

TORONTO OMBUDSMAN

THE OFFICE OF LAST RESORT

City of Toronto

Annual Report 2011

311 TORONTO AFFORDABLE HOUSING OFFICE CHILDREN'S SERVICES CITY CLERK'S OFFICE CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE CITY PLANNING CORPORATE FINANCE COURT SERVICES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES FACILITIES MANAGEMENT FIRE SERVICES FLEET SERVICES HUMAN RESOURCES LONG-TERM CARE HOMES AND SERVICES MUNICIPAL LICENSING AND STANDARDS OFFICE OF PARTNERSHIPS PARKS, FORESTRY AND RECREATION PENSION, PAYROLL AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS POLICY, PLANNING, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION PUBLIC HEALTH PURCHASING AND MATERIALS MANAGEMENT REAL ESTATE SERVICES REVENUE SERVICES SHELTER, SUPPORT AND HOUSING ADMINISTRATION SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL SERVICES TORONTO BUILDING TORONTO ENVIRONMENT OFFICE TORONTO WATER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES WATERFRONT SECRETARIAT 519 CHURCH STREET COMMUNITY CENTRE APPLINGROVE COMMUNITY CENTRE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS CECIL STREET COMMUNITY CENTRE CENTRAL EGLINTON COMMUNITY CENTRE COMMITTEE OF ADJUSTMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE 55 EASTVIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE EXHIBITION PLACE GEORGE BELL ARENA HARBOURFRONT COMMUNITY CENTRE HERITAGE TORONTO HOUSING CONNECTIONS LARRY GROSSMAN FOREST HILL MEMORIAL ARENA LEASIDE MEMORIAL COMMUNITY GARDENS ARENA MCCORMICK PLAYGROUND ARENA MOSS PARK ARENA NORTH TORONTO MEMORIAL ARENA PROPERTY STANDARDS COMMITTEE RALPH THORNTON COMMUNITY CENTRE ROOMING HOUSE LICENSING COMMISSIONER SCADDING COURT COMMUNITY CENTRE SINKING FUND COMMITTEE SONY CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS ST. LAWRENCE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS SWANSEA TOWN HALL TED REEVE COMMUNITY ARENA TORONTO ATMOSPHERIC FUND TORONTO CENTRE FOR THE ARTS TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION TORONTO LICENSING TRIBUNAL TORONTO PARKING AUTHORITY TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION TORONTO ZOO WILLIAM H. BOLTON ARENA YONGE-DUNDAS SQUARE 311 TORONTO AFFORDABLE HOUSING OFFICE CHILDREN'S SERVICES CITY CLERK'S OFFICE CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE CITY PLANNING CORPORATE FINANCE COURT SERVICES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES FACILITIES MANAGEMENT FIRE SERVICES FLEET SERVICES HUMAN RESOURCES LONG-TERM CARE HOMES AND SERVICES MUNICIPAL LICENSING AND STANDARDS OFFICE OF PARTNERSHIPS PARKS, FORESTRY AND RECREATION PENSION, PAYROLL AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS POLICY, PLANNING, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION PUBLIC HEALTH PURCHASING AND MATERIALS MANAGEMENT REAL ESTATE SERVICES REVENUE SERVICES SHELTER, SUPPORT AND HOUSING ADMINISTRATION SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL SERVICES TORONTO BUILDING TORONTO ENVIRONMENT OFFICE TORONTO WATER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES WATERFRONT SECRETARIAT 519 CHURCH STREET COMMUNITY CENTRE APPLINGROVE COMMUNITY CENTRE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS CECIL STREET COMMUNITY CENTRE CENTRAL EGLINTON COMMUNITY CENTRE COMMITTEE OF ADJUSTMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE 55 EASTVIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE EXHIBITION PLACE GEORGE BELL ARENA HARBOURFRONT COMMUNITY CENTRE HERITAGE TORONTO LARRY GROSSMAN FOREST HILL MEMORIAL ARENA LEASIDE MEMORIAL COMMUNITY GARDENS ARENA MCCORMICK PLAYGROUND ARENA MOSS PARK ARENA NORTH TORONTO MEMORIAL ARENA PROPERTY STANDARDS COMMITTEE RALPH THORNTON COMMUNITY CENTRE ROOMING HOUSE LICENSING COMMISSIONER SCADDING COURT COMMUNITY CENTRE SINKING FUND COMMITTEE SONY CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS ST. LAWRENCE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS SWANSEA TOWN HALL TED REEVE COMMUNITY ARENA TORONTO ATMOSPHERIC FUND TORONTO CENTRE FOR THE ARTS TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION TORONTO LICENSING TRIBUNAL TORONTO PARKING AUTHORITY TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION TORONTO ZOO WILLIAM H. BOLTON ARENA YONGE-DUNDAS SQUARE



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January 31, 2012

His Worship Mayor Rob Ford and Members of Toronto City Council:

I am pleased to submit my 2011 Annual Report to City Council for the period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011, pursuant to section 173 (2) of the *City of Toronto Act 2006* and the City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 3.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Fiona Crean", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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OMBUDSMAN'S MESSAGE

“An anti-government ideology is both short sighted and simplistic. Government and public service are a necessary and important part of citizens’ lives if we are to have a healthy democracy.”

IT HAS NEVER BEEN TOUGHER TO BE A DEDICATED PUBLIC SERVANT IN TORONTO.

The municipal government is going through its most profound shakeup in recent memory, more profound perhaps than amalgamation. Some residents are pushing to keep taxes down, others are fighting to save services, and many public servants are wondering if they will have a job when it is all over.

In the midst of this maelstrom, it is easy to lose track of three principles at the core of public service: fairness, accountability and good governance. Admittedly, they are not easy to talk about. People can quickly bring to mind the problems and “horror stories” in my recent reports, problems that occur when fairness, accountability and good governance are absent. But more time and effort needs to be spent making sure these principles are there from the outset, rather than fixing the problems after the damage to residents’ lives has already been done.

This is essential if we are to restore trust in our public institutions. And we must do this if the city is to grow and thrive as a democratic community. Right now, people’s fear and distrust of government are high. Their anger is palpable. Economic pressures are indeed significant, for some they are catastrophic, but an anti-government ideology is both short sighted and simplistic. Government and public service are a necessary and important part of citizens’ lives if we are to have a healthy democracy.

Creating conditions that promote and sustain collaboration between government and residents, particularly those who are not in the mainstream,

is an imperative for a sustainable future. We must be vigilant in keeping our public service relevant and accessible to the most marginalized among us, to those who often have no place at the table. It should not surprise us that marginalized communities frequently have great difficulty in gaining access.

In the short time since the Office of the Ombudsman has been open, I have spent most of my time trying to ensure that fairness, accountability and good governance do not get overlooked.

We all must remain alert in these times of change. In the haste to balance budgets, it is possible that the system of accountability which we have in place, and of which my office is a part, may be overlooked. The rights of every person in this city are in jeopardy if we permit anyone to plead fiscal imperatives as an excuse for not behaving justly, fairly and equitably or as an excuse to restrict the right to have complaints reviewed independently. This does not mean that we should ignore our fiscal responsibilities; it does mean that when change is made the imperative for fair and equitable service must remain central.

The last two years should be seen as a transition, a period where the public service gained an understanding and awareness of my office’s role, processes and expectations. But there is still a long way to go before the benefits are embedded in the culture of the public service. The values of a responsive and fair service culture still need to be more front-of-mind with all staff.

“ We all must remain alert in these times of change. In the haste to balance budgets, it is possible that the system of accountability which we have in place, and of which my office is a part, may be overlooked.”



Justice Douglas Cunningham put it well in his final report on the Mississauga Judicial Inquiry.

“An effective municipal accountability regime requires a culture of accountability that pervades municipal government. That culture of accountability cannot simply be imposed top down through legislation; it requires strong leadership from various municipal stakeholders. A balance must be struck that provides consistency, predictability, coherence, fairness and transparency, as well as sufficient flexibility.”

