



Office of the Ombudsman
2009–2010 Annual Report



Finding ways to help
government work better





Mission

Promoting the principles of fairness, integrity, and good governance.



Our logo represents the arms of the public, the government, and the Office of the Ombudsman raised for fairness, integrity, and good governance.



November 2010

The Honourable Charlie Parker, MLA
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with subsection 24(1) of the Ombudsman Act, chapter 327 of the Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1989, I have the pleasure of presenting to you, and through you to the House of Assembly, the annual report on the exercise of my functions under the act for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

Respectfully,

Dwight L. Bishop
Ombudsman



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Message from the Ombudsman

The role of an Ombudsman is rooted in administrative oversight. It is a fundamental component of good governance, with objectivity, fairness, and integrity being cornerstones.

The modern public-sector Ombudsman relies heavily on alternate dispute resolution and outreach. Own-motion or systemic investigations are being used more frequently to address widespread gaps in government service. An Ombudsman's office is specially situated to identify structural deficits in service. Helping people navigate government services is also an integral function, with special attention to groups and citizens in potentially vulnerable situations.

This has been a busy year for our office. The number of citizens' concerns investigated by the office increased. Our proactive focus is growing in the areas of youth, seniors, corrections, and diversity. We conducted outreach in 23 communities, enabling citizens to have a better understanding of our office. Systemic and policy reviews are more common and reflect better oversight. A number of investigations were concluded, including own-motion investigations, systemic reviews, and disclosure of wrongdoing. These investigations provided the opportunity to make recommendations that impact policies, procedures, and structures—the underpinnings of government service delivery.

While we are pleased with the overall response by most departments to our inquiries, interventions, and recommendations, the timeline to implement recommendations has been unacceptable in some cases. Three recommendations were not accepted this year. Although this number is low, these recommendations address issues affecting vulnerable people, and some involve policy changes. Non-acceptance strikes at the core of fairness.

Staff commitment and competence continue to be integral components of our service.

Dwight L. Bishop
Ombudsman



About the Office

Role and Mandate

The Office of the Ombudsman promotes fairness, integrity, and good governance within the provincial and municipal spheres of government. To achieve these core values, the office works objectively and impartially on behalf of the legislative authority, public service, and public.

Over the past several years, the scope and responsibilities of the office have broadened considerably. The mandate of the office extends to all individuals who receive services from, or are impacted by, provincial and municipal governments. Civil servants also have an avenue to address concerns regarding allegations of wrongdoing in the provincial government through the office's role in the provincial Disclosure of Wrongdoing process. These various duties contribute to both operational and administrative efficiencies.

Organizational Structure

The Office of the Ombudsman is located in Halifax. Complaints may be made in person, by mail, through our website, or by calling toll-free from anywhere in Nova Scotia. Ombudsman representatives travel throughout the province to meet with members of the public and government officials, carry out scheduled site visits, conduct community outreach sessions, and provide presentations explaining our role and mandate.

The Office of the Ombudsman Includes Four Service Areas.

Office Administration

Provides initial assessment and referrals for members of the public who contact the office, and fulfills administrative and office management functions.

Investigation and Complaint Services

Reviews and investigates public concerns about services provided by provincial and municipal government organizations. This area also undertakes policy and systems reviews.

Youth and Seniors Services

Reviews and investigates the concerns of children, youth, parents, guardians, and those working in child-and youth-serving government facilities, and service systems. This area also examines and investigates issues affecting senior citizens, particularly those who reside in provincially licensed residential care facilities.

Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing

Provides an independent reporting and investigation mechanism for provincial civil service employees regarding allegations of wrongdoing in the workplace.



Human Resources and Professional Development

The office has 17 full-time positions, including the Ombudsman, and continues to benefit from a roster of part-time employees. This roster helps meet caseload demands and lessens the impact of staff vacancies.

The office hires students through the Career Starts Program (diversity, mentorship, and co-op). In the past year, nine students gained a greater understanding of government through placements with the office. The students were from the Nova Scotia Community College Office Administration Program, Pro-Bono Students Canada (Dalhousie Law School), Mount Saint Vincent University, CompuCollege, McGill University, Dalhousie University, and Dalhousie School of Social Work.

The majority of staff participated in workshops on employee engagement and effective communication with complainants. Additional skills development included advanced investigations, interviewing skills, French language, leadership development, and respectful and healthy workplaces.

Ombudsman staff are members of the Diversity Roundtable, Partners for Human Rights, French Language Services Committee, GoverNEXT, and the Program Inventory and Costing Initiative. Staff also provide input on a variety of committees and initiatives designed to address diversity in the public service, including the recruiting and interviewing process.

After 40 and 25 years of employment with the province, respectively, Lois Smith and Kim Langlois received their Long Service Awards. The office is pleased to acknowledge their dedication and contribution to the office.

Financial Resources

The Office of the Ombudsman is funded through the province’s consolidated revenue fund, in accordance with section 3(7) of the Ombudsman Act.

Office of the Ombudsman 2009–10 Budget Expenditures		
Core Business	Budget	Actual
	(\$ thousands)	(\$ thousands)
Gross Expenses	1,658	1,559
Net Program Expenses	1,658	1,559
Salaries and Benefits	1,428	1,354
Staff (full-time equivalent)	17	17

The Office of the Ombudsman spent 94 per cent of the allotted budget. The variance is due to savings in operational expenses.



Pictured above (from left to right) are Kim Langlois, Manager, Investigation and Complaint Services; Honourable Charlie Parker, Speaker of the House of Assembly; and Lois Smith, Executive Secretary/Office Manager.



The Year in Review

Complaint Resolution Process

The office employs an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process for complaint resolution. Internal quality assurance programs help to ensure the process is efficient and effective. Many of the concerns brought forward are addressed through administrative review investigations. This less formal approach provides the opportunity to quickly and efficiently address complaints that lend themselves to front-line resolution. Issues that are complex or systemic in nature involve a more structured approach, and often require in-depth formal investigations, resulting in specific recommendations made under Section 20 of the Ombudsman Act. These recommendations are monitored for their implementation.

The number of jurisdictional matters addressed this year increased by 2.7 per cent, from 1,698 to 1,744. This includes 1,199 administrative review investigations which comprised 98 per cent of investigative reviews, 493 meetings with youth in care and custody, and 52 youth evaluation surveys. The office also addressed 527 non-jurisdictional inquiries, opened 16 formal investigations, five own-motion investigations (investigations initiated by the Ombudsman), and six policy/system reviews. Twenty-three disclosure inquiries relating to the Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations were received and assessed, resulting in five formal disclosure-of-wrongdoing investigations.

