



## **Position Description**

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<b>Position Title:</b>	<b>Early Resolution Officer</b>
<b>Team:</b>	<b>Operations</b>
<b>Reports To:</b>	<b>Manager, Early Resolutions</b>
<b>Affiliation:</b>	<b>Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union (COPE), Local 343</b>

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### **A. Position Summary**

Early Resolution Officers act as the initial point of contact for complaints to the Ombudsman's Office and are considered direct delegates of the Ombudsman in this respect. The Ombudsman functions as an independent and impartial officer of the provincial legislature who investigates and resolves complaints with respect to maladministration within the provincial government and its organizations, including boards, tribunals and agencies. Complaints are dealt with by telephone, email, in person and in writing and in both official languages. Early Resolution Officers are responsible for conducting the intake of complaints, including: documenting them; identifying and analyzing issues; and providing appropriate referral information for complaints, which lie outside of the Ombudsman's mandate. Each Early Resolution Officer is expected to effectively manage a caseload of complaints using the Office's case management database and to conduct follow-up research and make inquiries on individual complaints, as appropriate. They will also attempt resolution of complaints through communicating with complainants and officials from the provincial government and its organizations and using a variety of conflict resolution strategies. Early Resolution Officers are also called upon to analyze complex cases and issues using the case assessment method, identify cases, which are appropriate for investigation and prepare files for investigation by the investigations and SORT teams. Early Resolution Officers may be called upon to conduct trends analysis to identify patterns in complaints and potential systemic issues and may be assigned to provide assistance during the conduct of investigations by the Investigations and SORT teams, including conducting research, reviewing documentation and attending at interviews with investigators.

Each Early Resolution Officer reports in the first instance to a Manager and ultimately to the Director of the Early Resolutions Team. Early Resolution Officers work as part of a larger team and are expected to work collaboratively and maintain effective and constructive working



relationships and communications with their colleagues in addition to members of the investigations and SORT teams.

## **B. Summary of Responsibilities**

### Complaints Intake

- Receives complaints and inquiries by mail, email, telephone or in person and obtains all relevant information by asking clarifying questions, requesting documentation where appropriate and conducting appropriate follow-up where necessary.
- Uses a variety of effective communication skills to obtain relevant information from complainants via telephone or in person. This includes employing effective strategies to constructively obtain relevant information from persons who may be distressed or emotionally distraught or who face other challenges.
- Assesses complaints to determine whether issues can be dealt with within the Ombudsman's mandate using an issue-based analysis and clearly and effectively communicates the rationale for this assessment verbally and in writing where required.
- Determines appropriate referrals for complaints which are outside the Ombudsman's mandate or for which there are appropriate alternative avenues of recourse and clearly and effectively communicates information to complainants
- Summarizes and clearly documents complaints using the Office's case management system and ensures that any paper files are properly documented and organized
- Triage complaints, prioritizes and identifies next steps to attempt resolution
- Flags exceptionally serious, sensitive or systemic complaints to management's attention.

### Issue Analysis, Research and Resolution Attempts

- Reviews and analyzes complaints and identifies and frames issues for follow-up
- Conducts appropriate research and makes focused inquiries in order to identify opportunities for potential resolution or to make appropriate recommendations on the disposition of complaints.
- Identifies applicable legislation, regulations, policies or procedures and applies relevant portions to the issues identified in order to attempt resolution or to make appropriate recommendations on the disposition of complaints.
- Uses the case assessment method to identify and analyze more complex, multi-faceted or systemic issues.
- Communicates with complainants and government officials to attempt resolution of complaints, using a variety of conflict resolution strategies.
- Consults with manager where appropriate on identification of issues, appropriate next steps and/or disposition of complaints.

### Disposition of Complaints

- Recommends appropriate disposition of complaints according to an evidence based analysis of the issues.
- Prepares correspondence and other documentation, which clearly and cogently communicates the substance of the complaint, the issues that were dealt with by the office and its disposition of the complaint, along with a clear and cogent rationale for the assessment and disposition of the complaint. Correspondence and other communications must be easy to understand and reflect the appropriate tone and messages, which are consistent with the organizational direction of the Office.
- Ensures that the disposition of complaints and the rationale for such is clearly and appropriately recorded in the Office's case management system.

### Identification and Preparation of Files for Investigation

- Identifies and brings forward potential systemic issues for consideration by the SORT for investigation –issues must be clearly identified and researched where appropriate.
- Identifies complaints for investigation in a timely fashion using the case assessment method and in consultation with management.
- Prepares complaints for referral to the investigations or SORT team, where appropriate, including preparing: a clear and cogent summary of the facts and issues; a detailed analysis of the issues including applicable legislation, policy, procedures etc; an explanation of resolution attempts and why resolution was not possible and a cogent rationale as to why an investigation is recommended.
- Ensures that all proper background research has been conducted and appropriate attempts at resolution made before complaints are referred to investigations.
- Ensures that files, which are referred for investigation are well documented and organized so that the investigation can proceed without delay.
- Consults with investigators during the review and investigation of complaints referred for investigation and provides assistance as needed and approved by management.

### Caseload and File Management

- Effectively manages a caseload of complaints, using a variety of strategies and ensures a timely and relevant response to all complaints assigned
- Triage and prioritizes complaints as appropriate to ensure appropriate, timely and relevant responses
- Immediately flags and brings forward exceptionally serious, sensitive and high profile complaints including systemic issues to management's attention
- Regularly ensures that timelines and deadlines are met and that all complaints are dealt with in a timely fashion without undue delay

- Uses the office's case management system to effectively manage caseload and to ensure complaints and case related activities are properly documented
- Ensures paper complaint files are well documented and organized

#### Other Responsibilities

- Prepares cases summaries for use in the Ombudsman's Annual Report or for other purposes.
- Analyses trends and patterns in complaints in order to identify potential systemic issues.
- Summarizes complaint information and/or the results of the trends analyses for the purpose of briefing management and/or to assist the communications team in responding to media and other inquiries.
- Shares information with colleagues on relevant complaint issues and trends including through informal briefings at team meetings.
- Provides assistance as requested by management during the conduct of assessments and investigations by the Investigations and SORT teams, including conducting research, reviewing documentation and attending at interviews with investigators.
- Other related duties as assigned by management.