To achieve this at the City of Toronto, we must put our words into actions, in a proactive sense. And that requires more staff development that focuses on accountability, transparency, disclosure and performance. Sure, things go wrong. I have reported on several issues over the last year. And I have found that the problems are mostly with the systems and the way operations are run by the City rather than with the individuals.

Nonetheless, the lack of training and professional support for public servants, especially those who have received promotions, is evident. It is a common and understandable response to cut training when there are budget constraints; after all, service to the public is the most important priority. This should not be an either/or situation.

Another development that concerns me is the increasing “politicization” of the public service. Councillors and other stakeholders have said they are unable to get basic information from staff and sometimes the answers have been evasive or without the appropriate context. Senior public servants have made the same observations. Great public servants deserve our praise for showing their vision and their courage in the face of adversity. But it can be exceedingly difficult for staff to speak truth to power and provide their best advice as dutiful public servants.

Experience is telling me that in the sphere of municipal governments — especially a government as large as Toronto — the space between legislator and public servant is not adequately buffered. In fact, the space is razor thin and in significant jeopardy for public servants and good governance in general.

Such lack of clarity hurts everyone. That is why I believe Toronto City Council should ask the Province of Ontario to create a *Public Service Act* for the Toronto Public Service. It will provide the tools and framework that advance integrity, accountability and good governance. Such legislation would ensure a non-partisan, professional, ethical and effective body serving the public, the government and City Council. It would also clearly protect public servants in their duty to provide unbiased, ethical, best advice and full information.

The promise of increased powers and accountability that is enshrined in the *City of Toronto Act 2006* would be better realized if we had a *Toronto Public Service Act* to fill this important vacuum in city government.

I want to thank all those residents who have taken the time and shown the courage to complain and to applaud the many public servants who have shown vision in the face of very difficult times. The Ombudsman team is to be commended for its tenacity, hard work and integrity while working in sometimes challenging circumstances.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Crean', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

FIONA CREAN
Ombudsman of Toronto

OMBUDSMAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS

OMBUDSMAN RECOMMENDATIONS CAN RAISE THE BAR ON PROCEDURAL, SUBSTANTIVE AND EQUITABLE FAIRNESS.

As Ombudsman Brenninkmeijer of the Netherlands has put it:

“Proper treatment is not just a question of being ‘pleasant’ or ‘courteous’: it lies at the very legitimacy of government action and public compliance. Proper treatment is the concrete expression of procedural fairness...The Ombudsman constantly seeks to hold up a mirror to government. Issuing recommendations is one way of doing this.”

Where the courts supervise and may quash administrative decisions, an ombudsman may create change and improve governance through influence and dialogue, as well as by making recommendations to improve the administration of government as a whole.

One such example was the Ombudsman’s investigation into the treatment of residents with dementia and diminished capacity, “Duty to Care,” where the City is now adopting a corporate-wide framework on how to serve such individuals.

What does this show? It shows that ombudsman investigations can remedy individual complaints but investigations also have the unique capacity to address systemic ailments. For the most part, improvements made through ombudsman recommendations are system-wide. This means they have the greatest capacity to reach the most number of Toronto residents, across the largest geographic area, in a short time.

Once new policies and procedures are developed or improved and then put into practice, Toronto residents as a whole benefit. There is an improvement in the standards of equity and fairness in the delivery of public services. Overall this results in better public service.

Between April 2009 and December 2011 the Ombudsman has made a total of 125 recommendations. These come from specific investigation reports as well as the Ombudsman’s annual reports to City Council. Of the 119 recommendations derived from investigation reports, 94 are due to be implemented by the end of 2011. The City has successfully implemented 89 of these, a 95 per cent compliance rate. The remaining ones are being implemented. Of the six recommendations made in the 2009 and 2010 annual reports, the City has addressed all of them.

Overall, the Toronto Public Service has responded efficiently to recommendations issued.

Not surprisingly, the key themes in Ombudsman recommendations across all investigations have centred on accountability, fairness and transparency in the public service. The recommendations have focused on improving internal and external communications and record keeping and documentation, developing new or improving existing policies and procedures, and implementing fair complaint handling practices.

NEW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2012

The backdrop to this year's recommendations comes from our interactions with the public service along with our complaint handling and investigative experience.

Toronto Public Service Act

The duties and expectations for public servants are outlined in a variety of documents including a charter of expectations, whistle blowing legislation and conflict-of-interest guidelines. But there is no single locus of coherent, well-articulated rules that sets out the public servant's obligations and accountabilities in law.

Although municipal government operates in a different reality to other orders of government, a *Toronto Public Service Act* would ensure that public servants, City Council and the public are clear about the roles and responsibilities of public servants.

A *Toronto Public Service Act* would ensure that the Toronto Public Service is effective in serving the public, the government and City Council and that public servants are non-partisan, professional, ethical and competent in carrying out their duties. To accomplish this, the act would:

- set out the roles and responsibilities in the administration of the public service
- set a framework for the leadership and management of the public service
- outline the rights and duties of public servants concerning ethical conduct and political activity.

1. The Ombudsman recommends that Toronto City Council ask the Province of Ontario to create a *Toronto Public Service Act* that embeds expectations and standards for the purpose, role and responsibilities of its public servants.

Training and Skills Development

There is often inadequate support and technical training, especially following successful promotions. Ombudsman reviews have uncovered examples of a skills deficit preceded by a promotion for which the incumbent received little to no formal training.

2. The Ombudsman recommends that the Toronto Public Service ensure the proper supports for learning and skills development be put in place to assist someone who has been promoted and that ongoing skills development and technical know-how be made available.

University Ave
& King St W



ACCORDING TO PLAN

RESULTS

noun: a consequence, effect,
or outcome of something



OUR PLAN

In January 2010, we set out a three-year strategic plan. We expected that City Council would provide a budget sufficient to meet the challenge of achieving our mandate.

For 2011, we said we would continue our focus on systemic investigations, while raising awareness of the office among the public and the public service. We also said we would develop a strong stakeholder network.

We expected the outcomes would include a service to residents that is responsive and accountable, one that demonstrates value. We also expected to become known as a progressive authority among ombudsman in Canada.

OUR RESULTS IN 2011

1. We completed six investigations. These resulted in new or improved standards, services, policies and processes in many areas of the City's public service. They have led to improved communications and customer service and thus, greater accountability and better governance.
2. We have increased awareness of the office through the media coverage and public education that followed each published investigation report.
3. The Ombudsman participated in an information session for new City Councillors with the other accountability officers. She followed up by meeting individually with each of them and the returning Councillors.
4. We took on speaking engagements across the city — seven sessions with seniors' groups, three with the mental health community and many neighbourhood and faith meetings. The Ombudsman also accepted invitations to speak at venues such as Osgoode Law School, the Chinese Canadian National Council, the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, the Ontario Science Centre, the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Human Rights Week and a session on anti-corruption and whistle blowing.
5. We raised awareness within the Toronto Public Service during information sessions with groups such as senior managers, recreation supervisors and managers of Fire Services, Emergency Management Services and Municipal Licensing and Standards.
6. We added value to the City of Toronto, showing our leadership by:
 - developing and delivering a workshop on serving vulnerable populations with particular focus on dementia and diminished capacity at the national Forum of Canadian Ombudsman
 - redesigning the workshop for an international audience (from 28 countries and five continents) and presenting it to the annual international banking ombudsman conference
 - assisting the Ombudsman of Peru in building managerial capacity in planning, implementing and evaluating services through results-based management. The Canadian government funded this initiative.
7. We developed stakeholder relationships, meeting with a variety of community and regional leaders, including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto Board of Trade, Toronto Summit Alliance, MaRS, Atkinson Foundation, Canadian Urban Institute, Social Planning Council of Toronto, Skills for Change, seniors' advocacy groups such as CARP, Ontario Council Serving Immigrants, Toronto Association for Business Improvement Areas, Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, health centres, Maytree Foundation, Toronto Community Foundation and COSTI Immigrant Services.
 - meeting with international delegations of Nigerian judges and Chinese government officials
 - participating in a panel on accountability and the "City of Toronto Act five years on" co-sponsored by the Munk Centre and Osgoode Law School.



