registrar General, compared to 37 in 2021-2022.

### Document delays

People often contact our Office for help with long delays in processing applications for birth certificates, Ontario photo ID cards, or other official documents. We are able to clarify processes or policies, or help connect complainants with the right people to solve their issues.

For example:

- A man who had recently moved told us he still hadn't received his updated Ontario photo ID card, even after visiting ServiceOntario four times. We confirmed the card was sent to the man's local Ontario Disability Support Program office, not to his home, but he was never notified. After he picked up the card, he told us, "There are great people like you out there, helping people like me."
- A woman who needed an Ontario photo ID card complained that ServiceOntario staff told her she would first have to submit information about her 2021 federal tax assessment. We confirmed with the Registrar General's office that this information was not required for the woman to get her ID.



- A woman who wanted to revert to her original surname for her second marriage certificate sought our help after she could not figure out the process through ServiceOntario. Our staff guided her through the process for a name change and marriage certificate application.

## Case summaries

### Birth displac

A woman who was born in Ontario but living in Quebec applied for a name change after discovering that her birth registration listed the wrong name. She was rejected in both provinces – because she didn't currently live in Ontario, and because her birth certificate wasn't issued in Quebec. Officials at Ontario's Office of the Registrar General told us they don't have discretion to waive the requirement that applicants live in Ontario for at least one year before being eligible for a name change. However, we discovered a process by which the woman could request that her birth certificate be added to Quebec's Register of Civil Status, after which she could request a name change.

### Copy that

A woman applied for a replacement birth certificate for her adult son, who has a disability, but her request was cancelled because her ex-husband had also applied for a birth certificate for him (ServiceOntario does not permit individuals to have two birth certificates). She then tried to apply for a different type of birth certificate, but was given conflicting information about the process. We contacted staff at the Registrar General's office, who confirmed that the woman was given incorrect instructions, and that they would send her a copy of the birth certificate she requested.

## GOOD TO KNOW



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

### What's in a name?

A woman who immigrated to Canada as a child sought our help in changing her name on official documents. The Office of the Registrar General had raised questions because the name on her birth certificate and certificate of landing in Canada differed from that on later documents, when her mother changed it to an anglicized version. She had obtained a legal name change in 2022, but still could not get a driver's licence or health card in her new name. After we made inquiries with ServiceOntario, and the ministries of Transportation and Health, the woman was able to update her identification. We also worked with a ServiceOntario manager, who provided her with a letter so she could make corresponding changes to her Canadian passport and other federal documents.

“ I wanted to sincerely thank you for your help in obtaining my daughter's birth certificate. I wouldn't have gotten this far if it wasn't for your assistance.”



## 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 Employment Practices Branch, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), and its internal ombudsman, the Fair Practices Commissioner. We received **183** cases about the WSIB (down from 200 the previous year), and **59** about the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal, up from 36 in 2021-2022.

We received **356** complaints about the Ministry and its programs in 2022-2023. Although the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect employment and businesses across Ontario to a degree, the impact was less pronounced than in previous years, and pandemic-related relief and support programs were phased out.

### COVID-19 business relief grants

The Ombudsman oversees the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, which administered the Small Business Relief Grant to help eligible businesses that were required to close or limit their services during pandemic lockdowns.

Although applications for the program were no longer accepted after March 11, 2022, our Office continued to receive complaints about unfair decisions, delays, poor communication, and a lack of clarity around funding rejections. As we have done in prior years, we continued to raise these issues with the Ministry and resolve individual complaints. Some case examples:

- A clothing designer had spent much of the pandemic creating cloth masks, which she sometimes sold and sometimes donated. When she applied for a small business grant, her application was repeatedly denied, even after discussions with Ministry staff. Our Office

intervened and she was permitted to submit revised revenue figures – and her grant was approved. “Thank you so much,” she told us. “This is incredible. I feel like I’m going to cry.”

- A bar owner had been waiting for months for an update on her grant application. She contacted us because she couldn’t reach anyone to answer her questions. We spoke to a manager at the Ministry who confirmed that the woman was indeed approved, but a review of supplementary documents had delayed the process. She was thrilled to learn she would receive the funding.

## Case summaries

### Wait for it

A woman who had been approved for a second payment of **\$10,000** from the Ontario Small Business Support Grant program, sought our help after months of waiting. She said program officials had told her just to wait. At our urging, they reviewed her case and said they would expedite her second payment – but she still didn’t receive it. We reached out again to officials, who admitted that some payments had been affected by technical issues. They

confirmed she would receive her payment in a few days. The woman thanked us for our help.

### Expense suspense

An injured worker had been approved by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) to see a doctor some distance from his home. He tried to claim travel and meal expenses from the WSIB, but both were denied. He appealed the decision, but only his travel expenses were approved – and he had to start the process all over again for his meal expenses. After our staff made inquiries, the man’s case was moved up for quicker review, and his meal expenses were approved.

### Dues blues

A Francophone man in Quebec had been told he still owed dues for his trade licence, dating back to when he lived in Ontario a decade ago. He couldn’t understand what was owing, or why, and he had trouble getting information in French. We intervened on two fronts: We connected with supervisors at Skilled Trades Ontario to sort out the money owing, and our intervention also resulted in Skilled Trades Ontario improving its phone service to provide consistent access to bilingual agents.

“ I appreciate you working so swiftly on my issue, it was resolved within 3 days of contacting you.”

“ Thank you for following up with me. I believe that your help had an impact.”



## FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES

### Overview and trends in cases

Our French Language Services Unit received **296** complaints and inquiries between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023. This is consistent with previous years, taking into consideration that the 361 cases we reported for the same period last year included some 60 complaints related to a single topic: Cuts to French-language programs by Laurentian University.

It has now been more than four years since the government transferred the responsibilities of the French Language Services Commissioner to the Ombudsman's office. The role of the Commissioner is to encourage compliance with the *French Language Services Act* by government agencies and institutions of the Legislature.

In that time, the French Language Services Unit (FLS Unit) has handled more than **1,150** cases and produced three Annual Reports (separate from the Ombudsman's Annual Reports) and one formal investigation report. The FLS Unit also contributed a "Francophone lens" and expertise to several of the Ombudsman's general case resolutions and investigations, including our recently released probe of delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

The most common topics of complaint to the FLS Unit continue to be government service delivery and communications in French.

This past year also saw important progress in recognizing the rights of Francophones: As of April 1, 2023, a long-awaited new regulation under the *French Language Services Act* came into effect, requiring the "active offer" of services in French. This means that Ontario government agencies and institutions of the Legislature must make a clear and proactive offer of service in French, from the first point of contact with a member of the public. This change reflects many calls for improvement made by our Office, including recommendations made by former Commissioner Kelly Burke during her three years in the position.

“ I am honoured to be able to serve to protect our cultural heritage and language for present and future generations. [...] I can assure you of my full commitment and that of the entire Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario to ensure that Francophones in Ontario have access to the services they are entitled to, and to ensure that the institutions of the Legislature, the Government of Ontario, its agencies and third parties meet their obligations under the Act. The *French Language Services Act* is at the heart of Ontario’s francophonie and it is our collective responsibility to see that its obligations are met.”



