



Speaking Up for Fairness

2020/2021 Annual Report
of the Northwest Territories Ombud



Office of the Ombud Northwest Territories

We speak up for fairness

June 2021

HONOURABLE FREDERICK BLAKE
SPEAKER
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is my duty and privilege to submit the Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud, pursuant to section 43 of the *Ombud Act*, for the period from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021

Sincerely,

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Ombud

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Message from the Ombud



This report covers the period from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, which was the first full year of operation for the Office of the Ombud.

In this report you will find information about our office, our processes, and administrative fairness, as well as descriptions of our activities over the past year: inquiries and complaints, public education and outreach, other highlights, and our finances.

The global COVID-19 pandemic impacted our Office as it did the rest of the NWT. From April to mid-August of 2020 we worked remotely. We had to close our walk-in service, however people were still able to access our complaints process without interruption by calling our toll-free number, using the website form, or emailing. Public authorities responded to our inquiries with only minimal delays even though they were also working remotely during this period and did not always have easy access to their files.

Our public education and outreach activities suffered more disruption. While we provided several online presentations, distributed print materials, and continued advertising the office, we could not provide any in-person information sessions, and public events such as trade shows that we would have participated in were all cancelled. As a new office that many people still have not heard of or are unsure about, we know it is important for us to travel outside of Hay River so that more people can meet and speak with us in person. It is our hope that we will be able to restart in-person public education and outreach sometime before the end of this year.

Throughout the year we maintained frequent contact with other members of the Canadian Council on Parliamentary Ombudsman to monitor emerging issues and share experiences and strategies. We also participated in webinars hosted by the International Ombudsman Institute.

Without question, the public service in the NWT has been operating under tremendous strain throughout this emergency. The people in the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer, Protect NWT, health authority staff, and many others across Departments and agencies have worked very hard to keep people safe, and deserve our recognition for that.

However, it is exactly at such times of emergency that democratic values like administrative fairness can come under threat. In Canada, and around the world, we have witnessed how many people have fallen through the cracks as the pandemic has disproportionately affected the most vulnerable among us, including children, people living in institutional care, people with disabilities, racialized people, people living with poverty and/or insecure employment, and people experiencing homelessness or living in inadequate housing.

Transparency and accountability in decision-making, communications that are accessible to a diverse range of people, and fair processes, to mention a few principles of

administrative fairness, are especially important now. As the International Ombudsman Institute Covid-19 Resolution states:

The Ombudsman is needed more than ever during a global pandemic. The role is crucial in making sure people have access to public services they need to keep them safe and that these services are delivered fairly. ... it is of utmost importance that Ombudsman institutions make sure that the values that underpin their mission are maintained in these difficult times.

Not surprisingly, we did receive several inquiries and complaints from members of the public about COVID-related measures: a total of 13 across all authorities. Other complaints covered a wide range of government activities that we would expect to hear about in any year, such as hiring processes, housing, corrections and lands. Examples of some of the matters we handled are provided later in this report.



Like other Ombuds in the midst of this crisis, this office has endeavoured to provide timely advice and efficient interventions – to speak up for fairness – without distracting from public authorities' work to manage the pandemic while keeping the business of government running. As I am sure many others do, I look forward to the time when I can reflect on past events and write about lessons learned rather than an ongoing crisis. I very much hope that will be the case by the time of our 2021-2022 annual report, if not sooner.

About the Office of the Ombud





We are an independent office of the Legislative Assembly that speaks up for fairness in territorial government administration and services.

We listen to and investigate complaints from people who feel they have been treated unfairly by territorial authorities. We can also investigate matters on our own initiative without receiving a specific complaint. We work to find fair solutions and to help improve government services.

Our mandate includes public education on the role of the Ombud and the principles of administrative fairness.

Jurisdiction of the Office of the Ombud

The Ombud has jurisdiction over “matters of administration”. Administrative matters include most of the day to day dealings people have with employees of territorial government departments and agencies. Administrative matters do not include, for example, political matters like Cabinet and MLA decisions, decisions by the courts, actions by lawyers who are representing the government, or clinical decisions by health professionals.

The Schedule to the *Ombud Act* lists the government departments and agencies that are within the Ombud's jurisdiction.