The office makes recommendations designed to generate changes to government policies, procedures, and practices in service delivery and fairness. This year the office issued 37 formal recommendations, 25 of which involved changes to policy, procedure, or legislation. Thirteen of the 37 formal recommendations have been implemented while 20 were accepted, with implementation being monitored. An additional investigation resulted in a department preparing a settlement agreement. The following three recommendations were not accepted:

- Representatives of the South West Shore Development Authority rejected the recommendation to return monies spent from the maintenance fund and proceeds of sale for unrelated professional services, and without prior approval.
- The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission rejected the recommendation to assess whether a file should be reopened to determine whether an investigation was warranted.

- The Superintendent of Insurance did not accept the recommendation to examine the level of information exchange between insurers and consumers.

The last recommendation resulted from an investigation carried forward from 2007–2008, reported in last year's annual report.

While the office recognizes time is required to implement recommendations, the length of time taken by some public bodies continues to raise concerns. Two recommendations made in August 2008 to Nova Scotia Environment, in relation to domestic oil spills, are still being considered. These recommendations call on the department to identify inactive and otherwise un-remediated sites for inclusion in the regulatory framework and database, and to include a formal appeal process in the regulatory framework.

In October 2008, recommendations were made to the Department of Health regarding the capacity of vulnerable persons being placed in long-term care facilities. While the situation was remedied with the implementation of the Personal Directives Act in April 2010, the timeframe required by the department to address this matter was disappointing. More recently, however, significant progress has been made, and this office is satisfied with the measures the department has taken to address our concerns.

The office is monitoring the implementation of recommendations made in five investigations initiated under the Ombudsman Act prior to this fiscal year, and one disclosure-of-wrongdoing investigation.

Total Complaints and Inquiries Received (Ombudsman Act)

	2009–10	2008–09	2007–08	2006–07	2005–06
Jurisdictional	1,744	1,698	1,623	1,487	1,228
Non-jurisdictional	527	472	628	314	470
Total	2,271	2,170	2,251	1,801	1,698



While the number of administrative review investigations conducted increased this year, the timelines for completing these investigations has decreased. A greater percentage are being addressed in 1–7 days. This is due, in part, to additional resources and an increase in youth site visits, which enable Ombudsman representatives to address youth concerns at the early stages. The office strives to complete formal investigations within 12 months, and has achieved this target in most cases.

Resolution Timeframes				
Period	2009–2010	2008–2009	2007–2008	2006–2007
1–7 days	1,235 (73%)	1,139 (57%)	921 (59%)	901 (61%)
8 days–4 weeks	220 (13%)	257 (22%)	318 (20%)	252 (17%)
4+ weeks	237 (14%)	241(21%)	334(21%)	334(22%)
Total	1,692 (100%)	1,637 (100%)	1,573 (100%)	1,487 (100%)

Government standards for records management (Standards for Administrative Records/Standards for Operational Records—STAR/STOR) have been in use by the office for a full year, and the records control database is being populated rapidly. The inventory of older records continues. Movement of these records to off-site storage is expected to begin next fiscal year. To address expanding case management needs, representatives from the office met with the Nova Scotia Chief Information Officer (CIO) to assess whether the office would benefit from the implementation of FileNet. Our Case Management Software Statement of Requirements was provided as a proposal. A decision on this proposal is expected in the next fiscal year.

Administrative Review Investigations	
Assistance rendered to complainant	802
Resolved for the complainant	117
Resolved for the public body/properly implemented	125
Settled between the parties	14
Total with positive outcomes	1,058
Discontinued/withdrawn	83
Carried over to 2010–2011	58
Total administrative review investigations*	1,199

* Disclosure of wrongdoing statistics are reported separately.

Twenty-seven formal investigations, own-motion, and policy/system reviews were opened this year. Of these, nine were closed within an average of seven months. An additional four were concluded and are being monitored after being open an average of 7.5 months. Nine Ombudsman Act investigations were carried forward into 2010–11, and were open an average of 5.5 months. Four disclosure-of-wrongdoing investigations were also carried into 2010–11, open an average of 4.25 months.

Formal Investigations and Reviews	
Formal investigations	16
Policy/systems reviews	6
Own-motion investigations	5
Disclosure-of-wrongdoing investigations	5
Total	32

Awareness, Access and Understanding of the Office of the Ombudsman

The office reached 5,600 people through its outreach efforts, an increase of 51 per cent from last year. Outreach efforts included more in-person meetings with complainants and respondents; presentations; information sessions; community visits; and information booths, including the 50+ Expo. Community outreach occurred in Amherst, Antigonish, Bedford, Bridgetown, Bridgewater, Canning, Cherrybrook, Dartmouth, Halifax, Indian Brook, Inverness, Kentville, Middleton, Millbrook, New Glasgow, New Minas, Windsor, Wolfville, Port Hawkesbury, Shelburne, Sydney, Truro, and Yarmouth. Those who were not able to attend community outreach sessions were also reached during site visits, specifically youth in residential child-caring and detention facilities, seniors in long-term care, and adult female offenders. Also, the website was updated at the end of the year to make it more user friendly, and the office implemented the use of web-based technology, such as Facebook and Twitter. There were 65,789 hits to the website this year, an increase of 63 per cent from 40,299 last year.

As mentioned previously, the number of complaints brought to the attention of the office increased this year. There was a slight increase in the number of disclosure-of-wrongdoing inquiries (23 compared to 20 last year), resulting in five disclosure-of-wrongdoing investigations being initiated, a significant increase over previous years.



Pictured above at a community outreach session hosted at the Black Cultural Centre, Cherrybrook, are Mr. Matthew Byard (left) and Ombudsman representative Stan Ferguson.



Fairness and Accountability in Public Sector Administration

Often people contact the office because they are concerned about their right to a fair process, or about the fairness of a decision impacting their rights, especially when an administrative decision affects rights, privileges, or interests. When assessing whether a decision or process was administered fairly, the office examines if the legislation was administered consistently and in a reasonable manner, in accordance with a fair administrative process.