– Statement by Carl Bouchard, Interim French Language Services Commissioner, March 8, 2023

“ Carl will continue to benefit from the passionate support of the entire Ombudsman organization and its unwavering commitment to ensuring that the rights of Francophones in Ontario and the obligations of government and government agencies established by the *French Language Services Act* are respected and fulfilled.”

– Statement by Ombudsman Paul Dubé, March 8, 2023

Throughout the past fiscal year, the French Language Services Unit has prioritized outreach to Franco-Ontarians, to encourage them to come forward when they have difficulty accessing the services to which they are entitled.

The FLS Unit and Interim Commissioner Carl Bouchard, who was appointed in March 2023, have held more than 60 meetings and engagements with stakeholders, to discuss our role and work as well as common issues facing Franco-Ontarians. These have included in-person speeches and events, as well as meetings with groups representing a wide range of Francophones, such as students, seniors, immigrant women, business professionals and entrepreneurs, educators, municipal organizations, post-secondary institutions, health care professionals and 2SLGBTQ+ associations.

In July 2023, the Interim Commissioner announced a new investigation, launched on his own initiative, into the lack of French in the Ontario government’s out-of-home (outdoor) advertising, such as billboards, electronic panels, and ads on bus shelters and buses.

These activities, as well as case trends and updates on all of our Office’s recommendations to improve services in French, will be detailed in our next Annual Report of the French Language Services Commissioner, to be published in **December 2023**. (As in previous years, that report is based on an October-September fiscal year – that is, it will report on cases received between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023.)

## Case summaries

### “Please speak in English”

A Francophone man contacted us after his mother died in a Northern Ontario hospital. He said he and his



family noticed that she received very few services in French, even though the hospital is designated under the *French Language Services Act*. At one point, they even found a handwritten note at her bedside, that said “Please speak in English.” We raised this case with hospital management, and as a result, they took several measures to remedy the lack of bilingual staff. The hospital also developed an action plan and standards for an “active offer” of services in French, to ensure the language preference of patients and visitors is identified.

### Services in French at home

A woman sought our help in finding home care services in French for her husband, who had lost the ability to speak English as his health declined. She said her local Home and Community Care Support Services office did not provide consistent service, and her husband had not received any care in French for more than six months. After we raised the case with the local

## GOOD TO KNOW



We publish a separate Annual Report devoted to cases about French language services and recommendations to improve the delivery of services in French across the province. Watch for it in December.

agency, it worked with the home care service provider to ensure the man received services in French.

*[Note: Longer versions of the above two case summaries originally appeared in our December 2022 Annual Report of the French Language Services Commissioner.]*

“ Thank you for your perseverance and passion for helping Ontario Francophones access services in their language across the province. Much appreciated.”



## ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

### Overview and trends in cases

This category includes cases about public sector administration related to electricity and fuel, as well as natural resources, mining, rural affairs, and the environment. These complaints and inquiries relate to municipal hydro companies, as well as the Ontario ministries of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, of Natural Resources and Forestry, of Energy and of Mines.

Complaints in this area often involve the impacts of development on specific parcels of land, and the role of conservation authorities in protecting wetlands and other natural heritage features. Our staff can help by connecting people with the appropriate public officials and encouraging better communication.

In late 2022, the province announced a plan to remove 7,400 acres of land from the Greenbelt, which includes more than 800,000 hectares of land across the Golden Horseshoe, to build 50,000 homes. We received **19** complaints about this decision in fiscal 2022-2023. We explained to these complainants that our Office does not investigate complaints about elected officials or intervene in broader public policy decisions, and noted that the Auditor General and Integrity Commissioner were looking into financial and ethical aspects of the matter.

### Municipal hydro

As part of our jurisdiction over municipalities, the Ombudsman oversees municipally controlled corporations, which include hydro companies that are majority-owned or controlled by one or more municipalities. In 2022-2023, we received **90** cases about a wide range of concerns, primarily about billing, payment, and power outage issues. We resolved the bulk of these by helping hydro customers connect with local officials.

For example:

- A homeowner was shocked to receive a bill for \$1,300 along with a message that his account had been closed. When we looked into it, we discovered that a new neighbour had mistakenly used the homeowner's address when creating their own hydro account – effectively cancelling the homeowner's existing account. The hydro company fixed the issue, and also updated its form to require that each new customer enter their address twice.
- A man paid his hydro company more than \$10,000 for electrical upgrades to power an accessible bedroom for his son with special needs, but had been waiting for the work to be done for months. We provided him with contact information for the company's chief customer officer, who was able to address his questions.

## Parks, conservation, environment and natural resources issues

We received **83** cases in 2022-2023 about the provincial ministries in this category. In several cases, we connected people with relevant staff and shared best practices to ensure transparency for decisions. For example:

- A homeowner complained that he had missed out on thousands of dollars in tax rebates because he didn't realize his property was eligible for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program. Ministry staff told us that they mail notice of the incentive to some homeowners as a courtesy, but the onus is on them to educate themselves about the program and apply. We escalated the case to senior Ministry officials, who acknowledged that there were fairness concerns with

the notification process, and that they would review the program with our suggested best practices in mind. The Ministry also agreed to provide training to staff about retroactive rebates. The homeowner ended up receiving a partial tax rebate.

- We stepped in to facilitate communication when a woman was frustrated with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks over delays related to sound monitoring analysis of wind turbines near her home.
- A woman sought our help after she waited nine months for a land lease renewal to transfer her land to new purchasers. When we intervened, we confirmed that the lease had been registered, and she could request an expedited copy through the Land Registry Office.

We also received complaints about conservation authorities' decisions, communications and actions – or lack thereof.

For example:

- A woman lived in an RV (recreational vehicle) park on land regulated by the local conservation authority. Her property flooded, but the conservation authority didn't give her the results of their investigation into the issue. When we intervened, they agreed to inspect the site to confirm the flooding had stopped, and to give her guidance to avert future floods.
- A business owner told us she was worried she would lose a government grant for her new business if her local conservation authority didn't approve her application in time. When we intervened, the conservation authority admitted there had been a delay. It approved her application, and committed to reviewing and improving its internal processes.

## Case summaries

### A grey area

An environmental group complained to us when they didn't hear back from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry about their concerns related to a development project's unregulated grey water and natural septic systems. They were worried the development would affect a nearby lake, as well as the broader ecosystem and local animal populations. We put the group in touch with a supervisor at the Ministry's local office, who met with them to answer their questions. We continue to review new concerns raised by the group after their meeting with the Ministry.