We can investigate:

- GNWT Departments
- Education councils and authorities
- Health and social services authorities
- Aurora College
- Inuvialuit Water Board
- Legal Aid Commission
- Liquor Commission and Liquor Licensing Board
- NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation
- NWT Housing Corporation and housing authorities
- NWT Hydro Corporation
- NWT Power Corporation
- Status of Women Council of the NWT
- Surface Rights Board
- Tłıchq Community Services Agency
- Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission

We cannot investigate:

- Federal government departments or agencies
- Indigenous governments
- Municipal governments
- MLAs
- Legislative Assembly and Executive Council
- Courts
- Police
- Private businesses and individuals

Who we Are

The background of the page is a photograph of two women sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The woman on the left is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt and jeans. The woman on the right is wearing a blue zip-up jacket and dark pants. In the foreground, the bottom right corner shows a close-up of a third woman's face, wearing glasses and smiling. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal and blue geometric design. A white rounded rectangle contains text about the office.

The Office of the Ombud is located in Hay River, and is made up of Colette Langlois, the Ombud (centre), Darlene Lamb, Intake Officer/Office Manager (right), and Michelle Staszuk, Early Resolution and Investigations Officer (left) One of our physically distanced outdoor staff meetings during the summer of 2020.

How We do Our Work



We listen.

When people first contact us, we want to know which organization their concern is about and what happened. We ask about what they have already tried to fix the situation, and what they would like to have happen.

The answers to our questions help us to know whether the matter is something that we can look into, and whether there are other options that might fix the problem faster.

For example, if people have not contacted anyone within the government authority about the problem, or if there is an appeal process they have not tried, we usually ask them to do that first. If that does not work out, we let them know to contact us again.

Our intake process is confidential. We do not share your name or information, or take action on your complaint, without your consent.

We help navigate.

Sometimes bureaucracy can be confusing or intimidating. It is not always easy to know where to start. We can help point you in the right direction. We often refer people to contacts or processes within government authorities that they might not have been

aware of and that can fix some problems. We also refer people to other services and complaint processes for matters that are outside of our mandate.

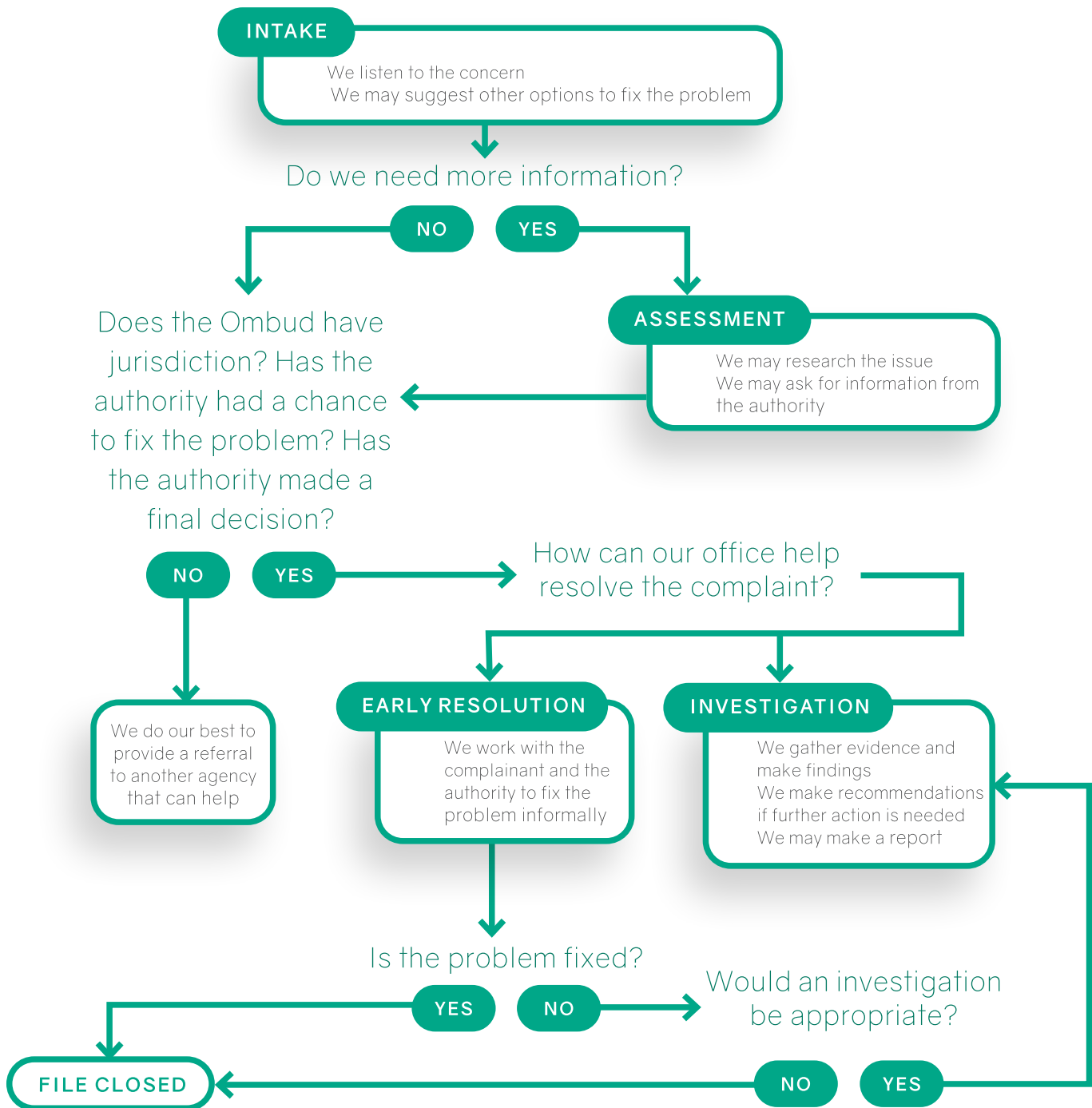
We work with people to solve problems.