INVESTIGATE

verb: carry out a systematic or formal inquiry to discover and examine the facts of an incident, allegation, etc. so as to establish the truth

A FALSE IMPRESSION OF FAIRNESS

Mr. K complained to the Ombudsman that the Children's Services Division (CSD) unfairly withdrew subsidized daycare for his children. The City also wanted him to pay back about \$23,000. The City said Mr. K failed to provide notice of his loss of employment, although Mr. K contended that he had done so and CSD was penalizing him for their own error in losing the documents. Mr. K had appealed the City's decision, unsuccessfully, three times.

The City investigated to determine whether Mr. K owed money to CSD. The Ombudsman found this internal investigation flawed. For example, the staff person only spoke to Mr. K for three minutes by phone and did not interview City staff or look into his claim about the missing document. The final report was poorly written and does not explain the investigation, evidence or conclusions.

The Ombudsman's investigation found serious problems in the way the City handled the appeals. Mr. K's first appeal was never sent to the Appeal Committee and he was never told what happened. The second went to the committee but the committee was never told that Mr. K claimed he had submitted the required documents or that he had appealed before.

The denial letter he received said the committee had met even though it had not and one member never voted on the appeal. The investigation found this had happened in 182 other appeals.

In Mr. K's third appeal, the committee was not told about the first appeal. Staff gave the committee the misleading impression that Mr. K had changed his story about having submitted the required documents.

The Ombudsman recommended that the City apologize to Mr. K for the manner in which his claim and appeals were handled and requested CSD review his case.

The Ombudsman also made nine recommendations to address the systemic issues. These included creating policies for the Appeal Committee; payment plans for recoveries from low-income families; record-keeping protocols; clear, accurate and complete communications; and training for staff involved in the investigative and appeals process.

The City Manager agreed with every recommendation and noted that implementing them would strengthen customer service.

INVESTIGATIONS

The Ombudsman launches a formal investigation when a complaint involves complex or conflicting information, multiple issues or cases with systemic or public interest implications. An investigation, which can take a year depending on complexity, usually ends with a formal report and recommendations.

POTHoles, FLOODS AND BROKEN BRANCHES: HOW THE CITY HANDLES YOUR CLAIMS

The Ombudsman's office, since it opened in 2009, has received a steady stream of complaints about third party liability claims filed against the City. Overwhelmingly, these under-\$10,000 claims have been about damage caused by potholes, sewer or water backups, and falling tree limbs.

Because of the number of complaints, the Ombudsman decided to investigate how the City, through its contracted adjuster McLarens Canada (now called Granite Claims Solutions), processes these claims.

The investigation found that claims are denied automatically at the outset, with a letter saying there had been an investigation, but there was no investigation. Claimants do not receive information or explanations. The Ombudsman also found significant delays in getting reports from the City and insufficient and misleading information on the City's website about these types of claims.

The Ombudsman made 10 recommendations on reforming the claims process to bring it in line with the City's promise of fairness, transparency and timeliness, and the need to protect its financial interest.

The City responded that the investigation was "balanced and thorough" and agreed to implement all the recommendations.

NO WAY TO COMPLY

Ms. A's troubles began when an officer from Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) found that the railing on the back deck of her Etobicoke home was too short and without guards, in violation of Toronto's Municipal Code.

Ms. A called MLS many times, trying to get more information on what changes were necessary. In her complaint to the Ombudsman, she says the officer was "dismissive" and "belligerent," telling her to hire a professional because he was not going to provide her the assistance she was asking for.

During the investigation, the Ombudsman found that staff and management at MLS failed repeatedly to treat Ms. A properly and give her the information.

The officer used an out-of-date version of the Municipal Code.

Rather than clearly communicate the needed changes in a timely and professional manner, MLS ordered four re-inspections, at a cost to Ms. A of \$60 each time.

While policy emphasizes compliance rather than prosecution, the officer decided Ms. A had been given enough time to comply and laid a charge under the Building Code. No one at MLS reviewed the charge to see if it was justified.

The Ombudsman also found that the former Executive Director of MLS had undermined the integrity of investigation by ordering staff to report on the investigator's questions, as well as their responses.

The Ombudsman recommended that MLS apologize to Ms. A and refund the fees she had to pay.

The report also recommended systemic fixes for MLS to improve their communications, timelines, record keeping and training.

CHANGING A BIASED MINDSET

Ms. M contacted the Ombudsman to complain about the treatment she received from Toronto Emergency Medical Services (EMS) after she told them that a paramedic, responding to her 911 call, had sexually assaulted her. Ms. M lives with mental health challenges in supportive housing. She believed her vulnerabilities affected the way in which EMS looked into her complaint.

The Ombudsman investigated how the EMS reviewed complaints and how it behaved toward Ms. M.

The Ombudsman found EMS procedures for complaint investigations did not contain acceptable standards. In addition, EMS did not follow its own procedures when investigating Ms. M's complaint.

INVESTIGATIONS

The Ombudsman found many instances of unfairness. EMS failed to investigate whether its own professional standards were breached. The investigator was not independent and did not have the necessary expertise. Employees prepared reports after discussions with each other and were not cautioned against doing so. Ms. M's privacy was breached by inappropriate workplace gossip and innuendo. EMS contacted the police without Ms. M's knowledge.

The Ombudsman also found bias about mental health, disrespect and a lack of professionalism towards Ms. M. Fair treatment necessitates accommodation for a complainant and may require a specific process sensitive to the vulnerabilities of a particular group.

The Ombudsman acknowledged the difficulties and challenges that EMS personnel face in their jobs. However, the vital public role of EMS demands public accountability and a fair and effective public complaints system.

The Ombudsman made 16 recommendations, which were accepted by EMS, and commended the EMS chief for his leadership in working to improve the system.

The recommendations included an apology to Ms. M which the chief did both in person and in writing, and several improvements to the EMS investigation process. The Ombudsman also recommended developing a specific procedure for addressing the needs of complainants with mental health issues, taking steps towards ensuring bias-free workplaces, and seeing that EMS employees are held to account for their duty of professionalism.

EMS has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving their process and working collegially with the Ombudsman.

PARKING ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Ms. S, owner of a business property in a plaza, filed an extensive complaint with the Ombudsman outlining difficulties she had with Transportation Services about commercial boulevard parking.

Ms. S claimed that Transportation Services had

- processed applications inappropriately
- helped previous owners to mislead her in their claim that parking was included on the property
- withheld an agreement from a Freedom of Information request
- refused to process a commercial boulevard parking application she had submitted on behalf of all the owners in the plaza.

The Ombudsman decided to investigate as the complaint indicated that systemic issues might be involved.

The investigation found no evidence to support Ms. S's allegations. The staff involved had conducted themselves properly and followed the bylaws and procedures.

BUILDING TO STANDARD

Mr. J complained to the Ombudsman's office that a neighbour had built a garage that exceeded size and setback requirements. Mr. J said there were other bylaw and building code violations on the property. He said that Toronto Building had failed to prevent this and had, in fact, bent the rules to accommodate the neighbour. Mr. J had complained to Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) about a number of concerns and was not satisfied with the outcome.

As it was unclear what action the City had taken during this longstanding complaint, the Ombudsman decided to investigate.

The Ombudsman found that City staff had applied the appropriate criteria and regulations to the neighbour's structures. She also determined that City staff from both MLS and Building responded appropriately to Mr. J's complaints.



CASE STORIES

noun: a process or record of research in which detailed consideration is given to a particular situation

CASE STORIES

Intake staff often handle straightforward complaints over a couple of days through phone calls, emails and sometimes meetings. More complex complaints are handled by investigators (and sometimes intake staff) and involve research into policy and practice. Often there is investigative work to be done. Such complaints generally take seven to 35 days.