### Flood of concern

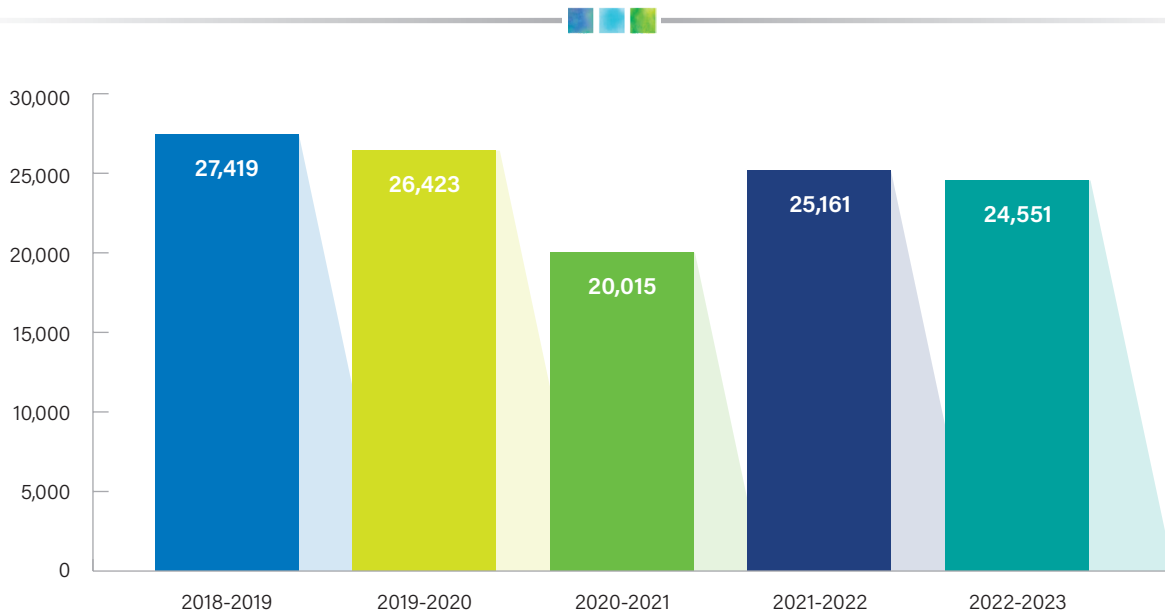
When a conservation authority approved a permit to fill regulated flood plains, we received several complaints from local residents concerned about the negative effects on the environment. Officials at the conservation authority told us the permit was unprecedented, but found no grounds to deny the application. Our review confirmed that the authority had followed its own processes for approving the permit, including taking steps to answer questions from the community. We referred the residents to Ontario's *Environmental Bill of Rights* for other avenues of recourse on the possible impacts to the environment, and shared best practices with the conservation authority to help improve public notice and transparency for future public meetings and decision-making.

“ I wanted to thank you for getting the attention of a manager and explaining the situation to them, which made handling the situation much easier than it would have been without your help.”

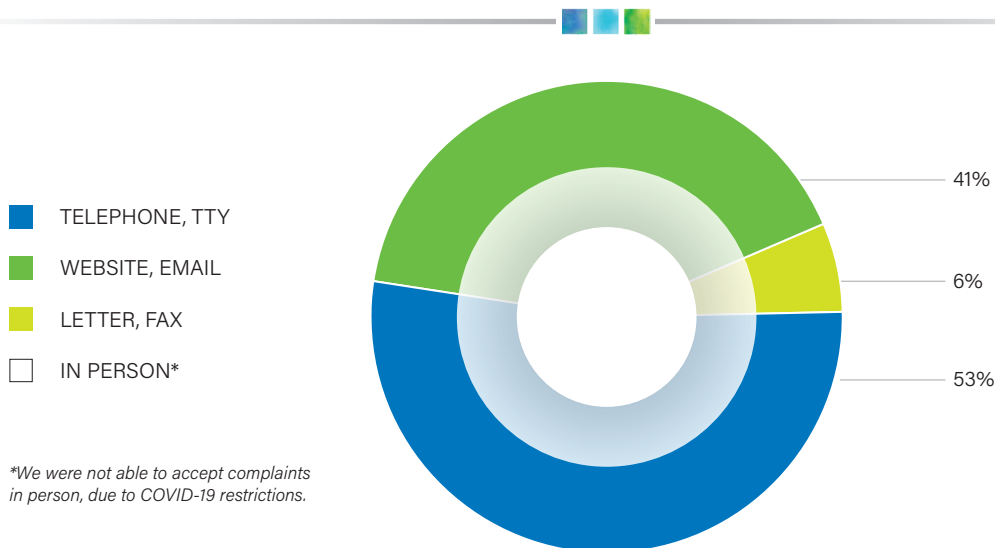
# APPENDIX –

# STATISTICAL CHARTS

## TOTAL CASES RECEIVED, FISCAL YEARS 2018-2019 - 2022-2023



## HOW CASES WERE RECEIVED, 2022-2023





## DISPOSITION OF CASES, 2022-2023



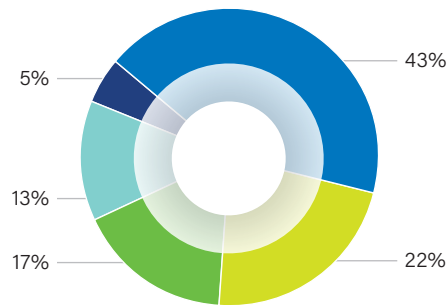
**138**  
consultations or questions



**652**  
information submissions

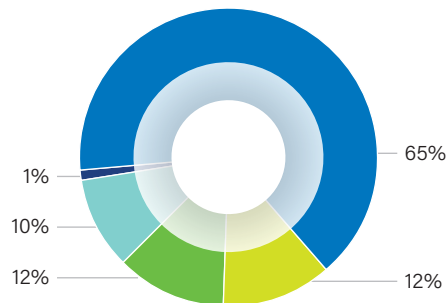
## CASES CLOSED - 2022-2023

**15,792**  
cases  
within the  
Ombudsman's authority



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

**7,988**  
cases  
outside the  
Ombudsman's authority



- 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



**54%**  
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.


## CASES BY PROVINCIAL RIDING, 2022-2023\*

AJAX	162
ALGOMA—MANITOULIN	162
AURORA—OAK RIDGES—RICHMOND HILL	78
BARRIE—INNISFIL	102
BARRIE—SPRINGWATER—ORO-MEDONTE	141
BAY OF QUINTE	119
BEACHES—EAST YORK	127
BRAMPTON CENTRE	88
BRAMPTON EAST	73
BRAMPTON NORTH	73
BRAMPTON SOUTH	100
BRAMPTON WEST	105
BRANTFORD—BRANT	155
BRUCE—GREY—OWEN SOUND	156
BURLINGTON	110
CAMBRIDGE	111
CARLETON	70
CHATHAM-KENT—LEAMINGTON	84
DAVENPORT	90
DON VALLEY EAST	83
DON VALLEY NORTH	92
DON VALLEY WEST	59
DUFFERIN—CALEDON	103
DURHAM	132
EGLINTON—LAWRENCE	109
ELGIN—MIDDLESEX—LONDON	147
ESSEX	125
ETOBICOKE CENTRE	99
ETOBICOKE NORTH	71
ETOBICOKE—LAKESHORE	128
FLAMBOROUGH—GLANBROOK	89
GLENGARRY—PRESCOTT—RUSSELL	127
GUELPH	95
HALDIMAND—NORFOLK	116
HALIBURTON—KAWARTHA LAKES—BROCK	144
HAMILTON CENTRE	190
HAMILTON EAST—STONE CREEK	134
HAMILTON MOUNTAIN	95
HAMILTON WEST—ANCASTER—DUNDAS	110
HASTINGS—LENNOX AND ADDINGTON	157
HUMBER RIVER—BLACK CREEK	102
HURON—BRUCE	121
KANATA—CARLETON	55
KENORA—RAINY RIVER	100
KIIWETINOONG	25
KINGSTON AND THE ISLANDS	162
KING—VAUGHAN	88
KITCHENER CENTRE	117
KITCHENER SOUTH—HESPELER	112
KITCHENER—CONESTOGA	74
LAMBTON—KENT—MIDDLESEX	108
LANARK—FRONTENAC—KINGSTON	130
LEEDS—GRENVILLE—THOUSAND ISLANDS AND RIDEAU LAKES	94
LONDON NORTH CENTRE	183
LONDON WEST	119
LONDON—FANSHAWE	146
MARKHAM—STOUFFVILLE	82
MARKHAM—THORNHILL	47
MARKHAM—UNIONVILLE	52
MILTON	66
MISSISSAUGA CENTRE	107
MISSISSAUGA EAST—COOKSVILLE	113