People and government authorities are not always able to work out problems themselves. If the matter is within our mandate, we see what we can do to help solve the problem. Our Office does not take sides with either the complainant or the public authority. Our role is to speak up for fairness.

We can often fix problems informally through our early resolution process. Early resolution involves listening to both sides, asking questions, gathering information, and discussing options.

Sometimes we decide we need to do a more formal investigation. We make this decision based on a number of considerations, including the kind of evidence we think we will need to get to the bottom of the matter, and whether we think formal recommendations might be appropriate. At the end of an investigation, we let the person who made the complaint and the government authority know what our findings were. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, we might then make recommendations to fix the problem. If the government authority does not take action, we may make a report to the Legislative Assembly.

Our Process



About Administrative Fairness



The Ombud is
an advocate for
administrative
fairness.

What does
that mean?

Every day, government organizations take actions and make decisions that affect people's lives. Administrative fairness is the standard of conduct that government organizations in a democratic society owe to people.

Government organizations are expected to treat people fairly and reasonably. For example, they need to follow rules, provide clear information about processes and decisions, and deal with people with honesty and respect.

Although there is no single definition of fairness, there are some basic principles and practices that can help to describe it.



The Fairness Triangle: Three Aspects of Fairness¹

Decision

What was decided?

- Did government have the legal authority to make the decision?
- Was the decision based on relevant information?
- Was the decision oppressive or unjust?
- Was the decision wrong in fact or law?

Process

How was it decided?

- Was the person given enough information to know what was required?
- Was the person given an appropriate chance to present their views?
- Did government take the time to listen?
- Did government provide reasons for decisions?
- Was the decision made within a reasonable time?
- Was the decision-maker unbiased?

Service

How was the person treated?

- Was government approachable?
- Was confidentiality respected?
- Was government honest and forthright?
- Did government offer an apology if a mistake was made?



Fairness is not always simple. Context is important in deciding whether something is fair. Fairness **does not** mean that government has to agree to every request, or treat everyone exactly the same.

¹ This section is based on materials developed by Ombudsman Saskatchewan. The Fairness Triangle was developed by Ombudsman Saskatchewan from the concept of the satisfaction triangle, in: Moore, Christopher (2003). *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

2020/2021

Inquiries and Complaints



Inquiries include all contacts to the Office about general information requests and case files (potential complaints).

Complaints are those matters where our Office intervenes by initiating either an early resolution process or an investigation. Many inquiries are resolved before they reach the complaint stage.

Administrative suggestions are suggestions made to authorities in writing to informally resolve a situation and/or to prevent similar situations from recurring. They are less formal than recommendations, which would be provided in a report following an investigation.

From April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, the Office received 171 inquiries, of which 53 progressed to the complaint stage. As of fiscal year-end, 9 inquiry files, and 12 complaint files remained open. No recommendations were made. Four administrative suggestions were made and were accepted by the authority.

