
By the numbers – cases received

Fiscal 2018-2019 (April 1, 2018-March 31, 2019): **27,419 (30% increase over last year)**

Provincial ministries and programs within jurisdiction: **14,175** (breakdown pp. 72-73)

Municipalities: General – **3,002** (breakdown pp. 74-77); Closed meetings – **155** (stats p. 80)

School boards: **873** (breakdown p. 78)  Universities: **282** (breakdown p. 79)

Most complained-about organization: Ontario Cannabis Store (**2,411** complaints – p. 33)

Top provincial organizations by case volume: See p. 71

45% of cases closed within 1 week; 61% within 2 weeks

What’s new – complaint trends and proactive work

- New policing legislation will extend ombudsman oversight to all police oversight bodies (p. 20).
- Ombudsman and staff visited correctional facilities across the province – will visit youth custody facilities in coming year (p. 22).
- Chair of new Tribunals Ontario cluster updated Ombudsman staff on efforts to address complaints about delays – the most common complaint among 549 received about tribunals (p. 26).
- Ombudsman staff flagged surge in complaints about changes to Ontario Autism Program (575 cases), monitoring communication with families and other administrative issues (p. 27).
- Complaints about the Family Responsibility Office continued to decline, but Ombudsman staff flagged a problem with it improperly accepting special expense claims (p. 28).
- Ontario Cannabis Store staff updated the Ombudsman’s team weekly on their response to complaints about deliveries, delays and customer service (2,411 cases – p.33).
- Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation resolved complaint of “self-excluded” player who was refused large casino jackpot, made improvements to self-exclusion program (p. 35).
- With integrity commissioners now mandatory in all municipalities, Ombudsman staff handled 115 complaints about them; shared best practices to help improve their processes (p. 39).
- Ombudsman’s updated guide to municipal open meeting laws was sent to all councilors and clerks; new digital digest of hundreds of summaries of open meeting cases now online (p. 44).
- Ombudsman staff helped people with unreasonable exclusions of students and restrictions on parents; flagged to Ministry of Education that school boards lack consistent policies (p. 49).
- Ministry of Transportation changed its policy to allow refugee claimants to submit “certified true” copies of their driver’s licences after federal officials took the originals (p. 54).
- Registrar General and ServiceOntario updated the Ombudsman on efforts to fix backlogs in birth, death and marriage registrations; complaints were up 106% and 38% respectively (p. 61).
• A municipal utility alerted two dozen customers about a technical glitch, discovered through one complaint to the Ombudsman, that delayed their Ontario Electricity Support Program funds (p. 66).

Investigations

Reports published in 2018-2019:
• Suspended State (driver’s licence suspensions for unpaid fines, released September 2018): Ministry of Transportation agreed to overhaul its system for notifying drivers of licence suspensions, track returned mail, improve digital tools, and report back to Ombudsman (p. 55).
• Press Pause (seizure of property from journalist by Niagara regional council, released July 2018): The Region accepted all of the Ombudsman’s recommendations, apologized publicly, changed procedures and began recording closed meetings (p. 41).

New and pending investigations (all completed – reports are in progress):
• Niagara Region (CAO hiring process, launched August 2018): p. 42.
• Near North District School Board (school closure process, launched October 2018): p. 50.
• Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (complaints about ambulance services, launched May 2018), p. 59.

Municipal closed meeting investigations: 46 meetings investigated, 22 reports and letters published; 26% of meetings investigated (12) found to be illegal, 33 best practice recommendations (p. 43).