MISSISSAUGA—ERIN MILLS	73
MISSISSAUGA—LAKESHORE	113
MISSISSAUGA—MALTON	99
MISSISSAUGA—STREETSVILLE	68
MUSHKEGOWUK—JAMES BAY	26
NEPEAN	98
NEWMARKET—AURORA	102
NIAGARA CENTRE	171
NIAGARA FALLS	179
NIAGARA WEST	73
NICKEL BELT	126
NIPISSING	191
NORTHUMBERLAND—PETERBOROUGH SOUTH	141
OAKVILLE	96
OAKVILLE NORTH—BURLINGTON	87
ORLÉANS	117
OSHAWA	171
OTTAWA CENTRE	161
OTTAWA SOUTH	106
OTTAWA WEST—NEPEAN	116
OTTAWA—VANIER	138
OXFORD	117
PARKDALE—HIGH PARK	111
PARRY SOUND—MUSKOKA	162
PERTH—WELLINGTON	84
PETERBOROUGH—KAWARTHA	109
PICKERING—UXBRIDGE	120
RENFREW—NIPISSING—PEMBROKE	132
RICHMOND HILL	77
SARNIA—LAMBTON	95
SAULT STE. MARIE	174
SCARBOROUGH CENTRE	106
SCARBOROUGH NORTH	54
SCARBOROUGH SOUTHWEST	100
SCARBOROUGH—AGINCOURT	51
SCARBOROUGH—GUILDWOOD	88
SCARBOROUGH—ROUGE PARK	92
SIMCOE NORTH	146
SIMCOE—GREY	195
SPADINA—FORT YORK	150
ST. CATHARINES	114
STORMONT—DUNDAS—SOUTH GLENGARRY	131
SUDBURY	150
THORNHILL	97
THUNDER BAY—ATIKOKAN	103
THUNDER BAY—SUPERIOR NORTH	104
TIMISKAMING—COCHRANE	149
TIMMINS	50
TORONTO CENTRE	176
TORONTO—DANFORTH	100
TORONTO—ST. PAUL'S	112
UNIVERSITY—ROSEDALE	119
VAUGHAN—WOODBIDGE	105
WATERLOO	115
WELLINGTON—HALTON HILLS	89
WHITBY	114
WILLOWDALE	97
WINDSOR WEST	224
WINDSOR—TECUMSEH	120
YORK CENTRE	97
YORK SOUTH—WESTON	108
YORK—SIMCOE	118

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

## TOP 10 PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS BY CASE VOLUME, 2022-2023\*



		NUMBER OF CASES
1	TRIBUNALS ONTARIO	2,043
2	ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM	922
3	FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE	471
4	DRIVETEST	375
5	SERVICEONTARIO	245
6	COLLEGES OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY	236
7	DRIVER LICENSING	206
8	WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD	183
9	OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN AND TRUSTEE	177
10	ONTARIO STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	169

\*Excluding correctional facilities and youth justice centres.

## TOP 10 CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES BY CASE VOLUME, 2022-2023



		NUMBER OF CASES
1	CENTRAL EAST CORRECTIONAL CENTRE	645
2	CENTRAL NORTH CORRECTIONAL CENTRE	483
3	TORONTO SOUTH DETENTION CENTRE	456
4	OTTAWA-CARLETON DETENTION CENTRE	251
5	SOUTH WEST DETENTION CENTRE	181
6	MAPLEHURST CORRECTIONAL COMPLEX	178
7	QUINTE DETENTION CENTRE	163
8	HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DETENTION CENTRE	136
9	NIAGARA DETENTION CENTRE	136
10	ELGIN-MIDDLESEX DETENTION CENTRE	135

## TOTAL CASES RECEIVED FOR PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND SELECTED PROGRAMS, 2022-2023\*

<b>MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS</b>		<b>6</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL</b>		<b>2,590</b>
ALCOHOL AND GAMING COMMISSION OF ONTARIO	24	
CHILDREN'S LAWYER	25	
COURT ADMINISTRATION	84	
LEGAL AID CLINIC	24	
LEGAL AID ONTARIO	89	
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN AND TRUSTEE	177	
ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION	11	
ONTARIO LAND TRIBUNAL	11	
TRIBUNALS ONTARIO	2,043	
<b>MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES</b>		<b>1,853</b>
DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES PROGRAMS	43	
DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES - PASSPORT PROGRAM	15	
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE	471	
MINISTRY FUNDED SERVICE PROVIDER - CHILDREN AND YOUTH	12	
MINISTRY FUNDED SERVICE PROVIDER - COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES	69	
ONTARIO AUTISM PROGRAM	73	
ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM	922	
SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMS - CHILDREN	22	
YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRES - DIRECT OPERATED	125	
YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRES - MINISTRY FUNDED	62	
<b>MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURALISM</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES</b>		<b>429</b>
COLLEGES OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY	236	
ONTARIO STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	169	
PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES BRANCH	11	
<b>MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, JOB CREATION AND TRADE</b>		<b>77</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF EDUCATION</b>		<b>107</b>
CHILD CARE QUALITY ASSURANCE AND LICENSING BRANCH	10	
<b>MINISTRY OF ENERGY</b>		<b>39</b>
ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD	26	
<b>MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT, CONSERVATION AND PARKS</b>		<b>49</b>
ONTARIO PARKS	18	
<b>MINISTRY OF FINANCE</b>		<b>183</b>
FINANCIAL SERVICES REGULATORY AUTHORITY	26	
LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO	12	
MUNICIPAL PROPERTY ASSESSMENT CORPORATION	17	
ONTARIO CANNABIS STORE	18	
ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING	66	