ONE COMPLAINT TRIGGERS NEW POLICY

Mr. M called the Ombudsman's office on behalf of an activist group to which he belonged. He complained that a non-profit organization had threatened to prevent his group from taking part in an event. The non-profit was not a part of the City but does receive grants from the City. Mr. M had heard that the City was actively involved in making the decision about his group's participation. He complained about their involvement and was unsatisfied with their response.

Our office found, after interviewing staff in the City's Equity and Diversity office, the Economic Development and Culture Division, and the Social Development Finance Administration Division that there was no process for handling complaints about grant-funded organizations.

The Ombudsman then met with the City Manager to express her concerns about the absence of such a process. She wrote to the City asking for a complaint mechanism. She stressed that the City needed to ensure the grants staff are familiar with the process, that it is accessible to the public, and that it is followed consistently.

The City Manager agreed. The Ombudsman's office reviewed the draft protocols and provided comments and support.

Result: The process for dealing with complaints, incorporating suggestions from the Ombudsman, is now available on the City's website for both the Social Development Finance Administration Division and the grants programs. Anyone wishing to complain about one of the City's more than 800 grant-funded programs now has a clear path to follow.

RUDE? NOT!

Mr. R complained to the Ombudsman's office that employees in the Toronto Employment and Social Services Division (TESS) were rude when he applied for Ontario Works benefits. Mr. R complained about TESS policies of requiring two pieces of photo ID to pick up cheques and not using email to communicate with clients. He also complained that TESS refused him access to its employment programs.

The investigator assigned to the case reviewed the division's policies and interviewed several TESS staff. The investigator and the director of investigations then met with the TESS general manager. TESS said it was Mr. R who was aggressive when they told him he needed to have two pieces of ID. TESS spent time explaining the various job programs and gave him an application, which he did not use. The general manager said the two pieces of ID helped prevent fraud

and were only needed when the client was new or unknown to the staff. Mr. R did receive his cheque when a supervisor intervened. The general manager also said TESS had reviewed its policies and was shifting to a debit card payment system, replacing manual cheques. TESS did not use email with clients because of concerns about privacy, but that policy was also under review.

The Ombudsman found that TESS provided a reasonable explanation for its actions and there was no evidence of rude or inappropriate behaviour.

Result: The Ombudsman investigator talked with Mr. R, explaining that they had found no evidence to support his complaint. The investigator also told Mr. R that TESS was changing to a debit card system and reviewing its use of email.

BUILDING A FIREWALL

Mr. D called the Ombudsman's office with his concern about the large house being built behind his home. He thought it might not comply with zoning bylaws. He had asked Toronto Building for all the documents related to the construction. Staff gave him wrong information on how to request the documents. Mr. D also complained about poor record-keeping, saying he was unable to find any record showing that the house met size restrictions.

Mr. D was related to the Ombudsman. This was the first time the office tried out its policy for dealing with a conflict of interest. It erected an internal firewall, assigning the name “John Doe.” The Ombudsman delegated her authority to the Fair Practices Commissioner, the Ombudsman for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. The John Doe files were kept apart and nothing was entered into the Toronto Ombudsman case management system. Ombudsman staff reported to the Fair Practices Commissioner and did not discuss anything about the case with the Toronto Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman investigator did find record-keeping problems. Mr. D had made his inquiries when the system of disclosure was being revised and employees were not yet fully trained. Also, there was an error at the inspection stage. An inspector should receive, review and sign off on a survey at the foundation stage before the framing begins, but this had not happened.

Result: Toronto Building agreed to make several changes, including clearing up instructions on its website, releasing more documents more easily, better documenting the requirement for inspectors to corroborate surveys with the built structure and recording clearly any approved changes.

HONOURING AN AGREEMENT

Mr. F is a senior with a spouse in long-term care. The tree in his yard, planted by the City of Etobicoke, was in terrible shape and he worried that someone could be injured. The City used to take care of the tree, but when he phoned about it, the City told him the tree was his problem.

Ombudsman staff phoned Parks, Forestry and Recreation, who said that an agreement signed in the 1990s allowed the City to maintain the tree. They explained the agreement was only for five years and was no longer in effect. However, a review of Mr. F’s documents showed that the City had renewed the maintenance agreement at least three times. The review also revealed an inspection report recommending removal of the tree.

When shown this evidence, the Urban Forestry director agreed to re-inspect the tree and remove it, if needed.

Result: The City looked at the tree again and removed it, at no cost to Mr. F.

SHELTER IN TIME FOR WINTER

Mr. T and his neighbours were missing their bus shelter. It was removed in September and Transportation Services told Mr. T in October that it was going to be replaced. A few weeks later Mr. T emailed Transportation Services asking for an update — no response. Near the end of November, Mr. T emailed the Ombudsman about the missing shelter.

An Ombudsman representative contacted a Transportation Services supervisor. The supervisor looked into the matter and found they were short on parts but the shelter would be reinstalled.

Result: Mr. T emailed the Ombudsman: “When I got off the bus this evening, I saw a brand new shining bus shelter... On behalf of all my fellow users, I thank you very much for your quick action to get it installed.”



CASE STORIES

PERMITTING SHODDY TREATMENT

Mr. C called in January to talk about an unreasonable delay in getting a building permit from the City. According to the City website, the usual length of time for a permit is 10 days. He had made his submission November 23.

Mr. C and his partner were in touch with a zoning examiner by phone and email. The examiner told them to pick up the permit on Friday. They went to the office on Friday but the permit was not ready. The examiner then told them to come Monday. They did, but again no permit. The examiner told them to come Wednesday. They did, but still no permit.

Mr. C could not understand what was causing the delay and why the examiner kept telling him it would be ready when it obviously was not.

An Ombudsman representative called the department's manager. The manager reported back that the department had been short-staffed as a result of sick leaves.

Result: In an email to the Ombudsman representative, Mr. C wrote: "Your quick action managed to resolve everything as we received our permit within 48 hours. It's unfortunate that we had to go this route but it has been extremely frustrating..."

CORRECTING A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

Mr. and Mrs. E do not speak English. A municipal officer visited their property to tell them they had to clean up debris in their back and side yards. They could not understand her but she did leave them a card with a phone number. Their daughter, Ms. E, placed several calls to the number on the card but received no response to any of her messages.

Then her parents picked up a registered letter. It was a Notice of Violation saying they had to clean up the debris by a certain date. The date had passed. At last, they learned from the letter what the municipal officer's visit had been about. They cleaned up the debris. Ms. E then started calling the City again. She did not think her parents should have to pay the re-inspection fee. This went on for eight months.

Ms. E did receive a letter from a supervisor saying the fee could not be reversed.

Ms. E contacted the Ombudsman's office, who spoke to the supervisor in Municipal Licensing and Standards. He agreed to review the matter.

Result: Ms. E called to tell the Ombudsman's office that her parents were exempted from paying the fee and she was very happy.

KEEPING SENIORS AT HOME, AS PROMISED

In March, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) recommended in a report the sale of several houses. Some of these had been home to senior tenants for a long time. Some of the seniors had received re-location exemptions for reasons of age or health. Ten years earlier the TCHC had confirmed by letter that the properties would not be sold until the exempted tenants had vacated.

In April, the media highlighted the plight of a widow who had lived in one of these homes for 25 years and had the exemption. TCHC had knocked on her door telling her she had to move. The TCHC board was to decide on the sale of the homes the day after the article came out.

The TCHC report did not mention the re-location exemptions. The Ombudsman was concerned that the failure to consider the exemptions would have an adverse and unfair impact on vulnerable seniors. She immediately wrote to the Chief Executive Officer at TCHC with her concerns and requested that the matter be resolved.

Result: The TCHC amended its report to say it would honour all documented commitments made to tenants in the houses. The widow and other seniors with exemptions were allowed to stay in their homes.

DON'T FILL OUT A FORM, LOSE YOUR HOME

"I am angry depressed scared how easy [it] was for Chair to hurt me, or staff to entrap to hurt..... The system is made to fail, think we are seniors ill disable The amount of forms we need to prove our income over and over and over is ridiculous.... This is the only home I have no place to go. I am ill and I work hard to get my life in order to loose it now. In God name help me."