Fair administrative processes strive to ensure the following:

- The people who are affected are aware that a decision will be made.
- They know what information is being considered.
- They are given an opportunity to present information, and to challenge the information that is in the decision-maker's hands.
- They are notified of the outcome and how it will affect them, and are given the reasons for the decision.
- The decision is objective, unbiased, and provided in a timely manner.

Communication between complainants and government employees continues to be an issue in complaints received by the office. This highlights the importance of public bodies reviewing their communication strategies on a routine basis in order to assess if they are meeting the needs of those who use their programs and services. Several departments and agencies have undertaken this during the past year.

Site Visits		
	Number of Visits	Total Present
Residential Child-Care Facilities	86	221
Senior Residential Facilities	59	121
Wood Street Centre (secure-care residential facility)	27	108
Nova Scotia Youth Facility (custodial facility)	25	140
Police Services	12	12
Cape Breton Youth Detention Facility	12	4
Adult Correctional Facility—Female Unit	12	30
Halifax Youth Attendance Centre	8	20
Total	241	656



Role of the Ombudsman

The most common meaning of the word Ombudsman is a “citizen protector,” an oversight body that investigates complaints to ensure government services operate fairly and effectively. An Ombudsman makes recommendations to the public body to improve its services, or provides feedback on policy implementation. Recently the word Ombudsman has come to mean much more than government oversight. Across Canada, organizations such as financial institutions, universities, and airlines use an organizational Ombudsman to improve the delivery of services, and there have been several Ombudsman appointments at the federal government level.

In recognition of the 200th anniversary of the world’s first legislative ombudsman, October 12–16 was observed as Fairness Week. The office celebrated this milestone by hosting an open house and many outreach sessions across the province. The International Ombudsman Institute also recognized the significance of this milestone by establishing a permanent Secretariat in Austria.

Policy Development, Reviews and Initiatives

Government departments request input from this office on policy development. Often these requests result in recommendations aimed at clarifying and improving existing legislation, regulations, policies, and procedures. Although this work is outside the traditional investigative process, it represents an encouraging trend. Following are some examples of initiatives undertaken:

- addressing issues that impact young persons within the judicial system, in consultation with the Provincial Youth Court Stakeholder Group
- developing a framework for an investigative course
- participating in a case conference sentencing hearing for a young person, at the request of the judge
- advising on policies and procedures related to community service probation orders, and on obtaining consent of youth
- reviewing citizen complaint forms and the complaint process
- reviewing the maintenance of records of privileged mail sent to offenders, the offender disciplinary system, and disciplinary reports
- advising on procedures for placement of offenders in segregation, and on close confinement in a special handling unit



A Month at a Glance

The following is a sample illustrating the number and scope of concerns brought to the attention of the office during a one-month period (May 2009):

- allegation of abuse while in foster care
- adult protection and placement
- assistance for person with disabilities
- benefits discontinued (financial)
- child protection/custody (3)
- complaint process relating to physicians
- complaint against RCMP (3)
- complaint regarding a private citizen
- court records/services (2)
- damage to foundation and contamination of water
- decision of council
- disagreement with location of a wind turbine project
- disagreement with lawyer
- driver's license—process
- employment issues/opportunities (5)
- fairness of Alcohol Ignition Interlock Program
- federal government services complaints (16)
- financial benefits/assistance (3)
- financial compensation over loss of sale
- housing assistance (2)
- human rights issue
- improper disposal of materials
- income assistance (2)
- landlord/tenant dispute (2)
- legal issue
- liability for injuries
- loss of financial benefits
- Maintenance Enforcement Program (7)
- municipal police (2)
- offender—access to telephone
- offender—complaint process
- offender—deduction from canteen funds
- offender—discipline/segregation (3)
- offender—discrimination
- offender—facility lighting
- offender—health (5)
- offender—mail privileges (2)
- offender—temporary absence (funeral)
- overpayment demand
- private business complaints (10)
- property taxes
- property—unsightly
- protection for persons with disabilities
- provincial employee pension
- remediation cost—oil spill
- restitution—recovery of overpayment (2)
- road maintenance
- substance of regulations
- traffic violations (2)
- transfer of ownership
- worker's compensation claim
- youth—access to information
- youth—access to educational program
- youth—bullying
- youth—contact with parent
- youth—facility policies (3)
- youth—issue with staff (4)
- youth—police conduct
- youth—request for community program information
- youth—request for legal representation
- youth—suspension of youth with special needs
- youth—transfer request



Investigation and Complaint Services (I&CS)

Many of the issues brought to the attention of this unit are complex and sensitive, often requiring formal investigation. Own-motion reviews address issues that are systemic in nature, and may be initiated when a pattern of complaints is identified or is developing in a specific area. While the primary focus is dedicated to addressing individual and systemic complaints, attention is also given to help people navigate through government processes and to assist government bodies by reviewing policies and proposed revisions to legislation and regulations.

Ombudsman representatives must maintain neutrality and, at the same time, strive to ensure the rights and protections of citizens are considered. The need to preserve transparency and accountability while conducting investigations in private brings balance and value to oversight processes. Increased use of multiple dispute resolution processes at the early stages is emerging, as well as more in-depth systemic examination of policies and procedures.

Some key areas that I&CS examine include:

- the manner in which programs and services are delivered
- governance, fairness, and accountability issues
- licenses and permits
- adult offenders' issues
- effectiveness of internal complaint processes
- access to programs and services
- the use of clear and concise language in communications

Correctional Services

The office maintains an active focus in provincial adult correctional facilities. Although Correctional Services have an internal complaints process, the number and nature of complaints brought to our office continues to raise concerns. Section 14(a) of the Ombudsman Act calls for effective internal complaints processes within government. The following table summarizes the nature of the issues addressed by this office over the last five years. An own-motion investigation to further examine this area, including this office's interface with Correctional Services, is necessary and will be undertaken.

Correctional Services Issues Raised, by Category					
	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06
Access to telephone	15	27	14	11	13
Calculation of release date	2	6	9	5	9
Canteen trust account	11	7	6	9	3
Clothing	4	8	9	8	1
Complaints against corrections workers	19	40	19	10	6
Concerns for personal safety	9	6	10	5	3
Court Services	12	16	16	22	7
Discipline	27	42	38	11	19
Living conditions, recreation, lockdown for administrative reasons	38	47	42	21	20
Mail (personal and confidential)	12	8	13	5	5
Offender complaint process	21	24	13	4	3
Programs and privileges	12	18	31	16	7
Property	6	27	24	9	5
Request for information from Office of the Ombudsman	6	6	10	2	4
Transfers/temporary absences	20	11	19	13	10
Other	19	20	18	24	16
Total Issues	233	313	291	175	131
Complaints/Contacts*	211	286	283	160	115

*The number of issues exceeds the total number of complaints received, as some complaints involved more than one issue.