*\*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.*

## TOTAL CASES RECEIVED FOR PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND SELECTED PROGRAMS, 2022-2023



<b>MINISTRY OF HEALTH</b>		<b>419</b>
ASSISTIVE DEVICES / HOME OXYGEN PROGRAMS	24	
HEALTH CARE CONNECT	14	
HEALTH PROFESSIONS APPEAL AND REVIEW BOARD	30	
MINISTRY FUNDED SERVICE PROVIDER	30	
ONTARIO HEALTH	39	
ONTARIO HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN - OHIP	96	
ONTARIO PUBLIC DRUG PROGRAMS	29	
<b>MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF LABOUR, IMMIGRATION, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT</b>		<b>356</b>
BETTER JOBS ONTARIO	10	
EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES BRANCH	19	
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY BRANCH	17	
ONTARIO LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD	20	
SKILLED TRADES ONTARIO	15	
WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE APPEALS TRIBUNAL	59	
WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD	183	
<b>MINISTRY OF LONG-TERM CARE</b>		<b>32</b>
LONG-TERM CARE INSPECTIONS BRANCH	16	
<b>MINISTRY OF MINES</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING</b>		<b>34</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND FORESTRY</b>		<b>32</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF PUBLIC AND BUSINESS SERVICE DELIVERY</b>		<b>358</b>
CONSUMER PROTECTION ONTARIO	20	
REGISTRAR GENERAL	66	
SERVICEONTARIO	245	
<b>MINISTRY FOR SENIORS AND ACCESSIBILITY</b>		<b>7</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL</b>		<b>3,880</b>
CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES	3,524	
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CORONER	13	
ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE	151	
OPP - CHIEF FIREARMS OFFICE	124	
PROBATION AND PAROLE	34	
<b>MINISTRY OF TOURISM, CULTURE AND SPORT</b>		<b>8</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION</b>		<b>831</b>
DRIVER LICENSING	206	
DRIVETEST	375	
METROLINX/GO TRANSIT	41	
TRANSPORTATION - MEDICAL REVIEW	71	
VEHICLE LICENSING	43	
<b>TREASURY BOARD SECRETARIAT</b>		<b>3</b>



## CASES RECEIVED ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES, 2022-2023 ■ TOTAL: 2,814\*

ADDINGTON HIGHLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	1
ADJALA-TOSORONTIO, TOWNSHIP OF	5
AJAX, TOWN OF	8
ALBERTON, TOWNSHIP OF	1
ALFRED AND PLANTAGENET, TOWNSHIP OF	2
ALGONQUIN HIGHLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	9
AMHERSTBURG, TOWN OF	4
ARMOUR, TOWNSHIP OF	1
ARNPRIOR, TOWN OF	1
ARRAN-ELDERSLIE, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
ASHFIELD-COLBORNE-WAWANOSH, TOWNSHIP OF	2
ASPHODEL-NORWOOD, TOWNSHIP OF	1
ASSIGINACK, TOWNSHIP OF	2
ATIKOKAN, TOWN OF	2
AURORA, TOWN OF	17
BALDWIN, TOWNSHIP OF	3
BANCROFT, TOWN OF	4
BARRIE, CITY OF	7
BAYHAM, MUNICIPALITY OF	10
BECKWITH, TOWNSHIP OF	2
BELLEVILLE, CITY OF	4
BLACK RIVER-MATHESON, TOWNSHIP OF	1
BLANDFORD-BLENHEIM, TOWNSHIP OF	1
BLIND RIVER, TOWN OF	3
BONNECHERE VALLEY, TOWNSHIP OF	1
BRACEBRIDGE, TOWN OF	2
BRADFORD WEST GWILLIMBURY, TOWN OF	2
BRAMPTON, CITY OF	31
BRANT, COUNTY OF	6
BRANTFORD, CITY OF	26
BRIGHTON, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
BROCK, TOWNSHIP OF	1
BROCKVILLE, CITY OF	4
BRUCE, COUNTY OF	5
BRUDENELL, LYNDOSCH AND RAGLAN, TOWNSHIP OF	6
BURK'S FALLS, VILLAGE OF	1
BURLINGTON, CITY OF	19
BURPEE AND MILLS, TOWNSHIP OF	4
CALEDON, TOWN OF	13
CALLANDER, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
CALVIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	21
CAMBRIDGE, CITY OF	10
CARLETON PLACE, TOWN OF	3
CARLING, TOWNSHIP OF	6
CASSELMAN, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
CAVAN MONAGHAN, TOWNSHIP OF	3
CENTRAL ELGIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
CENTRAL FRONTENAC, TOWNSHIP OF	1
CENTRAL MANITOULIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
CENTRE HASTINGS, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
CENTRE WELLINGTON, TOWNSHIP OF	1
CHAMPLAIN, TOWNSHIP OF	3
CHAPLEAU, TOWNSHIP OF	1
CHATHAM-KENT, MUNICIPALITY OF	20
CHATSWORTH, TOWNSHIP OF	3
CHISHOLM, TOWNSHIP OF	6
CLARENCE-ROCKLAND, CITY OF	1
CLARINGTON, MUNICIPALITY OF	12
CLEARVIEW, TOWNSHIP OF	1
COBALT, TOWN OF	8
COBOURG, TOWN OF	1
COCHRANE, TOWN OF	2

COCKBURN ISLAND, TOWNSHIP OF	1
COLLINGWOOD, TOWN OF	3
CORNWALL, CITY OF	19
CRAMAHE, TOWNSHIP OF	2
DAWN-EUPHEMIA, TOWNSHIP OF	1
DESERONTO, TOWN OF	1
DOURO-DUMMER, TOWNSHIP OF	7
DRYDEN, CITY OF	2
DUFFERIN, COUNTY OF	1
DURHAM, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	43
DUTTON-DUNWICH, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
DYSART ET AL, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
EAR FALLS, TOWNSHIP OF	1
EAST FERRIS, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
EAST GWILLIMBURY, TOWN OF	2
EDWARDSBURGH/CARDINAL, TOWNSHIP OF	1
ELGIN, COUNTY OF	1
ELLIOT LAKE, CITY OF	7
ERIN, TOWN OF	4
ESSEX, COUNTY OF	2
ESSEX, TOWN OF	7
FORT ERIE, TOWN OF	12
FORT FRANCES, TOWN OF	4
FRONTENAC, COUNTY OF	4
GANANOQUE, TOWN OF	6
GEORGIAN BAY, TOWNSHIP OF	2
GEORGIAN BLUFFS, TOWNSHIP OF	2
GEORGINA, TOWN OF	12
GILLIES, TOWNSHIP OF	2
GORE BAY, TOWN OF	2
GRAND VALLEY, TOWN OF	2
GRAVENHURST, TOWN OF	3
GREATER MADAWASKA, TOWNSHIP OF	2
GREATER NAPANEE, TOWN OF	10
GREATER SUDBURY, CITY OF	38
GREENSTONE, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
GREY HIGHLANDS, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
GREY, COUNTY OF	12
GRIMSBY, TOWN OF	3
GUELPH, CITY OF	9
GUELPH/ERAMOSIA, TOWNSHIP OF	2
HALDIMAND COUNTY	13
HALIBURTON, COUNTY OF	1
HALTON HILLS, TOWN OF	6
HALTON, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	14
HAMILTON, CITY OF	104
HAMILTON, TOWNSHIP OF	1
HASTINGS HIGHLANDS, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
HASTINGS, COUNTY OF	9
HAVELOCK-BELMONT-METHUEN, TOWNSHIP OF	5
HAWKESBURY, TOWN OF	2
HEAD, CLARA & MARIA, UNITED TOWNSHIPS OF	2
HIGHLANDS EAST, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
HILTON BEACH, VILLAGE OF	1
HORNEPAYNE, TOWNSHIP OF	2
HOWICK, TOWNSHIP OF	2
HUNTSVILLE, TOWN OF	8
HURON EAST, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
HURON-KINLOSS, TOWNSHIP OF	2
HURON, COUNTY OF	7
IGNACE, TOWNSHIP OF	11
INGERSOLL, TOWN OF	2