So said Mr. V in a letter to the Ombudsman. Mr. V lives in Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) in a rent-geared-to-income apartment. In August TCHC told him he would have to pay market value even though they had his income tax return documents indicating his income warranted a rent-geared-to-income unit. He received a notice from TCHC that the decision was final and the deadline to submit a request for review had passed. Mr. V is a senior, disabled, and on a fixed income. He cannot afford to pay market rent. He was afraid of losing his home.

An Ombudsman representative reviewed Mr. V's documents and the TCHC policies on the annual review process and contacted TCHC. They agreed a TCHC tenant service coordinator would help Mr. V fill out the forms and they would waive the deadline.

Result: Mr. V was approved for the rent-geared-to-income subsidy. In fact, they found he had been paying too much rent. His rent is now lower and he may even get a refund.

TRAPPED IN RED TAPE

Ms. H, who was nearing retirement age and on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), moved to her own apartment in Toronto from Markham. Her ODSP benefits stopped after the move, and she needed compression socks, which are expensive. Ms. H's daughter stepped in to help. She did, after many calls, succeed in getting her mother's ODSP benefits reinstated. However, no matter how hard she tried, she was unable to find out how to obtain coverage for the prescribed socks.

In frustration at the amount of time she was spending looking for a solution, the daughter phoned the Ombudsman's office.

First, in a conference call with the daughter and mother, the Ombudsman representative obtained permission to make inquiries on behalf of Ms. H. Then the representative started making calls. It turned out that a number of events conspired to mire Ms. H's file in a sea of red tape. At the same time that her ODSP file was moving between offices (because of the move to Toronto), ODSP was closing her case and moving it to a different support program (because she was nearing retirement age). Thus, her file was lost in the system.

Compression socks are classed as discretionary items and have to be approved, but this falls under Ontario Works, which the City administers (the province runs ODSP). Ontario Works could not process an application for the socks until ODSP closed the file, which was somewhere in the red tape.

The Ombudsman representative reached a supervisor in the City's Employment and Social Services who intervened in the system, found Ms. H's file and got the mess untangled.

Result: After the supervisor untangled the tape, Ms. H's daughter applied online for the much-needed compression socks. A case worker from the City visited Ms. H the next day to confirm the documents and approve the benefit. Ms. H got her socks.





GETTING REFUNDS TO THE RIGHT PLACE

Mr. N lives in a condo development with 14 units. Because they use the smallest garbage bins, the 14 units were each to receive a refund for solid waste. However, Revenue Services credited the refund (about \$2,600) for all 14 units to Unit #1's account. Ongoing credits were set to go to Unit #1 as well.

For more than seven months, the person in Unit#1 and the condo corporation had been trying to get Revenue Services to correct the situation.

First, the Ombudsman representative asked Mr. N to put the issue in writing to Revenue Services. When they did not reply, the representative called Revenue Services. They looked into the matter and found there was an error because the condo corporation is responsible for solid waste for the entire building but each unit has its own utility bill. Solid Waste could see only one account, the property management company, and by default assigned the refund to the first address listed — Unit #1.

Result: Revenue Services now issues a refund to the corporation, who divides it among the 14 units.

NOTIFY FIRST, THEN CUT

Ms. B had a complaint about Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS). One day, she was awakened by knocking at her door. Since she was resting after a medical procedure, she did not answer. She then heard chainsaws in her backyard. She found that workers contracted by the City had pruned her tree and left the debris piled in her yard. She said that the previous year, MLS had ordered her to prune the tree, which she had done.

Ms. B called an MLS supervisor, who explained that the division had to respond immediately because of the danger posed by the hanging branch. He said MLS staff knocked on her door before starting the work, but she did not open the door. He agreed to give her a bill for the labour associated with the branch removal. Instead of a bill, however, she received a notice from Revenue Services that a charge of \$886 had been transferred to her property tax.

Ms. B thought the charge, which did not include debris removal, was too high. She also said it was unreasonable that she had not received notice of the violation, as MLS had done in the past.

Following discussions with Ombudsman staff, MLS agreed that the matter was not handled appropriately. Despite the “emergency” situation, MLS should have given Ms. B a notice of the violation before taking action.

Result: MLS took the \$886 charge off Ms. B's property tax and did not charge her for the work.

LEVELLING THE PEDALLING FIELD

Mr. P, the owner of a rickshaw company, came to the Ombudsman to talk about an unfair application of licensing standards.

In about 2003, the City changed the bylaw that regulates rickshaw operations, out of concern for safety and to prevent the drivers from hustling tourists. This meant many restrictions, including one that rickshaws could not be on certain roads at certain times of day. There are about 50 reasons a rickshaw operator can get a ticket. Mr. P said that Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) was overly enthusiastic with enforcement.

Mr. P's company was the only one left. All his competitors left as a result of the restrictions and fees, which were more restrictive than in any other city.

Then another competitor came on the scene, but their cabs were pushed by pedal, not pulled by the torso. They got around the bylaw by saying they had a different business model giving free, eco-friendly rides. They did, however, cover their cabs in advertising and ask for big tips. Although they provided the same service and posed the same safety risks and harassment of tourists, they did not need a City licence, driver's licence, or proof of insurance as the City made this group part of a pilot program. The City did not ticket them

for parking on the sidewalk, carrying their fares on restricted roads or other things for which Mr. P's rickshaws were ticketed.

MLS officers told Mr. P, "They're not for hire or licensed. We can't ticket them."

Mr. P says that if the purpose of the bylaw is safety, all rickshaws should be subject to the same regulation. He has complained to the City for years about this, but enforcement remained inconsistent.

An Ombudsman investigator called the manager of enforcement at MLS. He agreed there had not been licensing or enforcement of the competitor's vehicles, even though the bylaw had changed to include pedi-cabs in 2009. He said the enforcement should be starting. He suggested changing the standard operating procedure to be clear that any pedi-cab is subject to enforcement and needs a licence. He said that if a company is in the business of providing rides to the public, they will be licensed and enforced. He agreed to make it a part of staff training before the season started.

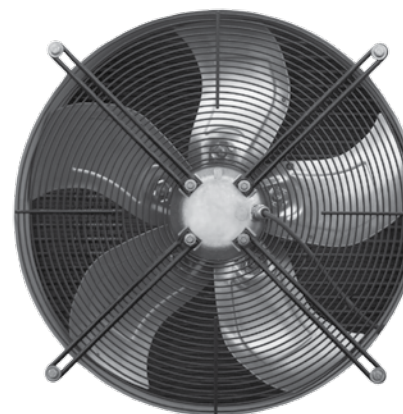
Result: The MLS manager spoke with the competitor company and explained that they needed to be licensed and to follow the bylaw. MLS staff now know there is no difference between for-hire and not-for-hire pedi-cabs.

GASPING FOR AIR

Mr. W rents in a seniors' building from Toronto Community Housing (TCHC). During the summer, TCHC was refurbishing balconies on one side of the building and as a consequence balcony doors were boarded up. The central air conditioning was not working. Mr. W was concerned about tenants who did not have their own air conditioning. He had spoken to people at TCHC but nothing was done.

An Ombudsman representative spoke to a TCHC manager. They were waiting for a part for the air conditioner but would put a stand-alone unit in the recreation room that day so that tenants could get some relief from the heat.

Result: Mr. W phoned to report that the recreation room was now a cooling station and that notices were up in the building to let the tenants know. Mr. W said that without the intervention of the Ombudsman, it would not have happened.



THE POWER OF APOLOGY

“AN APOLOGY IS THE SUPER GLUE OF LIFE. IT CAN REPAIR JUST ABOUT ANYTHING.”

So says Lynn Johnston, creator of the comic strip “For Better or For Worse.”

An apology is an important acknowledgement of the value of something lost. All too often, people underrate the apology as a means of resolving a dispute.

An apology is remarkably powerful when someone offers it sincerely, recognizes the hurt fully, takes responsibility, expresses regret and promises action. An apology benefits the person who was hurt, the public servant who delivers the apology and the public interest at large.

Mistakes were made. Others will be blamed.