Case Examples

Administration of a Blasting Bylaw

The complainant attributed property damage and problems with sewer and water services to blasting activity. Municipal blasting permits require contractors to submit a declaration that a pre-blast survey has been completed; however, the documentation to support the declaration does not have to be submitted to the municipality. In this case, portions of the pre-blast survey were undertaken, but a specific survey was not completed. The declaration submitted was not accurate or complete. The municipality became aware of this infraction after the statutory timeline had passed and therefore it could not pursue a charge under the bylaw. This office recommended that the pre-blast survey requirements be better defined in the bylaw, a checklist of requirements be incorporated in the statutory declaration signed by contractors, and the municipality implement a pre-blast survey audit program.

Property Taxes

An individual was charged interest on unpaid property taxes, although they had not received a tax bill. Ombudsman representatives determined the individual had notified the municipality of a change of addresses the previous year, but the municipality had not communicated this to all the departments involved in issuing property tax bills. The municipality acknowledged the oversight, interest charges were waived, and a revised tax bill was issued.

Damage to Property & Location of Survey Marker

A property owner believed that a provincial department had caused erosion damage by run-off water from an adjacent highway. The owner further alleged that the department had recently removed a survey marker from the property when they completed work along the highway. Our investigation revealed that the trench had likely been on the property for over 30 years, and the original cause or source of water could not be determined. The department did acknowledge the recent highway work and took responsibility for having the property re-surveyed and the marker replaced.

Essential Needs Being Met

An offender serving an intermittent sentence was not being issued toiletries upon each admission to the correctional facility. When contacted by an Ombudsman representative, the Deputy Superintendent conducted an internal review and found that the concerns were valid. Measures were put in place for offenders to receive the appropriate essential items when entering the facility.

Access to Services

An individual contacted our Office expressing frustration with the inability to access and understand a provincial health care program. Our Assessment Officer assisted the individual with the application process and contacted the Nova Scotia Literacy Society to provide follow up and one-on-one assistance for the individual. This situation led to our Office establishing a working group to identify potential service gaps and effective practices to optimize public service delivery by the province. The working group is developing recommendations in the areas of literacy, production of clear communication materials, and available resources to improve client assistance.



Recommendations

Following are examples of the nature and scope of recommendations arising from Investigation and Complaint Services.

Recommendations arising from Investigation and Complaint Services	
Responsibility	Action
Municipality	Reimburse costs incurred by a family in efforts to resolve a property issue.
Provincial department	Examine how property owners are notified when decisions are made to reverse the mapping location of parcels of land.
Municipality	Review a recruitment campaign.
Municipality	Establish objective criteria and guidelines or policy relating to the use of discretionary power.
Provincial department	Ensure established inter-jurisdictional protocol is followed.
Provincial department	Ensure a comprehensive case review process is in place.
Provincial department	Acknowledge that a complainant's file could have been managed more effectively.
Provincial department	Review the appropriateness of using legislated garnishment provisions.
Municipality	Outline the requirements of pre-blasting surveys, specifically as related to septic fields and/or wells, to ensure they are clearly defined.
Municipality	Develop and implement a quality review mechanism during blasting projects to audit pre-blast surveys.
Municipality	Develop a checklist of requirements for contractors' signatures.
Municipality	Review the appropriateness of staff having the ability to give a warning under a bylaw.
Provincial department	Review the internal process for handling public complaints.
Provincial commission	Develop a public education process to create awareness of time limits established in legislation, including use of a website as a venue.
Provincial commission	Reconsider a complaint where statutory amendments are put in place after the lodging of the initial complaint.
Provincial department	Outline and develop voting procedures for offenders in provincial correctional facilities.
Municipality	Forward issues for a committee review and decision relating to a dispute between an individual and a municipality.
Provincial agency	Conduct a review to determine what guidelines should be in place to ensure the consistent administration of an Act.



Justice

Years	Total	Correctional Services	Maintenance Enforcement Program	Courts and Public Prosecution	Victim Services	Medical Examiner Service	Other
2009–2010	273	211	39	16	0	2	5
2008–2009	333	286	29	8	1	4	5
2007–2008	354	283	42	13	2	7	7
2006–2007	219	160	32	4	0	1	22

Community Services

Years	Total	Income Assistance and Employment Support	Family and Children's Services	Housing Services	Service Issues	Services for Persons with Disabilities	Medical and Dental	Other
2009–2010	226	107	53	44	12	6	0	4
2008–2009	187	70	53	26	15	11	1	11
2007–2008	229	96	60	43	13	3	3	11
2006–2007	207	96	61	24	3	0	12	11

Health

Years	Total	Offender Medical	Continuing Care	Capital District Health Authority	Mental Health	Addiction Services	Cape Breton District Health Authority	Other District Health Authorities & Hospitals	Pharmacare	Southwest District Health Authority	South Shore District Health Authority	Other
2009–2010	166	94	32	13	0	0	1	8	8	0	0	10
2008–2009	149	95	16	12	2	0	6	4	5	1	1	7
2007–2008	204	131	21	15	4	0	10	7	2	0	3	11
2006–2007	198	130	27	18	2	3	4	*	0	1	2	11

*Other district health authorities/hospitals were included in Other during previous years.



Halifax Regional Municipality						
Years	Total	Planning and Development Services	Halifax Regional Police	Transportation and Public Works	Metro Transit	Other
2009–2010	54	10	18	7	2	17
2008–2009	34	2	13	9	2	8**
2007–2008	53	16	12	6	4	15
2006–2007	34	8	9	*	*	17

*Included in Other.

**Included in Other 2009–10 (Real Property Planning, Animal Services, Legal Services, Human Resources, Water Commission)

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations								
Years	Total	Registry of Motor Vehicles	Residential Tenancies	Assessment Services	Debtor Assistance and Student Loans	Land Title Registry	Tax Commission	Other
2009–2010	45	20	8	0	2	1	1	13
2008–2009	60	32	8	0	8	3	0	9
2007–2008	74	30	14	6	5	4	4	11
2006–2007	65	17	17	7	1	*	*	23

*Included in Other.