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

## CASES RECEIVED ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES, 2022-2023



INNISFIL, TOWN OF	12
IROQUOIS FALLS, TOWN OF	3
JOCELYN, TOWNSHIP OF	1
KAWARTHA LAKES, CITY OF	23
KEARNEY, TOWN OF	1
KENORA, CITY OF	8
KILLALOE, HAGARTY AND RICHARDS, TOWNSHIP OF	1
KILLARNEY, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
KINCARDINE, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
KING, TOWNSHIP OF	12
KINGSTON, CITY OF	17
KINGSVILLE, TOWN OF	8
KIRKLAND LAKE, TOWN OF	5
KITCHENER, CITY OF	14
LAIRD, TOWNSHIP OF	2
LAKE OF BAYS, TOWNSHIP OF	4
LAKESHORE, TOWN OF	4
LAMBTON SHORES, MUNICIPALITY OF	13
LAMBTON, COUNTY OF	10
LANARK HIGHLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	4
LANARK, COUNTY OF	3
LASALLE, TOWN OF	2
LEAMINGTON, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
LEEDS AND GRENVILLE, UNITED COUNTIES OF	8
LEEDS AND THE THOUSAND ISLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	2
LENNOX & ADDINGTON, COUNTY OF	1
LINCOLN, TOWN OF	3
LONDON, CITY OF	77
LOYALIST TOWNSHIP	5
MACHAR, TOWNSHIP OF	1
MACHIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
MADAWASKA VALLEY, TOWNSHIP OF	1
MADOC, TOWNSHIP OF	5
MAGNETAWAN, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
MALAHIDE, TOWNSHIP OF	2
MANITOUWADGE, TOWNSHIP OF	7
MARATHON, TOWN OF	1
MARKHAM, CITY OF	13
MARKSTAY-WARREN, MUNICIPALITY OF	11
MARMORA AND LAKE, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
MATTAWA, TOWN OF	3
MCGARRY, TOWNSHIP OF	4
MCKELLAR, TOWNSHIP OF	3
MCMURRICH/MONTEITH, TOWNSHIP OF	2
MCNAB/BRAESIDE, TOWNSHIP OF	2
MEAFORD, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
MELANCTHON, TOWNSHIP OF	1
MERRICKVILLE-WOLFORD, VILLAGE OF	4
MIDDLESEX CENTRE, MUNICIPALITY OF	6
MIDDLESEX, COUNTY OF	1
MIDLAND, TOWN OF	2
MILTON, TOWN OF	15
MINDEN HILLS, TOWNSHIP OF	3
MINTO, TOWN OF	3
MISSISSAUGA, CITY OF	44
MISSISSIPPI MILLS, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
MONO, TOWN OF	1
MOOSONEE, TOWN OF	1
MUSKOKA LAKES, TOWNSHIP OF	7
MUSKOKA, DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY OF	5
NEEBING, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
NEW TECUMSETH, TOWN OF	4

NEWMARKET, TOWN OF	3
NIAGARA FALLS, CITY OF	13
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, TOWN OF	10
NIAGARA, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	42
NIPISSING, TOWNSHIP OF	5
NORFOLK COUNTY	17
NORTH ALGONA WILBERFORCE, TOWNSHIP OF	1
NORTH BAY, CITY OF	11
NORTH DUNDAS, TOWNSHIP OF	2
NORTH FRONTENAC, TOWNSHIP OF	2
NORTH GLENGARRY, TOWNSHIP OF	3
NORTH GRENVILLE, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
NORTH HURON, TOWNSHIP OF	2
NORTH KAWARTHA, TOWNSHIP OF	1
NORTH PERTH, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
NORTH STORMONT, TOWNSHIP OF	3
NORTHEASTERN MANITOULIN AND THE ISLANDS, TOWN OF	1
NORTHERN BRUCE PENINSULA, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
NORTHUMBERLAND, COUNTY OF	4
NORWICH, TOWNSHIP OF	9
OAKVILLE, TOWN OF	21
OLIVER PAIPOONGE, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
ORILLIA, CITY OF	7
ORO-MEDONTE, TOWNSHIP OF	5
OSHAWA, CITY OF	15
OTONABEE-SOUTH MONAGHAN, TOWNSHIP OF	8
OTTAWA, CITY OF	176
OWEN SOUND, CITY OF	5
OXFORD, COUNTY OF	3
PEEL, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	89
PELHAM, TOWN OF	7
PEMBROKE, CITY OF	4
PERRY, TOWNSHIP OF	1
PERTH, COUNTY OF	3
PETAWAWA, TOWN OF	3
PETERBOROUGH, CITY OF	9
PETERBOROUGH, COUNTY OF	1
PETROLIA, TOWN OF	1
PICKERING, CITY OF	11
POINT EDWARD, VILLAGE OF	1
PORT COLBORNE, CITY OF	8
PORT HOPE, MUNICIPALITY OF	6
POWASSAN, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
PRESCOTT AND RUSSELL, UNITED COUNTIES OF	2
PRINCE EDWARD, COUNTY OF	6
PRINCE, TOWNSHIP OF	1
PUSLINCH, TOWNSHIP OF	3
QUINTE WEST, CITY OF	3
RAINY RIVER, TOWN OF	2
RAMARA, TOWNSHIP OF	5
RED LAKE, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
RENFREW, COUNTY OF	4
RENFREW, TOWN OF	4
RICHMOND HILL, CITY OF	6
RIDEAU LAKES, TOWNSHIP OF	3
RUSSELL, TOWNSHIP OF	6
RYERSON, TOWNSHIP OF	2
SABLES-SPANISH RIVERS, TOWNSHIP OF	3
SARNIA, CITY OF	7
SAUGEEN SHORES, TOWN OF	6
SAULT STE. MARIE, CITY OF	18
SCUGOG, TOWNSHIP OF	4