Across all authorities, there were 13 case files related to COVID-19 matters, and 14 case files related to staffing matters.

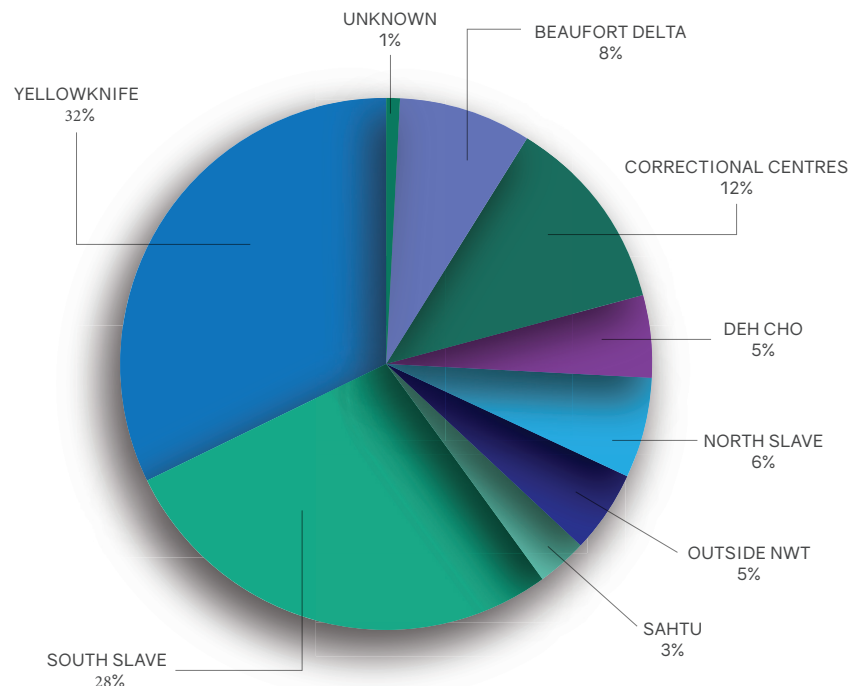


2020/2021 Inquiries

2019/2020 INQUIRIES	OPEN/ CARRIED OVER	CLOSED	CARRIED OVER TO NEXT FISCAL YEAR	
Carried over from previous fiscal year	8	7	1	
Information Request	4	4	0	
Potential Complaints	167	146	STATUS AT YEAR END	
			At intake	9
			At early resolution	7
			At investigation	6
TOTAL	179	157	22	

Inquiries by Location

Beaufort Delta	13
Correctional Centres	21
Deh Cho	9
North Slave	10
Outside NWT	9
Sahtu	5
South Slave	48
Yellowknife	54
Unknown	2
TOTAL	171