Updates on previous investigations:
• The Route of the Problem (school busing problems in Toronto, released August 2017): Most of the Ombudsman’s recommendations were implemented; only 4 new complaints this year (p. 50).
• Out of Oversight, Out of Mind (tracking of inmates in segregation, released April 2017): A new definition of “segregation” closer to international standards is in place and more staff were hired. New complaints declined slightly, to 266 from 296 last year (p. 24).
• Nowhere to Turn (services for adults with developmental disabilities who are in crisis, released August 2016): New direct funding was announced; work on the Ombudsman’s recommendations continues, as new individual complaints come in (almost 400 since report’s release (p. 30).
• A Matter of Life and Death (provincial direction on police de-escalation training, released June 2016): New policing legislation requires officers to receive de-escalation training; new use-of-force model and Ontario Police College curriculum changes still in progress (p. 21).
• In the Line of Duty (operational stress injury and suicide among OPP members, released October 2012): Ombudsman staff assessing 90 new complaints and monitoring reviews by OPP and Solicitor General and Chief Coroner’s review of suicides since 2012 (p.21).
• Between a Rock and a Hard Place (care and custody of children with complex special needs, released May 2005): New cases continue to arise where families are told the only way to get residential care for their children is to surrender custody; Ombudsman staff flagged the lack of a process for families to access temporary care for children in urgent situations and continue to monitor Ministry’s response (p. 31).
Individual case highlights – how Ombudsman intervention helped:

- Female inmates who were being triple-bunked at a correctional facility were moved after Ombudsman staff questioned why part of the facility was only being used on weekends (p. 23).
- An inmate received dentures after being without them for a year while he awaited trial (p. 22).
- A cancer patient was saved from eviction after Ombudsman staff ensured that her landlord received her overdue rent payment through the Ontario Disability Support Program (p. 29).
- A teen with autism and developmental issues who was being housed in a hospital was moved to a residential placement after Ombudsman staff worked with the family and officials (p. 30).
- A man who paid child support for 14 years even though his daughter was in the care of a children’s aid society was refunded $4,100 by the Family Responsibility Office (p. 32).
- The family of a man who died before he could collect his lottery winnings received the $2,000 after Ombudsman staff helped them provide the required documents to verify his ticket (p. 36).
- A man received a new cannabis delivery after his first one turned out to be an empty box, and the Ontario Cannabis Store initially told him he had to return the box for a refund (p. 36).
- A woman whose municipal housing service refused her funding for a new furnace received $5,000 after Ombudsman staff pointed out their refusal was not justified (p. 38).
- A municipality revised its order banning a man from all municipal property, including sidewalks and parks, and committed to reviewing his restrictions in six months (p. 40).
- A mother obtained busing for her two children with special needs after Ombudsman staff informed her of documentation needed by the school board (p. 48).
- A college student with a disability received $9,510 in student assistance that she had been wrongly denied (p. 51).
- A commercial truck driver at risk of losing his job after an erroneous report by his doctor resulted in suspension of his licence had it reinstated after contacting Ombudsman staff (p. 55).
- A senior who missed a driving test due to hip surgery had the test rescheduled and the resulting licence suspension and reinstatement fees revoked (p. 57).
- A driver whose licence was suspended for a fine he incurred 27 years earlier was refunded $933 in duplicate fines and fees that Ombudsman staff discovered he had paid decades ago (p. 57).
- A woman who could not renew her health card because she did not have a permanent residence received coverage after Ombudsman staff put her in touch with the right officials (p. 58).
- A transgender woman received full coverage for breast reconstruction surgery after Ombudsman staff worked with her and her surgeon to submit required documentation (p. 60).
- A woman who waited two months for her long-form birth certificate received it in two days after she contacted the Ombudsman (p. 61).
- A Tesla owner received the missing second half of his $7,000 in Electric and Hydrogen Vehicle Incentive Program rebate (p. 67).
Update: Children and Youth Unit and French Language Services Unit
May 1, 2019 to June 14, 2019

Children and Youth unit

Cases received since May 1: 270

Ongoing investigations: All investigations ongoing as of May 1 are still in progress; reports will be finalized in the coming months.

Outreach and priorities:

• Ensuring all service providers for children in care post information for children and youth to contact the Ombudsman, as required by law
• Meetings with stakeholders, e.g., senior Ministry officials, Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies; outreach events for service providers and children and youth in care
• Participating in Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates annual meeting

French Language Services unit

Cases received since May 1: 62

Investigations: All investigations ongoing as of May 1 are still in progress, reports will be finalized in the coming months.

Outreach and priorities:

• Hosting the International Association of Language Commissioners international conference in Toronto, June 26-27
• Conducting a nationwide candidate search for a permanent French Language Services Commissioner
• Meeting stakeholders in the francophone community, e.g., l’Assemblée de la francophonie de l’Ontario, health care entities, Minister of Francophone Affairs and officials