## CASES RECEIVED ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES, 2022-2023

SEGUIN, TOWNSHIP OF	1
SEVERN, TOWNSHIP OF	2
SHELBURNE, TOWN OF	1
SHUNIAH, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
SIMCOE, COUNTY OF	28
SIOUX LOOKOUT, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
SMITHS FALLS, TOWN OF	5
SOUTH BRUCE PENINSULA, TOWN OF	9
SOUTH DUNDAS, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
SOUTH FRONTENAC, TOWNSHIP OF	2
SOUTH GLENGARRY, TOWNSHIP OF	3
SOUTH HURON, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
SOUTH STORMONT, TOWNSHIP OF	6
SOUTHGATE, TOWNSHIP OF	1
SPRINGWATER, TOWNSHIP OF	3
ST. CATHARINES, CITY OF	10
ST. CLAIR, TOWNSHIP OF	3
ST. JOSEPH, TOWNSHIP OF	1
ST. MARYS, TOWN OF	1
ST. THOMAS, CITY OF	11
ST.-CHARLES, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
STIRLING-RAWDON, TOWNSHIP OF	3
STONE MILLS, TOWNSHIP OF	1
STRATFORD, CITY OF	12
STRATHROY-CARADOC, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
STRONG, TOWNSHIP OF	2
SUNDRIDGE, VILLAGE OF	1
TAY VALLEY TOWNSHIP	2
TAY, TOWNSHIP OF	4
TECUMSEH, TOWN OF	3
TEHKUMMAH, TOWNSHIP OF	1
TEMAGAMI, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
TEMISKAMING SHORES, CITY OF	3
TERRACE BAY, TOWNSHIP OF	1
THAMES CENTRE, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
THE BLUE MOUNTAINS, TOWN OF	3
THESSALON, TOWN OF	1
THOROLD, CITY OF	6
THUNDER BAY, CITY OF	18
TILLSONBURG, TOWN OF	6
TIMMINS, CITY OF	11
TINY, TOWNSHIP OF	8
TORONTO, CITY OF	344
TRENT HILLS, MUNICIPALITY OF	7
TRENT LAKES, MUNICIPALITY OF	5
TUDOR & CASHEL, TOWNSHIP OF	1
TWEED, MUNICIPALITY OF	3
UXBRIDGE, TOWNSHIP OF	4
VAL RITA-HARTY, MUNICIPALITY OF	2
VAUGHAN, CITY OF	22
WAINFLEET, TOWNSHIP OF	3
WASAGA BEACH, TOWN OF	18
WATERLOO, CITY OF	6
WATERLOO, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	34
WELLAND, CITY OF	16
WELLESLEY, TOWNSHIP OF	4
WELLINGTON NORTH, TOWNSHIP OF	2
WELLINGTON, COUNTY OF	11
WEST ELGIN, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
WEST GREY, MUNICIPALITY OF	2

WEST LINCOLN, TOWNSHIP OF	3
WEST NIPISSING, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
WEST PERTH, MUNICIPALITY OF	4
WHITBY, TOWN OF	13
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE, TOWN OF	5
WHITESTONE, MUNICIPALITY OF	1
WILMOT, TOWNSHIP OF	5
WINDSOR, CITY OF	64
WOLLASTON, TOWNSHIP OF	7
WOODSTOCK, CITY OF	7
WOOLWICH, TOWNSHIP OF	4
YORK, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF	36
CASES WHERE NO MUNICIPALITY WAS SPECIFIED	36
<b>SHARED CORPORATIONS INCLUDING CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES</b>	<b>71</b>
ALECTRA	26
CONSERVATION HALTON	1
CREDIT VALLEY CONSERVATION	1
CROWE VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	3
ELEXICON ENERGY	4
ENOVA POWER CORP.	2
ENTEGRUS POWERLINES	3
ESSEX POWER CORPORATION	1
GRAND RIVER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	2
GREY SAUBLE CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	1
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONSERVATION	1
NEWMARKET-TAY POWER DISTRIBUTION LTD.	1
NIAGARA PENINSULA ENERGY INC.	1
NICKEL DISTRICT CONSERVATION AUTHORITY ("CONSERVATION SUDBURY")	2
NOTTAWASAGA VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	2
ORANGEVILLE HYDRO	2
OTONABEE REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	1
QUINTE CONSERVATION	2
RAISIN REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	1
RIDEAU VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	6
SOUTH NATION CONSERVATION	2
TORONTO AND REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	2
UPPER THAMES RIVER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	2
WESTARIO POWER	2
<b>SHARED LOCAL BOARDS</b>	<b>64</b>
ALGOMA DISTRICT SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	7
DISTRICT OF COCHRANE SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	1
DISTRICT OF NIPISSING SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	9
DISTRICT OF PARRY SOUND SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	7
DISTRICT OF SAULT STE. MARIE SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	15
DISTRICT OF TIMISKAMING SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	2
KENORA DISTRICT SERVICES BOARD	6
KINGSTON AREA TAXI LICENSING COMMISSION	2
MANITOULIN-SUDBURY DISTRICT SERVICES BOARD	2
NIAGARA CENTRAL DOROTHY RUNGELING AIRPORT COMMISSION	1
THUNDER BAY SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD	7
CASES WHERE NO BOARD WAS SPECIFIED	5

## CASES RECEIVED ABOUT CLOSED MUNICIPAL MEETINGS, 2022-2023 ■ TOTAL: 95



CASES ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES WHERE OMBUDSMAN IS THE INVESTIGATOR*	81
CASES ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES WHERE ANOTHER INVESTIGATOR HAS BEEN APPOINTED**	14

SUMMARY OF COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS				
MUNICIPALITY	MEETINGS & GATHERINGS REVIEWED	ILLEGAL MEETINGS	PROCEDURAL VIOLATIONS FOUND	BEST PRACTICES SUGGESTED
ADJALA-TOSORONTIO, TOWNSHIP OF	3	0	0	0
AMHERSTBURG, TOWN OF	4	0	4	2
ARRAN-ELDESLIE, MUNICIPALITY OF	2	0	0	0
BROCKVILLE, CITY OF	2	0	2	0
BRUCE COUNTY	4	3	2	4
CASSELMAN, MUNICIPALITY OF	4	0	2	2
CORNWALL, CITY OF	2	2	2	3
DUFFERIN COUNTY	1	0	0	0
EMO, TOWNSHIP OF	1	0	0	2
GREATER SUDBURY, CITY OF	1	0	0	0
GREY BRUCE HEALTH UNIT	2	0	4	0
HAMILTON WATERFRONT TRUST	3	3	0	1
HAMILTON, CITY OF	8	0	0	1
HURON-KINLOSS, TOWNSHIP OF	3	0	0	0
KAWARTHA LAKES, CITY OF	2	2	2	2
LANARK HIGHLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	1	0	0	0
LEEDS AND THE THOUSAND ISLANDS, TOWNSHIP OF	2	1	3	0
LONDON, CITY OF	1	0	0	0
MCKELLAR, TOWNSHIP OF	4	4	0	2
MINDEN HILLS, TOWNSHIP OF	6	0	0	0
NIAGARA FALLS - DOWNTOWN BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA	1	0	0	1
NIAGARA FALLS, CITY OF	1	0	0	1
NIPISSING, TOWNSHIP OF	7	1	0	0
NORFOLK COUNTY	3	0	0	0
OWEN SOUND, CITY OF	1	0	0	1
PELHAM, TOWN OF	1	1	1	0
PICKERING, CITY OF	1	0	0	1
PRINCE, TOWNSHIP OF	1	1	1	0
RUSSELL, TOWNSHIP OF	1	0	0	0
SAUGEEN MUNICIPAL AIRPORT COMMISSION	2	1	1	4
SAULT STE. MARIE, CITY OF	2	2	0	1
SOUTH BRUCE PENINSULA, TOWN OF	1	0	0	0
WASAGA BEACH, TOWN OF	1	0	0	0