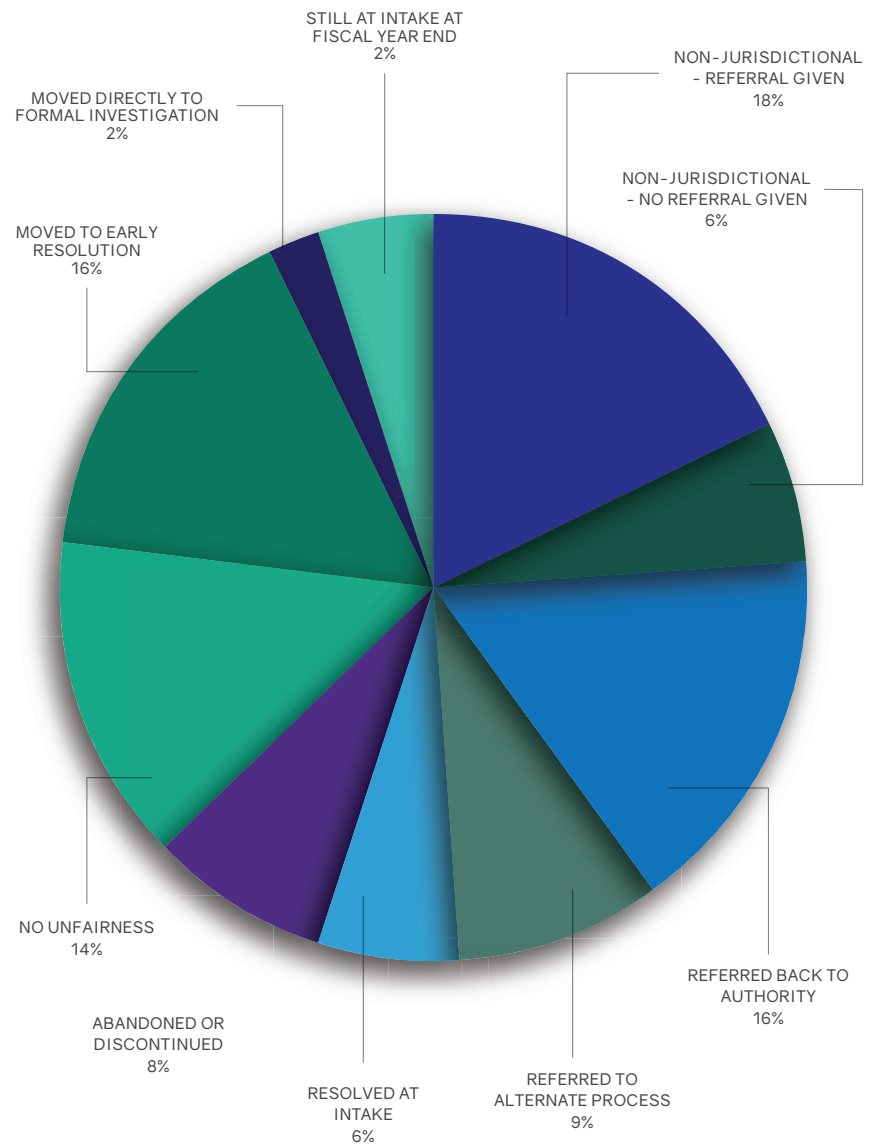




Case Files by Outcome at Intake*

*includes 2 intake files carried over from 2019/2020

NON-JURISDICTIONAL	
Referral given	30
No Referral given	10
JURISDICTIONAL	
Referred back to authority	27
Referred to alternate process	16
Resolved at intake	10
Abandoned or discontinued	13
No unfairness	23
Moved to early resolution	27
Moved directly to formal investigation	4
STILL AT INTAKE AT FISCAL YEAR END	9
TOTAL	169





Case Files by Organization

NON-JURISDICTIONAL	
Business	6
Federal government	5
Municipal government	6
Non-government organization	3
Not a matter of administration	1
Pre-2016	2
Private individual	6
Territorial office	11
TOTAL NON-JURISDICTIONAL	40

JURISDICTIONAL	
Aurora College	2
BDIC	1
Divisional Education Councils	3
Edeucation, Culture and Employment	8
Environment and Natural Resources	1
Finance	13
Hay River Health and Social Services Authority	3
Health and Social Servies (Department)	27
Housing Authority	4
Infrastructure	9
Industry, Tourism and Investment	5
Justice	25
Lands	3
Legal Aid Commission	1
Municipal and Community Affairs	6
NWT Health and Social Services Authority	4
NWT Housing Corporation	6
Tłıchq Community Services Agency	1
Unspecified	1
WSCC	4
TOTAL JURISDICTIONAL	127

TOTAL	167
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Complaints by Outcome

RESOLVED AT EARLY RESOLUTION	
Voluntary action by authority – complainant satisfied	13
Voluntary action by authority – Ombud satisfied	4
Abandoned or discontinued by complainant	1
INVESTIGATIONS	
Complaint not substantiated	1
Complaint substantiated – recommendations	0
Complaint substantiated – no recommendations	1
Investigation discontinued – voluntary action by authority	3
STILL OPEN AT FISCAL YEAR END	
In early resolution process	7
In investigation process	6
TOTAL	36

2020/2021

Examples of Our Work

“What was most important to me was when I first called your office, it meant so much to have someone to talk through the situation with at that time when I was in the middle of it and feeling alone and overwhelmed.”

“I am very pleased with the outcome. That is what I wanted, to know that the issue has been brought to the Department’s attention so they will have it in mind when they deal with people in the future.”

“I feel that you shone a light on my matter which was really important to me, and now I know there will be more awareness.”

“As a result of your work, I am hopeful that what happened to me will not happen to anyone else.”

“Now I know the full explanation of what happened, I’m so happy to know that the bad thing I was fearing was behind the decision in my case, wasn’t actually the reason it happened. Thank you for this closure.”