### **C. Position Qualifications**

**Education:** Post secondary education preferably in the social sciences or in a related field or an acceptable combination of education and experience.

#### **Experience Requirements:**

- Minimum 2 years recent experience in providing intake, complaint handling and resolution services along with referral information in an Ombudsman or similar type organization
- Minimum 2 years recent experience in the field of complaints and/or conflict resolution

#### **Personal Suitability:**

The Early Resolution Officer position requires a candidate with a high level of integrity and professional competence. They must be of good character, reliable and capable of being trusted to handle confidential, sensitive and personal information using the appropriate safeguards and discretion. Early Resolution Officers must possess a strong analytical capacity and excellent interpersonal skills and must be capable of projecting a professional, competent and capable image in their internal and external dealings,



including with complainants, government officials and other stakeholders. All communications must be handled with a high level of respect, courtesy and professionalism. Early Resolution Officers must also be capable of demonstrating excellent judgment, initiative and discretion.

### **Language Requirements:**

Proficiency in oral and written communication in the English language is required. Proficiency in oral and written communication in French is considered an asset.

### **Skills and Abilities**

- Ability to analyze and synthesize complaints, identify relevant individual and potential systemic issues, assess jurisdiction and identify avenues for potential recourse.
- Ability to research, review and apply relevant legislation, regulations and policy
- Ability to effectively resolve complaints in an Ombudsman or similar environment using a variety of conflict resolution techniques and strategies.
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- Ability to manage a high volume caseload, prioritize issues and tasks and meet deadlines.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills including the ability to effectively communicate with individuals who may be distressed or emotionally distraught or who may face other challenges.
- Ability to use a personal computer including word processing and email programs and the internet.
- Knowledge of and/or experience in working with provincial government organizations including boards, tribunals and agencies is considered an asset.
- Experience using a complaints management database is considered an asset.

## **D. Work Environment**

The Office of the Ombudsman offers a highly charged, demanding, energetic and challenging work place with opportunities to work on interesting cases directly affecting the citizens of Ontario. We emphasize a hard-working productive environment that encourages professional development and teamwork.

**Physical Environment:** Early Resolution Officers work in an open-concept workspace which is designed to facilitate team work and frequent consultation and professional communication among colleagues.



**Hours of Work and Travel:** Hours of work per week are established by Collective Agreement and individual work schedules are established and approved by management. Early Resolution Officers may be called upon to work overtime frequently during evenings and weekend. Travel may be required on an occasional/infrequent basis.

**Access to Confidential Information:** Early Resolution Officers must ensure that the confidentiality obligations of the Ombudsman, as set out in the *Ombudsman Act*, are adhered to and must routinely handle confidential information using appropriate safeguards and discretion.

**Teamwork and Supervision:** Early Resolution Officers are expected to work collaboratively with their team members and colleagues on the investigations team and elsewhere in the Office. Each Early Resolution Officer is supervised by a dedicated assistant manager, however they are expected to work autonomously and exercise initiative, using appropriate judgment to determine when consultation with management is appropriate. Early Resolution Officers are expected to work effectively and efficiently with minimal supervision, taking the initiative to find solutions to any problems, which occur and to identify creative ways to improve the quality of service provided.

**Time Pressures:** Early Resolution Officers occupy a busy and demanding position, which requires regular multi-tasking and the ability to deal professionally and competently with a high volume of work. They must be capable of dealing with competing demands and priorities and highly organized in their work. A maximum amount of flexibility is required in order to ensure that complaints are dealt with in a timely and responsive fashion.

**Effect of Errors:**

Members of the public and government officials rely on Early Resolution Officers, as delegates of the Ombudsman, to provide timely and accurate information at all times. Early Resolution Officers are expected to act with a high degree of integrity and professionalism at all times and in all of their dealings. Failure to present a professional, courteous and competent image or to provide accurate and timely information or results has the potential to have adverse impacts for individuals and on the office, its credibility and reputation and ultimately its operations.

**Freedom to Make Decisions:**

The type of work performed by Early Resolution Officers is not conducive to the rigid application of policies and procedures. Early Resolution Officers are expected to take a principled approach to decision making, using sound judgment and common sense and ensuring that the organizational principles of the office are respected, such as integrity, professionalism, timeliness, thoroughness and accuracy and relevant and meaningful responses to complaints. Advice, guidance and support is available from managers and Early Resolution Officers are expected to determine when consultation is appropriate. Decisions on individual cases are made



pursuant to an evidence-based analysis of clearly identified issues and are subject to review by managers.

### **Interpersonal Communications and Contacts**

Early Resolution Officers function as direct delegates of the Ombudsman, dealing with inquiries and complaints from members of the public including interest groups and assistants to Members of Provincial Parliament and in communications with government officials at a variety of levels and representing the entire range of government organizations including tribunals, boards and agencies. They are expected to be capable of managing difficult communications and sensitive situations with skill, judgment and discretion and always a high degree of integrity and professionalism. They must be capable of using effective communication strategies to communicate with individuals who may be distressed or emotionally distraught or who are experiencing other challenges in communicating and with persons who may not agree with or may not be satisfied with the message or information, which is being provided to them. All communications must be handled with a high level of professionalism, courtesy and respect and demonstrate a high level of competency which is commensurate with the position.