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

## CASES RECEIVED ABOUT SCHOOL BOARDS, 2022-2023 ■ TOTAL: 794

ENGLISH PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS	
ALGOMA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	3
AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
BLUEWATER DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	10
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA	9
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD ONTARIO NORTH EAST	2
DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	30
GRAND ERIE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	10
GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	7
HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	25
HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	22
HASTINGS & PRINCE EDWARD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	11
KAWARTHA PINE RIDGE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	11
KEEWATIN-PATRICIA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	4
LAMBTON KENT DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	4
LIMESTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	4
NEAR NORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	9
OTTAWA-CARLETON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	60
PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	37
RAINBOW DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	6
RAINY RIVER DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
RENFREW COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	5
SIMCOE COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	35
SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
THAMES VALLEY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	46
TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	101
TRILLIUM LAKELANDS DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	12
UPPER CANADA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	6
UPPER GRAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	6
WATERLOO REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	22
YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	26
ENGLISH CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARDS	
ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	10
BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	4
BRUCE-GREY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO	3
DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	33
DURHAM CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	4

HALTON CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	13
HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	7
HURON-SUPERIOR CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
KENORA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
LONDON DISTRICT CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD	6
NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	5
NIPISSING-PARRY SOUND CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	2
OTTAWA CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD	13
PETERBOROUGH VICTORIA NORTHUMBERLAND AND CLARINGTON CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	8
RENFREW COUNTY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	3
SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	12
SUDBURY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
THUNDER BAY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	1
TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	40
WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	4
WELLINGTON CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	2
WINDSOR-ESSEX CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	4
YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD	13
UNSPECIFIED ENGLISH CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD	1
FRENCH CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARDS	
CONSEIL DES ÉCOLES CATHOLIQUES DU CENTRE-EST	3
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE DE DISTRICT DES GRANDES RIVIÈRES	1
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE MONAVENIR	11
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CATHOLIQUE PROVIDENCE	4
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE DE DISTRICT CATHOLIQUE DE L'EST ONTARIEN	4
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE DE DISTRICT CATHOLIQUE DES AURORES BORÉALES	1
FRENCH PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS	
CONSEIL DES ÉCOLES PUBLIQUES DE L'EST DE L'ONTARIO	8
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE PUBLIC DU GRAND NORD DE L'ONTARIO	7
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE VIAMONDE	5
UNSPECIFIED FRENCH PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD	1
SCHOOL AUTHORITIES	
JOHN MCGIVNEY CHILDREN'S CENTRE SCHOOL AUTHORITY	1
CASES WHERE NO SCHOOL BOARD WAS SPECIFIED	
	29

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



## CASES RECEIVED ABOUT COLLEGES OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY, 2022-2023 ■ TOTAL: 236

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE	17
CAMBRIAN COLLEGE	8
CANADORE COLLEGE	11
CENTENNIAL COLLEGE	13
COLLÈGE BORÉAL	1
COLLÈGE LA CITÉ	4
CONESTOGA COLLEGE	16
CONFEDERATION COLLEGE	4
DURHAM COLLEGE	12
FANSHAWE COLLEGE	16
FLEMING COLLEGE (SIR SANDFORD FLEMING COLLEGE)	13
GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE	16
GEORGIAN COLLEGE	9

HUMBER COLLEGE	19
LAMBTON COLLEGE	3
LOYALIST COLLEGE	6
MOHAWK COLLEGE	11
NIAGARA COLLEGE CANADA	8
NORTHERN COLLEGE	3
SAULT COLLEGE	4
SENECA COLLEGE	23
SHERIDAN COLLEGE	10
ST. CLAIR COLLEGE	3
ST. LAWRENCE COLLEGE	5
CASES WHERE NO COLLEGE WAS SPECIFIED	1

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

## CASES RECEIVED ABOUT UNIVERSITIES, 2022-2023 ■ TOTAL: 205

ALGOMA UNIVERSITY	7
BROCK UNIVERSITY	4
CARLETON UNIVERSITY	12
LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY	5
LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY	6
MCMASTER UNIVERSITY	15
NIPISSING UNIVERSITY	2
OCAD UNIVERSITY	3
ONTARIO TECH UNIVERSITY	5
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY	10
TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY*	12
TRENT UNIVERSITY	8

UNIVERSITÉ DE L'ONTARIO FRANÇAIS	1
UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH	9
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA	12
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO	22
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO	9
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR	8
WESTERN UNIVERSITY	17
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY	4
YORK UNIVERSITY	30
CASES WHERE NO UNIVERSITY WAS SPECIFIED	4

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

## CASES RECEIVED ABOUT CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES, 2022-2023 ■ TOTAL: 1,218

ALGOMA, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	23
ANISHINAABE ABINOOJII FAMILY SERVICES	9
BRUCE GREY CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	17
CHATHAM-KENT CHILDREN'S SERVICES	3
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF GRAND ERIE	45
DILICO ANISHINABEK FAMILY CARE	31
DNAAGDAWENMAG BINNOOJIIYAG CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES	19
DUFFERIN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	2
DURHAM CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	35
FRONTENAC, LENNOX AND ADDINGTON, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF	30
GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF	17
HALTON CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	32
HAMILTON, CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	22
HAMILTON, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	40
HIGHLAND SHORES CHILDREN'S AID	23
HURON-PERTH CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	17
JEWISH FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICES	3
KAWARTHA-HALIBURTON CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	20
KENORA-RAINY RIVER DISTRICTS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	6
KINA GBEZHGOMI CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES	15
KUNUWANIMANO CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES	3
LANARK, LEEDS AND GRENVILLE, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF	22
LINCK (CHATHAM-KENT CHILDREN'S SERVICES)	6
LONDON AND MIDDLESEX, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	43
NIAGARA, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES	69
NIJJAANSINAANIK CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	7
NIPISSING AND PARRY SOUND, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF THE DISTRICT OF	14

NOGDAWINDAMIN FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES	24
NORTH EASTERN ONTARIO FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES	23
OGWADENI:DEO	12
OTTAWA, THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	39
OXFORD COUNTY, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	9
PAYUKOTAYNO JAMES AND HUDSON BAY FAMILY SERVICES	4
PEEL CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	52
RENFREW COUNTY, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF	18
SARNIA-LAMBTON CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	21
SIMCOE MUSKOKA FAMILY CONNEXIONS	46
ST. THOMAS AND ELGIN COUNTY, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF	18
STORMONT, DUNDAS AND GLENGARRY, THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF THE UNITED COUNTIES OF	7
SUDBURY AND MANITOULIN, THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF THE DISTRICTS OF	23
THUNDER BAY, THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF THE DISTRICT OF	10
TIKINAGAN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES	17
TORONTO, CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	20
TORONTO, CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF	75
TORONTO, NATIVE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF	9
VALORIS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS OF PRESCOTT-RUSSELL	11
WATERLOO REGION, FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF THE	40
WEECHI-IT-TE-WIN FAMILY SERVICES	4
WINDSOR-ESSEX CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	29
YORK REGION CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY	29
CASES WHERE A CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY WAS NOT SPECIFIED	105

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

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY, 2022-2023

Our Office's budget for the fiscal year 2022-2023 was **\$31.28 million**. Actual expenditures (unaudited) were **\$24.05 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)
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	
SALARIES & WAGES	14,308
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	4,181
COMMUNICATION & TRANSPORTATION	326
SERVICES	4,573
SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT	669
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>24,057</b>



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