These were just some of the comments we heard from people about our work.

Sometimes people are not sure who to talk to about their concerns. Sometimes people do not believe government is taking their issues seriously. Even if it is too late for them, many people would like problems to be fixed so that the same thing does not keep happening to others. Sometimes people find it hard to trust government and may fear the worst: that someone is making things difficult for them on purpose. Sometimes government is not clear or transparent enough about its processes and decisions. And sometimes people fall through cracks in the system.

These are all situations where our Office has been able to help through our independent

and free of charge services. We do this through referrals, our early resolution process, and our investigation powers. We get information from and speak directly with the officials who can help us understand what happened and work with us to come up with solutions. This is different from most other processes. As Justice Dickson wrote in the 1984 British Columbia Development Corporation decision, the powers granted to Ombuds allow them “to address administrative problems that the courts, the legislature and the executive cannot effectively resolve.”

The following are a few specific examples of cases that we resolved in 2020/2021. We have changed names to protect people’s privacy.



Example #1

Problems with a private business

(Referral to other agencies)

Tyler's house had recently suffered some expensive damage, and he had called his insurance company to see if it would be covered under his policy. His insurance company told him that his policy did not cover the situation that had caused the damage. Then his insurance company told him that they were cancelling his home insurance policy entirely because of the increased risk. Tyler contacted our Office to see if there was anything he could do.

The Ombud Office does not have jurisdiction over private companies, so we could not help Tyler directly. However, we let him know about the General Insurance Ombud Service of Canada. The General Insurance Ombud Service is an independent dispute resolution service for Canadian consumers of home, automobile and business insurance. We provided Tyler with the website and contact information so he could get in touch and find out if they could help him resolve the issue with his insurance company.

Example #2

Quick response on cleaning concerns

(Early Resolution)

Alex was an inmate in an NWT correctional facility. He knew that several of the inmates who had been assigned to clean the visitor's waiting area had recently been released. Alex was concerned about whether the waiting area was being properly cleaned.

We contacted the Warden about this concern. He understood the importance to everyone of cleaning protocols during the COVID 19 pandemic. He explained that when inmates who have been assigned to cleaning the waiting area are released, new inmates with the appropriate security designation are assigned and trained. The Deputy Warden on duty is responsible for ensuring daily cleaning. The Warden provided us with a copy of the cleaning protocol, checklist and daily cleaning schedule that were in place for the waiting area. The Warden also sent out a reminder memo to all staff.

Alex appreciated getting specific information about the cleaning schedule and procedures so that he could feel assured that it was being taken care of. He was also happy with how quickly a response was provided and to know that the issue was taken seriously.



Example #3

Understanding hiring decisions

(Early Resolution)

Ryan had applied for several jobs with the GNWT in the past few years. He was disappointed not to get any of the positions as he felt he would have been a good fit. Ryan had a youth criminal record which had been pardoned many years ago. He started to worry that it might somehow have found its way into GNWT files and that this was what was hurting his job chances. A GNWT employee is able to access and review their personnel files to see what is in them, but Ryan had never been a GNWT employee, so he wasn't sure what he could do to find out if there was something in a file about him.

We confirmed that the GNWT does not make or keep personnel files about non-GNWT employees, and that this policy was followed in Ryan's case. There was nothing on record about Ryan in GNWT human resources files apart from the job application materials he had provided himself, and documents relevant to his application such as his screening and interview results.

The human resources staff we spoke with also provided information to help Ryan in future job competitions. They recommended that he send a cover letter and resume that is specifically tailored to each position he applies on, rather than using the same ones for each application. They explained that it is very important for applicants to carefully review each job description and to make sure that their cover letter and resume show how their qualifications meet the required qualifications.

Resume writing tips are available on the GNWT's website. Human resources staff also let Ryan know that before applying for a position, an applicant can ask them to review and provide feedback on their draft resume. If an applicant is offered an interview, they can ask human resources for a practice interview before they do the actual interview. People can also ask human resources for feedback after regular interviews, to find out how they could do better in the future. Human resources staff said that the single biggest issue for most applicants in interviews is not providing enough details in their answers, so practising can really help.

Ryan was very relieved to have independent confirmation that there was nothing in a file being held against him, and he was happy to find out about the things that he could do to improve his chances in future job competitions.