So, why is it so difficult to apologize? There is a natural reluctance to admitting fault, compounded by the blame culture in which we live. Perhaps there is little support for apologizing, and public servants fear for their careers. Often they believe an apology is an admission of wrongdoing and litigation will follow. That is why Ontario followed British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba in creating the *Apology Act, 2009*, which lets someone apologize without worrying that the apology will be used later in court.

Why apologize?

A meaningful apology can diffuse emotion, restore trust, repair relationships and assist parties to move forward.

For the complainant, the apology acknowledges that something went wrong. An apology can mitigate the hurt and anger and restore the good reputation of the public service and begin to repair the relationship between the parties.

For the public servant, the apology acknowledges that he or she is taking responsibility for an error. The public servant thus earns the privilege of being forgiven, restores integrity and in doing so can enhance reputation. To acknowledge a mistake is to assert leadership, take responsibility and prescribe corrective action. That demonstrates good management.

For the public service, which needs the trust of the public, an apology shows that trust. An apology can raise social harmony and lessen adversarial litigation.

It protects the public interest and ensures good administrative practice. The public service is held accountable for its actions. A meaningful apology can increase the chances that future errors and problems will be properly addressed, throughout the system.

What do people want when things go wrong?

Complainants want recognition. They want someone to take responsibility, explain what went wrong and why. They want someone to redress the problem, and they want an apology that clearly takes ownership and expresses sincere regret.

What they do not want is an apology that assumes no responsibility and takes no action. A half-hearted apology does far more harm than no apology. There is a vast difference between:

I regret what happened to you or I am sorry if you feel offended.

and

I am very sorry this happened to you. I hope you will forgive us for our mistakes. I recognize the terrible impact our actions have had on you and your family. I have thoroughly reviewed what went wrong and have attached an explanation. I take full responsibility and will be taking the following actions to avoid any recurrence.

Providing a full apology when appropriate is the right thing to do. It is a progressive approach to accountability and creates a culture of service in which the public service and the public can move from a culture of “us and them” to a place of mutual trust and respect.

THE KEY TRENDS

Faulty Decisions

- wrong
- unreasonable
- unfair
- unexplained

Poor Service

- inability to reach public servant
- unfair treatment
- unfair policies

Poor Communication

- written communications unclear, difficult to understand
- calls not returned
- unreasonably long response time
- information lacking or wrong

Poor Record Keeping

- lack of note-taking
- incomplete files
- no record of decisions
- no paper trail

Unprofessional Conduct

- rude
- disrespectful
- unhelpful

Unreasonable Delay

- in returning calls or emails
- in processing appeals
- in handling complaints

Unpredictable Enforcement

- over-enforcement
- under-enforcement



HISTORY IN NUMBERS

noun: an arithmetical value

THE STORY IN NUMBERS

The Office of the Ombudsman handled 1,475 complaints in 2011. By year end, 1,443 were completed. Of the complaints, 11 were investigations. Half of the six investigations completed in 2011 were systemic reviews. The remaining investigations and complaints are carried over into 2012.

The five most common ombudsman issues were failure to adequately communicate; inadequate, poor or denial of service; wrong, unreasonable or unfair decision; unreasonable delay; and unpredictable enforcement. Poor record keeping, unprofessional conduct and poor customer service were factors across the board.

OMBUDSMAN CASE CATEGORIES TOP 5

1. Communication inadequate, improper or none
2. Denial or lack of services; inadequate or poor service
3. Decision wrong, unreasonable or unfair
4. Enforcement unfair or failure to enforce
5. Unreasonable delay

The top area of complaint was the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), followed by Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) and Revenue Services.

At TCHC, a large proportion of complaints spoke to building maintenance issues. Problems included long delays in addressing building and unit maintenance, failure to adequately communicate information regarding repairs, and disputes over maintenance payments. Complaints included numerous health and safety concerns resulting from non-repairs.

A significant number of complaints were about the priority transfer process. Common concerns included denial of eligibility for priority transfer, extensive delays in transferring residents facing urgent circumstances, and inadequate responses from TCHC staff.

Other complaints related to financial disputes, evictions and inadequate and ineffective responses to bed bug infestations.

Complaints about MLS, although broad in range, invariably focused on staff conduct. Among them were allegations of mistreatment, lack of professionalism, harassment, biased monitoring and enforcement, and the removal of personal property without consent. More broadly, many residents reported difficulties communicating with staff. Examples included unreasonable delays in responding or no response at all and failure to provide requested documents.

Residents made a variety of complaints about uneven enforcement practices and the issuing of violation notices and work orders. Complaints included wrongfully issued notices and orders, unreasonable timelines for compliance and work taking place without proper notice.

Many complaints concerned tenant issues and the inadequacy of the MLS response. These complaints included inadequate heat, excessive noise, maintenance problems and infestation.

THE STORY IN NUMBERS

In Revenue Services, the principal theme concerned excessive water bills and the inadequate response to billing discrepancies. Many complaints cited issues with property taxes and their assessment. Concerns included disputed tax assessments, property tax billing errors, refund delays and taxes in arrears. Across bill types, residents experienced a variety of errors including overbilling, unidentified charges, unprocessed payments and fees or penalties they considered unjust or unreasonable.

OUR JURISDICTION TOP 10

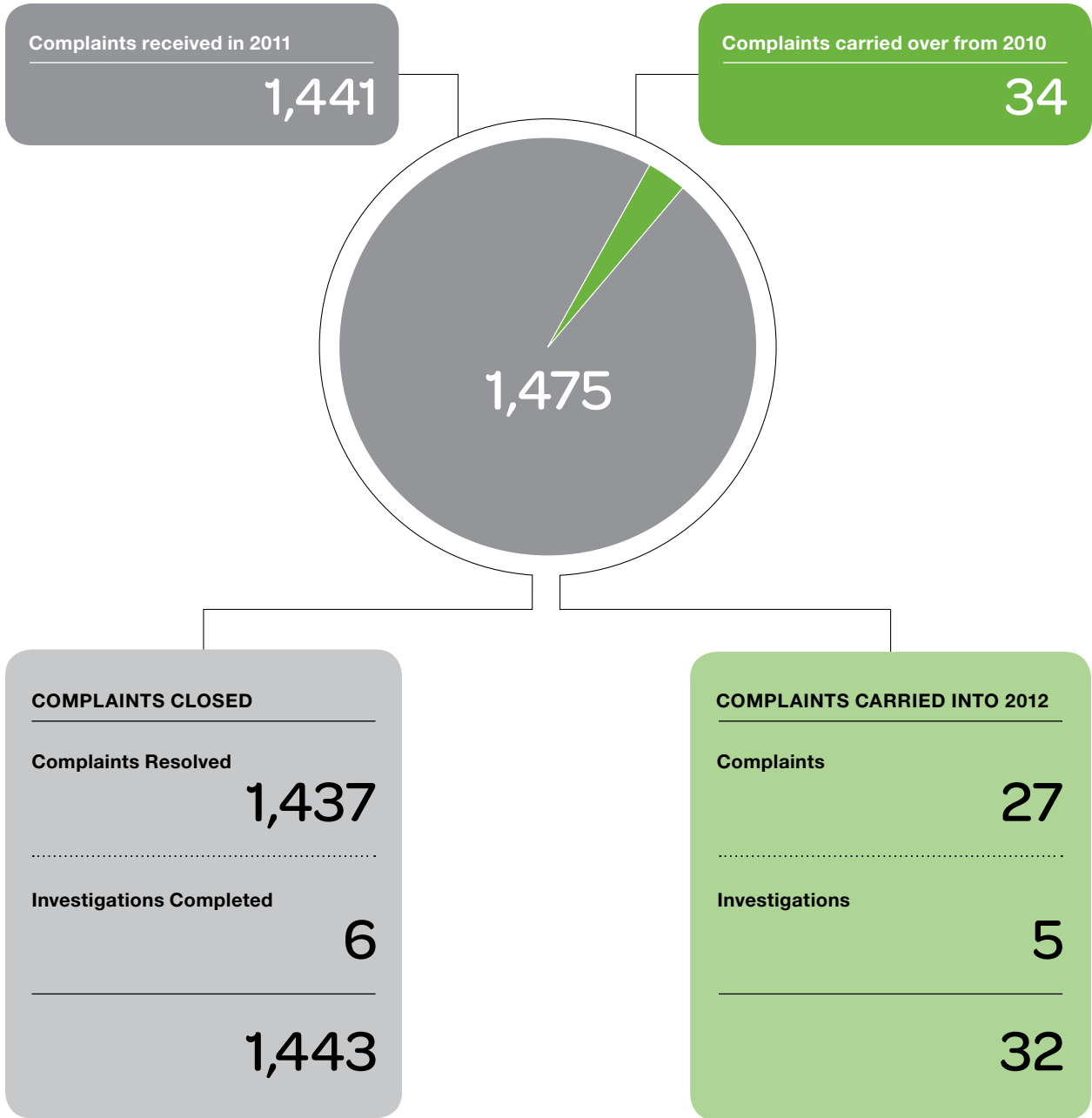
- Corporate Finance
- Employment and Social Services
- Housing Connections
- Municipal Licensing and Standards
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- Revenue Services
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Toronto Transit Commission
- Toronto Water
- Transportation Services