Assessment Service is now reported under Property Valuation Services as of 2009-10

Workers Compensation Board									
Year	Total	Administrative Service	Benefits Revoked/Reduced/Inadequate	Claims Process	Conditions**	Employer Issues (Assessment Rate, Coverage)	Chronic Pain (Payments)	Benefits Denied	Other*
2009–2010	59	21	7	6	4	3	3	2	13

*Information about process, third party complaint, access to records, communication restrictions.

** Return to work, retraining, treatment, medical tests/appointment.



Own-Motion & Systemic Investigations

Following are examples of the nature and scope of own-motion and systemic investigations.

South West Shore Development Authority

A party to the complaint had released the issues and findings of this investigation publicly. Based on the level of public interest, and to maintain the integrity of the investigative report and its findings, the Ombudsman issued the report publicly under Section 24(2) of the Ombudsman Act on February 23, 2010.

A community group brought forward many concerns regarding the Regional Development Authority (RDA) in their area, and the Department of Economic and Rural Development. Their concerns focused on the accountability and transparency of the administration of public money provided to the RDA. Questions were also raised about the oversight responsibility of funding partners to such organizations. Our investigation found a significant lack of board governance; financial transactions without proper documentation or board approval; issues around conflict of interest; release of public funds without adequate control; and a need for greater oversight and administrative review by funding partners.

Twelve recommendations resulted from this investigation, requiring greater accountability from the board of directors and all funding partners, including the Department of Economic and Rural Development. We also recommended that a provincial body be given legislative authority to complete comprehensive audits of RDAs; that audits be conducted on governance, compliance, and value for money; that an audit be conducted on the proceeds of sale and the associated maintenance fund of a former youth centre; that there be further examination of potential conflicts of interest; that a separate standing committee of RDA boards oversee the financial and auditing functions; and that money spent without proper authority related to the maintenance fund and proceeds of sale from the former youth centre be returned. All but one recommendation was accepted and are in the process of being implemented.

Voting in Provincial Correctional Facilities

A Correctional Services worker contacted our office to report that adult offenders throughout the province were unable to vote in the provincial election occurring that same day. An Ombudsman representative immediately contacted the Chief Electoral Officer, who advised it would not be possible given the timing issues involved to set up polling stations in all five correctional facilities on the day of the election. An own-motion investigation was initiated with a focus to prevent a similar situation from happening. Our investigation determined that although a pamphlet specific to offenders was drafted by Elections Nova Scotia outlining how to vote by write-in ballot, slippage occurred and the information was not forwarded to correctional facilities in time for the election. We recommended that provincial protocols outlining voting procedures for offenders in provincial facilities be developed jointly between Elections Nova Scotia and the Department of Justice, Correctional Services. The recommendation was accepted and implemented.

Tribunal Locations

A person contacted our office concerned with being required to travel 175 kilometers to attend a tribunal appeal hearing regarding termination of employment. The individual believed the distance and travel costs made the process inaccessible and unfair. Our investigation determined that appeal hearings were being held by the tribunal in two locations within the province. Based on the limited number of venues, the potential exists for some individuals to be required to travel a significant distance. Our report and recommendations will be issued early next year.



Youth Detention Facility

Staff of a youth facility informed Ombudsman representatives of their concern about the practice of placing adult female offenders in a youth facility. The scope of our investigation included the placement of adult female offenders within the youth facility, the use of video surveillance and monitoring, health services, training, and administrative issues.

Authority to temporarily house adult female offenders in the facility on a short-term basis was granted in 2007. A review of facility records indicated that adult female offenders have been placed in the youth facility on several occasions, for various periods of time. During one placement, an offender presented many challenges—including screaming, yelling obscenities throughout the night, and removing her clothing—and was physically restrained by staff. Ombudsman representatives determined that the facility was not designed to fully isolate this type of behaviour from the youth in the facility. These placements are not in keeping with the spirit of the federal Youth Criminal Justice Act or the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. To maintain the autonomy of the youth detention facility, this office recommended that other arrangements be made to detain adult female offenders, rather than placing them in the youth detention facility; and also recommended that the designation of the youth detention facility made under clauses 3(1)(b) and (d) of the Correctional Services Act be reviewed. In addition, the office recommended a review of the policy respecting video monitoring, recordings, and staff training, and a review of existing procedures for dispensing medication, using physical restraint, conducting searches, and caring for youth.

We are currently monitoring the implementation of recommendations.

Placement of Youth with Complex Needs

Family members of a youth in the temporary care of the province contacted our office expressing frustration with the lack of placement options within the province. These concerns coincided with a similar issue referred to our attention by a youth court judge, and was receiving national attention. We initiated an own-motion investigation relating to placement and treatment options for children and youth with complex needs in the care and custody of the province.

The primary focus of our investigation includes a review of placement policies and procedures, including out-of-province placement, and treatment options available to youth who require long-term treatment. The responses by departments to recommendations stemming from the Nunn Inquiry are also being considered. The investigation is ongoing.



Youth and Seniors Services

Youth Services

Youth Services provided by this office are key to the overall quality assurance for children and youth receiving provincial and municipal government services. This section provides an independent process for investigating and resolving complaints from children, youth, parents, guardians, and youth care workers. Youth Services also represents the current shift from traditional child advocacy to youth ombudsman. This trend was evident at the Ombudsman 8 Summit held in Italy, which coincided with the G8 Summit. The Ombudsman 8 Summit brought together international child ombudsman and youth advocates from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In addition to responding to specific complaints, Ombudsman representatives conduct scheduled and unscheduled site visits to youth in care and custody, and prepare individual, monthly, and quarterly reports to the respective departments. This year, the office conducted 170 site visits to youth in care and custody and met with 493 youth.

Representatives work closely with youth, residents, and staff of provincial care and custody facilities to establish and maintain a positive rapport. This gives individuals an opportunity to come forward with concerns and to seek resolutions to potential problems before they become complaints.

This year the office was pleased to welcome Sir Albert Aynsley-Green, the Children's Commissioner for England. Sir Aynsley-Green's visit provided an opportunity for the office to gain a fresh perspective in helping young people meet their challenges, and to share the unique role and mandate carried out by our Youth Services section.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations General Assembly, the office held an artwork and essay contest for youth. Hundreds of entries were received and sixteen students from grades primary–7 were recognized for their depictions of children's rights. John Humble, Regional Director, UNICEF Atlantic, judged the artwork. A calendar was created and distributed throughout the province. Chelsi Robichaud, a student from L'École du Carrefour du Grand-Havre, was the winner of the essay contest on youth rights for grades 8–12. She had the honour

of being Ombudsman for the day for her contribution. A grade 2 class from Annapolis East Elementary School was also recognized for best class participation.

The office's youth evaluation interview survey seeks the opinions of young people on services provided to them while they are in the care and custody of the province. It is in keeping with Article 12 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The survey has been reviewed and improved based on feedback from youth participants, staff within the Departments of Justice and Community Services, and internal observations. The subject base expanded to include youth in custody, secure care, and residential care. This year the office conducted 52 youth evaluation surveys.

As the year progressed, Ombudsman representatives developed internal policy regarding the establishment of a Child Death and Critical Injury Administrative Review Protocol. While this process has not progressed to the extent expected, discussions with key stakeholders are ongoing. The office has also expanded its foster care outreach. Representatives met with and presented to government staff, attended a foster care symposium, and collaborated with non-governmental organizations to develop and deliver children's rights presentations in schools. Education and outreach efforts to private career and community colleges continue to expand.

Ombudsman representatives participate on, and provide input to, committees and groups that conduct research and develop programs for youth, provincially and nationally. These include:

- Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates (CCPCYA)
- Cape Breton University, Children's Rights Centre
- Child Find Canada
- Children's On-Line Privacy Working Group
- Child Welfare League of Canada (CWLC)
- National Youth in Care Network
- The Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights
- Nova Scotia Council for the Family
- "Youth in Care" Newsletter Project



Youth Services—Custody* Issues Raised, by Category

Policies and procedures	30
Staff	17
Discipline	6
Release Plans	5
Other**	4
Police	3
Facility	3
Conflict with other youth	3
Health care/concerns	2
Food services	2
Probation services	2
Youth evaluation interview	2
Lawyer	2
Total	81

(70 complaints/contacts, resulting in 81 issues)

*Nova Scotia Youth Facility 72; Halifax Regional Police Service 2; Amherst Police 2; Truro Police 1; Halifax Youth Attendance Centre 1; Probation Services, Amherst Office 1

** Other (return call = 2; missing property = 1; personal items = 1)

Youth Services—Secure Care Issues Raised, by Category

Policies and procedures	18
General discussion	16
Staff	9
Health care/concerns	4
Food	3
Discharge plans/placement	2
Conflict with other youth	2
Social Worker	2
Facility	2
Recreation	1
Personal belongings	1
Total Issues	60

(59 complaints/contacts, resulting in 60 issues)

Youth Services—Residential Child-Caring Facilities Issues Raised, by Category

Placement	8
Social Worker	7
Facility	6
Conflict with another youth	5
Staff	5
Policies and procedures	4
Food	4
Education	3
Personal belongings	1
Access to assessment	1
Total	44

(40 complaints/contacts, resulting in 44 issues)



Case Examples

Access to Information

A parent was not satisfied with a school official's response to a request for information regarding a child enrolled in an after-school program. The parents had joint custody of the child, but information was being provided to only one of the parents. The school board did not have a policy respecting access to children or information by divorced or separated parents. Based on this, the board was asked to reconsider their position in this instance. We also recommended a policy be developed and extended to all school board programs. The recommendation was accepted, and we are monitoring its implementation.

Out-of-Country Placement

A youth in care expressed concern that while being escorted to an out-of-country residential placement, the border services agency for the receiving country denied the youth entry. The youth was upset, confused, and questioned why the department was not aware this could happen. The Ombudsman representative determined that a student visa was required to gain entry to the country. In the past, the residential facility was referred to as a treatment centre, not a school, which contributed to the confusion at the border. Based on the change in circumstances, the department was required to find a new placement. The youth was eventually placed in a treatment facility in another province. This office subsequently initiated an own-motion investigation regarding the placement of youth with complex needs. The investigation is ongoing.

Nightly Bed Checks

Several youth at a residential facility met with an Ombudsman representative to express concerns regarding the nightly bed check practice. The youth explained they were being awakened when staff used flashlights or turned on the bedroom lights while checking on residents. Our office facilitated a meeting between the youth and staff, and adjustments were made in the process to check on youth.

Identification Required

A youth in care contacted our office asking for help to obtain a government-issued identification (ID) card. The ID was required to open a bank account so the youth could deposit a clothing allowance cheque. The youth was frustrated after repeated unsuccessful attempts to speak with the agency social worker. When contacted by an Ombudsman representative, the department acknowledged the assigned social worker had been unavailable for a few weeks and apologized. The agency agreed to follow up with the youth. With the help of another social worker, the youth obtained an ID card and opened a bank account.

Future Residential Care Placement

A youth who was returning to a residential facility was concerned about the possibility of returning to an 'emergency room' at the facility. Staff clarified that during a previous placement, the youth was temporarily moved to a room often incorrectly referred to as an emergency room. An Ombudsman representative attended a case conference with the youth, social worker, and facility staff. A treatment plan was discussed, along with the progress made by the youth since the previous placement. This resulted in the youth returning to the original room, with access to all personal belongings.



School Supplies & Student Fees

During a scheduled site visit to a residential facility, a youth asked for help to obtain school supplies and have student fees paid. After discussing the matter with the Ombudsman representative, the youth approached staff who confirmed the student fees were paid that afternoon. Later in the day, staff took the youth shopping to purchase school supplies.

Dietary Needs

A youth was concerned about dietary needs not being met while at a residential facility. The youth required a liquid diet supplement twice a day, but it was not consistently provided. When contacted by an Ombudsman representative, staff explained that the facility nurse had communicated the youth's dietary requirements to relevant staff and ordered an adequate supply of the supplement to ensure availability.

Seniors Services

Ombudsman representatives visit residential care facilities, nursing homes, and homes for the aged to explain the role and function of the office, and discuss any concerns seniors, their families, caregivers, and staff may have.

The number of seniors, family members, and agency contacts made to the office over the past few years has increased. This has resulted in increased outreach and collaboration with seniors' organizations, families, and resident councils. Education on the role and mandate of the office is provided, and Ombudsman staff visit residential care facilities on an ongoing basis. This year, Ombudsman representatives conducted 59 site visits to long-term care facilities, a significant increase from the 18 conducted last year.