Similar to 2010, the majority of complaints came from downtown and East York. The number of complaints was more than twice as frequent as complaints from Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough.

The majority of residents came directly to the Ombudsman's office, a substantial number coming forward as a result of media coverage. Elected officials and increasing numbers of community organizations also referred residents to the office.

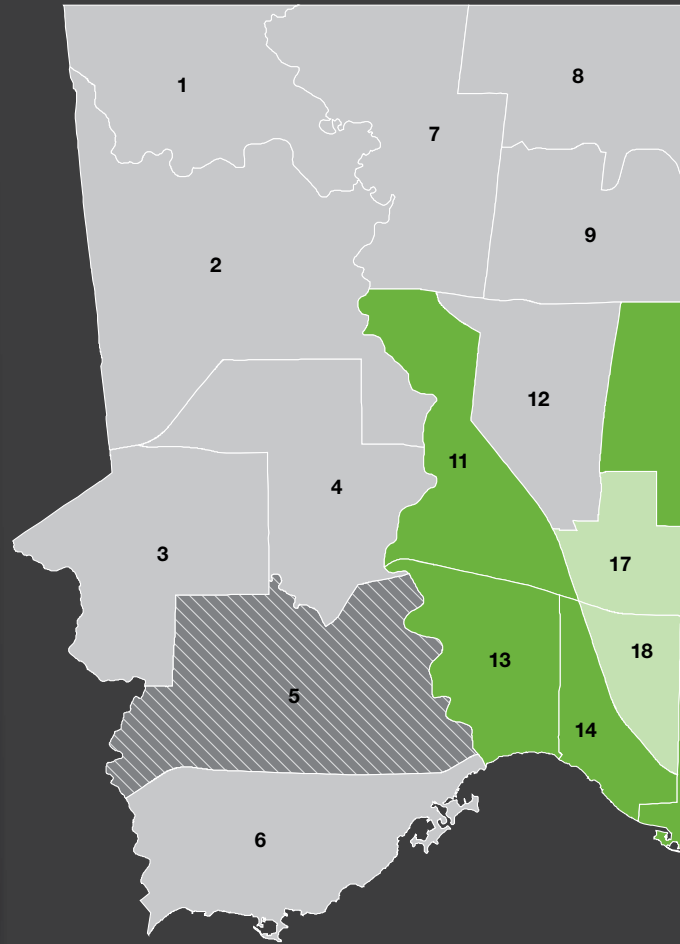
The Ombudsman's office has a published complaint system about its own services. This year there were five complaints, two of which were about dissatisfaction with the decision rendered. Neither was upheld. A third complaint about inadequate information was addressed by a subsequent letter. Another resident who had filed many complaints, complained about an untimely response. In fact, the office was able to address the complaints that fell within the Ombudsman's authority within four weeks. The fifth complaint was about unclear processes but there was no evidence to support it.