Ombudsman representatives provide input to, and participate on, various seniors-related advisory councils, committees, and initiatives. These include:

- 50+ Expo
- Gerontology Association of Nova Scotia (GANS)
- Senior Abuse and Prevention Awareness Committee
- Chebucto Links



Case Examples

Reunited with Spouse

While attending an office outreach session, a senior requested help to have a spouse in long-term care transferred closer to their home community. The elderly couple were apart because of the care needs of one spouse. Visits were becoming challenging and less frequent. The health of one spouse was declining, and the couple wanted to spend their remaining time together. An Ombudsman representative helped the senior to request a needs reassessment from the department. The spouse was placed on a transfer list, and eventually moved to a care facility in their home community.

Home Heating Rebate

A senior who was denied a home heating rebate, and was unable to obtain clarification for the denial, asked for our help. The Ombudsman representative determined the individual's income met the requirement for the heating rebate. The representative also learned that the income of an adult child, who was temporarily living in the home to provide care to the ailing parent, had been calculated in the total household income and was a factor in the denied application. Department policy dictates that two adults over the age of 18, living in the same home are to be deemed a family unit, and the incomes combined. When contacted by the Ombudsman representative, the department agreed to reassess the application. Department staff confirmed the adult child provided in-home care support and was not contributing financially to the household. The senior was approved for the rebate.

Transitional Care

A person contacted our office regarding a friend who is a senior with a disability. The senior had sought treatment at an emergency room and was transferred to a transitional care unit in another community against their wishes. Ombudsman representatives visited the hospital to meet with the senior, hospital social worker, and staff. The senior acknowledged needing long-term care, but was confused about the process and transfer to a facility 80 kilometers away. It was determined the transfer was temporary due to the lack of beds in local long-term care or transitional care. Ombudsman representatives provided this information to the senior and the senior's friend, along with an explanation of the transitional care process. Staff at the hospital also agreed to arrange a follow-up meeting between the senior and representatives from Continuing Care for further discussion and to give an overview of the process.

Home Inspection

An individual contacted our office frustrated because a residential inspection by a housing authority was six months overdue. The resident claimed the home had an oil leak, drafty walls, a front door that would not open, and mice infestation. Calls to the authority were no longer being returned. When contacted by our office, a housing authority representative advised that an appointment had been arranged several months prior, but the individual was in the hospital at the time and the inspection did not occur. A review of the file determined there was no follow-up. The housing authority apologized and conducted an inspection the same week. The individual was then told that a more suitable residence would be found in the same area.



Investigation Process

A family member contacted our office with concerns of an inadequate investigation of an allegation of abuse at a residential care facility. Ombudsman representatives met with staff of the department, and reviewed the investigation reports. We determined the investigations by both the facility and department were conducted in accordance with the Protection of Persons in Care Act. During our review, we observed that staff at the facility may have been subjected to undue stress as a result of the many investigative processes, and interactions with various family members. Both the facility and department agreed to our recommendation to develop and implement a critical incident stress debriefing policy for residential staff, and to advise all staff about the policy.

Recommendations

Following are examples of the nature and scope of recommendations arising from Youth and Seniors Services.

Recommendations arising from Youth and Senior Services

Responsibility	Action
School board	Add to a student transportation policy a process for requesting side-road service.
School board	Develop an appeal process for situations where side-road transportation services are denied.
School board	Implement a policy on the use of video surveillance and recording.
School board	Implement a policy for student transportation discipline, outlining the process for general and serious misconduct.
Long term care facility	Develop and implement a critical incident stress debriefing policy for residential staff.
Child welfare agency	Provide comprehensive staff training on an existing Interprovincial/Territorial Protocol, and document the training in personnel files.
Child welfare agency	Require staff to review the Interprovincial/Territorial Protocol when they are notified about an interprovincial or territorial transfer. Report any areas of uncertainty to the regional child welfare specialist.
Child welfare agency	Review department policies regarding appropriate file documentation, and provide further training if necessary.
Custodial facility	Ensure that staff document their verbal responses to written requests, including the staff person's name and date of follow-up.
School board	Develop a policy on access to children or information by divorced or separated parents, and extend the policy to all school board programs.



Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing

The Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations and policy provide Nova Scotia's civil service with a process to disclose allegations and concerns of wrongdoing within government. This process has been in effect for five years, and the office has seen a gradual increase in the level of confidence civil servants are placing in this avenue of redress. During the last fiscal year we had more disclosure investigations than any other jurisdiction in Canada. The provinces with disclosure-of-wrongdoing processes have a fairly consistent number of inquiries (20–30 inquiries). The federal government reported 206 general inquiries.

The office continues to build relationships with our counterparts across the country, both provincially and federally. Ombudsman representatives have participated in a number of conferences discussing best practices, challenges, and experiences.

Office outreach efforts have increased, providing government and the public with greater awareness of the wrongdoing process and the role and mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman. This year a number of presentations were made to members of the Highway Workers Union within the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. This initiative was received positively and reached a number of employees directly and indirectly. An invitation was extended to the Nova Scotia Government Employees' Union, but the offer was declined. Information was also presented to new Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) during their orientation. Office information packages, including information on disclosure of wrongdoing, were also provided to all MLAs.

Initiatives and consultation with the Public Service Commission (PSC) are ongoing. This office has provided recommendations over the past five years to the PSC that have been incorporated in their review of current practices, regulations, and policy. It is our understanding that legislation for disclosure of wrongdoing is being considered. The Office of the Ombudsman will continue to provide input and to identify challenges with the current wrongdoing regulations and policy, and look forward to future dialogue to improve the process.

Investigation Activities

There was a slight increase in the number of inquiries, with 23 disclosure assessment reviews conducted. Five investigations were commenced under the regulations. Of those five, one was concluded and four are ongoing. The office continues to monitor the recommendations made in a previous investigation that concluded a wrongdoing occurred involving a protection program for vulnerable adults.

The following is a breakdown of the 23 disclosure-of-wrongdoing assessment reviews conducted by the office this year:

- Fourteen disclosures, while received from civil servants, did not meet the definition of a potential wrongdoing. Many of these employees were exercising their rights under a collective agreement to have a matter examined, and others were provided with information on alternative avenues to address their concerns.
- Five investigations were initiated under the regulations, one of which was requested by a deputy head.
- Four disclosures were from individuals who did not meet the definition of an employee under the regulations or policy. All individuals were provided with information on other avenues to address their concerns.

Since the inception of the regulations and policy in September 2004, the office has received and conducted 79 disclosure inquiry assessments. A review of these assessments shows the following common areas of concerns for civil servants:

- 58 per cent pertained to human resource issues, categorized in three areas:
 - 37 per cent of the human resource issues were general in nature
 - 33 per cent pertained to allegations of harassment
 - 30 per cent pertained to allegations of unfair hiring practices



- 13 per cent of all assessments pertained to allegations of gross mismanagement. Of these, 70 per cent were alleging misspending of public funds.
- 6 per cent of all assessments pertained to allegations of wrongdoing involving public safety.

Recommendations

The current regulations provide a number of challenges. Following are some of the recommendations and suggestions that the Office has made to the Public Service Commission (PSC) to improve the process for disclosing allegations of government wrongdoing.

Recommendations and Suggestions to Improve the Process for Disclosing Allegations of Government Wrongdoing

2004–05	Develop and communicate a policy that further clarifies the scope of Section 20(c) related to disciplinary action for reporting a potential wrongdoing outside of the regulations or policy.
2005–06	Develop and communicate a policy for all government departments and offices to which the regulations and policy apply, requiring them to report yearly on the steps they have taken and/or initiatives they have launched to ensure the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government employees have a consistent understanding of the disclosure-of-wrongdoing process. • The arrangements and processes for disclosure within their departments/offices are adequate and appropriate.
2006–07	Amend the regulations to allow notification and reporting of the investigation to be directed to the head of the Public Service, as designated under Section 8 of the Public Service Act, when an alleged wrongdoing directly involves a Deputy Minister of a department. Require consistent notification for both the deputy head and the Office of the Ombudsman. Continue with compliance audits, as committed in the 2004-2005 Annual Report on the Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations and Policy.
2007–08	Grant the Office of the Ombudsman the authority to go forward with an own-motion investigation, as stipulated in the Ombudsman Act. Permit individuals outside of the Civil Service, including the general public, to come forward with allegations of wrongdoing.
2008–09	Implement previous recommendations for improvements, and report the outcome of a review conducted by the PSC once the review is complete. The regulations, as currently adopted, present challenges in process, and require clarification. Have the PSC provide more active education and awareness about the disclosure process.
2009–10	Amend the disclosure process to give individuals the option to report an allegation directly to the Ombudsman, regardless of the circumstance, and not require them to progressively disclose internally.



Looking Forward

We continue to work to enhance our electronic file and database systems, and are hopeful these needs will be met. We are also looking ahead to:

- Increase Office outreach and accessibility, particularly to Aboriginal and African Nova Scotian communities.
- Expand services by increasing our use of web-based technology, such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Expand our role in foster care, outreach to schools regarding child and youth rights, and family resource centres.
- Promote the principles of conflict resolution.
- Consult with key stakeholders to implement a model for the administrative review of child death and critical injuries.
- Review our legislation to assess the appropriateness of recognizing various forms of alternate dispute resolution in the continuum of the investigative process.
- Monitor trends in regards to issues and complaints received, to assess areas for own-motion and systemic review.



Statistics

Complaints and Inquiries Received (by Organization), 2009–10

Justice (62)		Bible Hill (Village)	2
Justice Corrections (211)	Total: 273	Cumberland County	2
		Kings County Municipality	2
Community Services	226	Nova Scotia Agricultural College	2
		Nova Scotia Pension Agency	2
Health (50)		Seniors	2
Capital District Health Authority–Offender (94)		South West Shore Development Authority	2
Capital District Health Authority (13)		Springhill	2
Annapolis Valley District Health Authority (2)		Tourism, Culture and Heritage	2
IWK Health Centre (2)		Wolfville (Town)	2
Pictou County Health Authority (2)		Annapolis (County Municipality)	1
Cape Breton District Health Authority (1)		Bridgewater	1
Colchester East Hants Health Authority (1)		Chester	1
Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (1)	Total: 166	Clare (District Municipality)	1
		Digby (District Municipality)	1
		Economic and Rural Development	1
Workers' Compensation Board	59	Elections Nova Scotia	1
Halifax Regional Municipality	54	Emergency Management Office	1
Service NS and Municipal Relations	45	Farm Loan Board	1
Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal	20	Fisheries and Aquaculture	1
Legal Aid Commission	16	Health Promotion and Protection	1
		Immigration Office	1
Education (10)		Inverness	1
Halifax Regional School Board (4)		Kentville	1
South Shore Regional School Board (2)		Labour Standards Tribunal	1
Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board (1)		Lunenburg (District Municipality)	1
Chignecto Central Regional School Board (1)		Medical Services Insurance	1
Strait Regional School Board (1)		Middleton	1
Tri-County Regional School Board (1)	Total: 20	Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation	1
		Nova Scotia Legislature	1
Environment	15	Pictou (Town)	1
Labour and Workforce Development	15	Port Hawksbury	1
Cape Breton Regional Municipality	13	Public Service Commission	1
Human Rights Commission	13	Queens Municipality	1
Public Prosecution Service	8	Victoria County	1
Finance	5	Westville	1
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy	5	Yarmouth (District Municipality)	1
Police Commission	5	Yarmouth (Town)	1
Property Valuation Services Corporation	5		
Agriculture	4	TOTAL	1,030
Natural Resources	4		
Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board	3	Note: No complaints or inquiries were recorded for the	
Truro	3	remaining departments, agencies, boards and commissions.	
Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal	3	Complaints and inquiries from youth in the care or custody	
Barrington (District Municipality)	2	of the province are reported separately.	



Contact Us

Can We Talk?

Ombudsman representatives are available to visit your group or organization to talk about the services the office provides. The office also has communication materials to distribute, such as brochures and posters. Additional reference documents supplementing our Annual Report, including our Statement of Mandate and Accountability Report, may be found on our website, or by contacting our office.



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Fax: (902) 424-6675

Public Inquiries/Complaints: (902) 424-6780
1-800-670-1111 (toll-free in Nova Scotia)

Youth Inquiries: 1-888-839-6884 (toll-free in Nova Scotia)

Seniors Inquiries: 1-800-670-1111 (toll free in Nova Scotia)

Disclosure of Wrongdoing Inquiries: 1-877-670-1100
(toll-free in Nova Scotia)