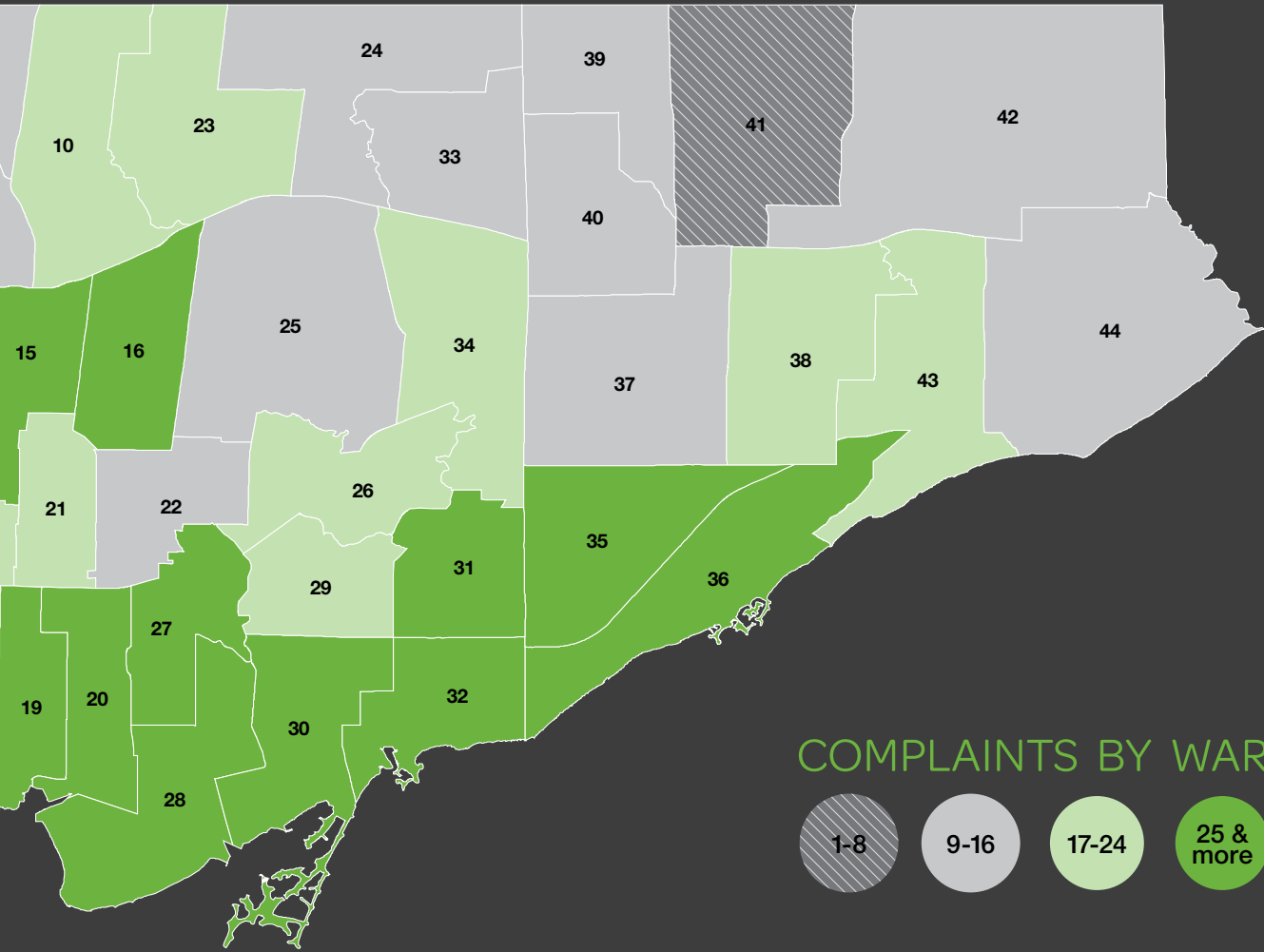
COMPLAINT SUMMARY



CITY WARDS

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Etobicoke North | 23. Willowdale |
| 2. Etobicoke North | 24. Willowdale |
| 3. Etobicoke Centre | 25. Don Valley West |
| 4. Etobicoke Centre | 26. Don Valley West |
| 5. Etobicoke-Lakeshore | 27. Toronto Centre-Rosedale |
| 6. Etobicoke-Lakeshore | 28. Toronto Centre-Rosedale |
| 7. York West | 29. Toronto-Danforth |
| 8. York West | 30. Toronto-Danforth |
| 9. York Centre | 31. Beaches-East York |
| 10. York Centre | 32. Beaches-East York |
| 11. York South-Weston | 33. Don Valley East |
| 12. York South-Weston | 34. Don Valley East |
| 13. Parkdale-High Park | 35. Scarborough Southwest |
| 14. Parkdale-High Park | 36. Scarborough Southwest |
| 15. Eglinton-Lawrence | 37. Scarborough Centre |
| 16. Eglinton-Lawrence | 38. Scarborough Centre |
| 17. Davenport | 39. Scarborough-Agincourt |
| 18. Davenport | 40. Scarborough-Agincourt |
| 19. Trinity-Spadina | 41. Scarborough-Rouge River |
| 20. Trinity-Spadina | 42. Scarborough-Rouge River |
| 21. St. Paul's | 43. Scarborough East |
| 22. St. Paul's | 44. Scarborough East |





FINANCIALS

2011 Budget

In 2011, the Office of the Ombudsman budget allocation approved by City Council was \$1,391 million for the operating year ending December 31, 2011.

The budget was subsequently adjusted in-year as part of city-wide public service adjustments for all programs to account for changes in benefits, pension amounts and related matters to \$1,409.6 million.

2010 External Audit

Hillborne Ellis Grant, an external audit firm, performed a successful compliance audit with one exception regarding expenses for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2010, a full copy of which is reproduced on the website at ombudstoronto.ca.

The auditor reported the exception to an otherwise successful compliance audit to the City Manager in a separate report as the error originated from the City Clerk and not the Office of the Ombudsman.

He reported: “The back-up for this entry could not be located as the entry was the result of an error by City Clerk’s Office staff in the process of a training exercise. A new staff member was participating in a training session and as part of the session recorded this entry. The entry made to demonstrate a training point should have been reversed but was not, nor was it identified for reversal during month end review. The Director of Council and Support Services, City Clerk’s Office, notes that the Office of the Ombudsman has abided by all policies and procedures related to its expenditures related to photocopier expenses. The Director has reviewed and revised internal procedures to prevent similar occurrence in the future by Council and Support Services staff and supervisory staff disciplined for lack of proper diligence exercised on performing the review.”



The Ombudsman meets with
Thorncliffe community residents



MAILBAG

1. May I take this opportunity to thank you from the bottom of my heart for having the courage to state and make concrete suggestions about what needs to be done for seniors like me. [resident](#)
2. Thank you for having the courage and conviction to state your points well to have maximum effect. [resident](#)
3. I would very much like to commend you for stepping in to assist Ms. X. I believe that your office provides an invaluable service to the residents of Toronto and the resolution of Ms. X's issue is a testament to the importance of the Ombudsman's Office. [City Councillor](#)
4. Your annual report is one of the best I've seen. I love it! [ombudsman colleague](#)
5. I want to express my gratitude for your assistance...your quick action managed to resolve everything. It's unfortunate we had to go this route but it has been extremely frustrating. [resident](#)
6. Your commitment to helping citizens of this city weather the crisis in their lives is appreciated by all who benefit from local services. Your team have proven to be unrelenting in their commitment to fulfill your mandate to all citizens of this city. Your work advances moral and ethical government. And this is why if we were to ever see the Ombudsman service end, or even to decrease in any way, it would be a disservice not only to those who so desperately deserve respect and support but a disservice to the community at large. [complainant](#)



PUSH-POUSSEZ

PULL-TIREZ

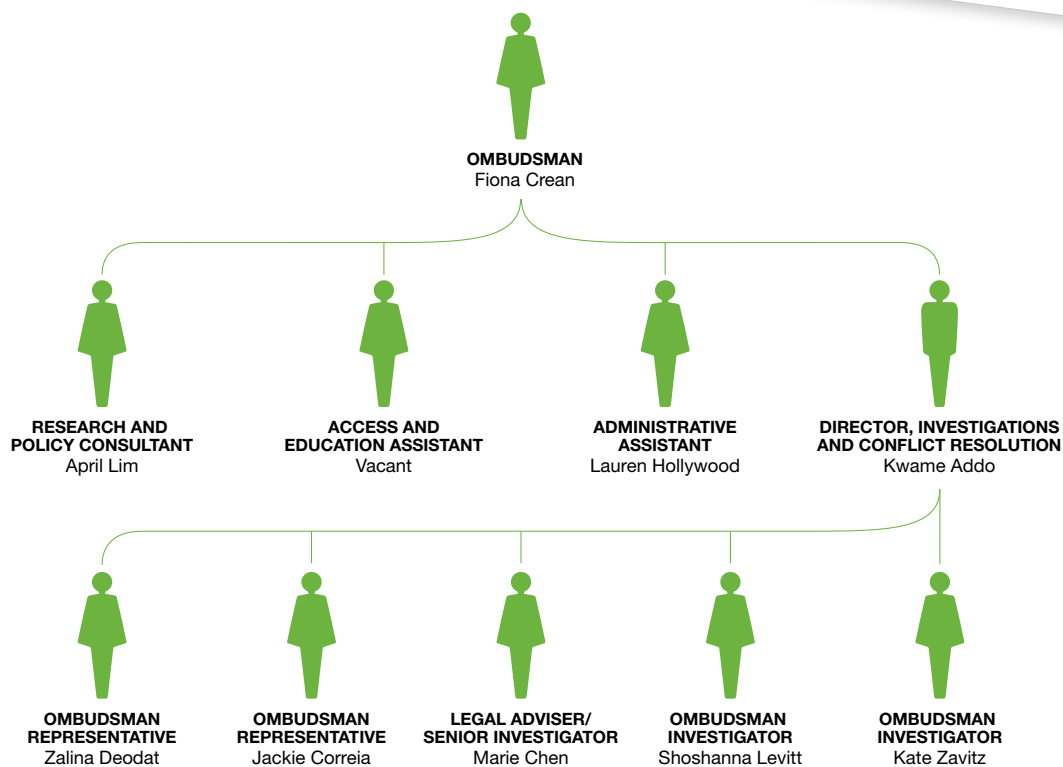
PUBLIC

PUSH-POUSSEZ

PULL-TIREZ

noun: ordinary people
in general; the community

THE TEAM





T: 416-392-7062 TTY: 416-392-7100
E: OMBUDSATORONTO.CA
WWW.OMBUDSTORONTO.CA

Arrivals/Arrivées		11:46	
Line	Origin	Destination	Status
24	London	London	On Time / À l'heure
25	London	London	On Time / À l'heure
26	London	London	On Time / À l'heure
27	London	London	On Time / À l'heure
28	London	London	On Time / À l'heure
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49	London	London	On Time / À l'heure
50	London	London	On Time / À l'heure

Travel Information

HAVING TROUBLE WITH A CITY SERVICE?

1. We look into your complaints about the administration of Toronto's government, agencies, boards and commissions, for example, water, parks, the TTC or community housing.
2. We are independent from the Toronto Public Service. The Ombudsman is an officer of Toronto City Council.
3. We advocate for fairness.
4. We are an office of last resort, after you have already tried to resolve the problem.
5. Our services are confidential and free.
6. We offer information sessions. Call us at 416-392-7062 and TTY 416-392-7100 or email us at ombuds@toronto.ca
7. Our location:
Office of the Ombudsman
375 University Avenue, Suite 203
8:30am-5pm
Monday to Friday
Sign up for our newsletter at ombudstoronto.ca



This report was printed on environmentally friendly paper containing 100% post-consumer waste. Please recycle.