Example #4

Giving the authority a chance to fix the problem

(Referral back to an authority)

Alice was concerned about an incident in her son's classroom that happened with the teacher. She had contacted the principal about it. The principal listened to her but did not let her know what actions would be taken to resolve the issue. In addition to the specific incident, Alice had concerns that her son was not getting the help he needed due to his learning disabilities. She had spoken to the principal on several occasions but did not feel confident that changes would be put in place.

The Ombud Office is an office of last resort. This means that before we look into a matter, we usually ask the person with the complaint to speak to a manager within the authority, and/or to try any appeal processes that are available. This gives the people within the authority the opportunity to solve the problem. It often proves to be the quickest way to fix an issue. If a person tries this and it does not work out, they can come back to our Office and we will look into the complaint.

In this case, we advised Alice to contact the Superintendent of the District Education Council (DEC) in her region to explain the situation. She did so, and the Superintendent provided with her an immediate response. The Superintendent had not known about the issue before as it had only been handled at the school level. The Superintendent appreciated Alice bringing the information forward and took immediate action to meet with both the teacher and the principal.

Some information about the outcome could not be shared with Alice, because as an employer, a DEC also had obligations of confidentiality towards its employees. However, the Superintendent was able to assure Alice that the matter was addressed and that everyone took it seriously. The Superintendent also let Alice know about changes made to the communications process to prevent similar issues in the future.

Finally, the Superintendent put Alice in touch with someone in the school who would work with her to develop a plan for her son's education to address the other concerns she had raised. Some immediate changes were made, and others would be developed as part of an ongoing, collaborative process. Alice was satisfied with the immediate results and relieved to have a path towards the long-term improvements.



Example #5

Making sure the Department followed its policy

(Early Resolution)

Our Office was contacted by a member of the public who believed that a company had been improperly listed on the GNWT's Business Incentive Policy ("BIP") Registry, because the company had connections to a southern business. She had raised her concerns with the BIP Office and with the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI), and was assured that the company had submitted proper documentation. However, because of confidentiality issues, she was not able to review the documents herself and continued to have doubts about whether the documents had been properly vetted.

The first thing we did was review the BIP requirements carefully. The BIP registry has the following requirements:

- 1) Company must be registered under NWT or federal corporate legislation,
- 2) Company must have a current business licence issued by a municipal corporation or the NWT,

- 3) Company must operate from an actual place of business owned or leased from year to year in the NWT; and
- 4) Company must have 51 % of its voting shares beneficially owned by NWT residents and proof that they have been NWT residents for a minimum of the past 12 months.

Our Office then conducted a search of the files on the company at both the BIP registry and Legal Registries. Our inquiry process is private, which means that we are able to review documents on a confidential basis. We do not provide copies of the documents to complainants, but we can sometimes confirm whether the authority followed its policies.

In this case, we were able to assure the complainant that the company had proved that it met all the requirements to be on the BIP Registry. This helped the complainant understand that the source of her concern was the policy itself, and not how ITI was applying it.



Example #6

When the process is more stressful than the decision

(Early Resolution)

In the summer of 2020, our Office received complaints about decisions made under the COVID-19 Travel Restrictions and Self-Isolation Protocol Public Health Order. Under the terms of the Order in place at the time, issued on July 16, 2020, people arriving from outside the NWT were required to self-isolate for 14 days in either Yellowknife, Inuvik, Hay River, or Fort Smith. It was possible to apply to the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer for an exemption from this requirement on the basis of compassionate, family reunification or other exceptional circumstances.

Applications for exemptions are sent to ProtectNWT. However, pursuant to the Order, it is the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (OCPHO) which decides on exemption requests. ProtectNWT then communicates the decision to the applicant. While there is no formal appeal process in place, in practice, the OCPHO has reconsidered decisions if an applicant provides additional information that is relevant to the situation.

The following summary is a composite of multiple complaints we received on this issue.

Andrea asked for an exemption to allow her to isolate outside of one of the four centres. Andrea emailed the request to ProtectNWT with the full details of her situation. The next day, Andrea got a phone call saying her request was denied. She asked to have her case looked at again. The following day, she received an email from ProtectNWT saying that her request for an exemption had been denied.

The email did not provide much information and left Andrea unsure of whether the decision maker had really considered her situation. Andrea called ProtectNWT and spoke to someone who said they would bring her case back to the “appropriate agency” for reconsideration. Two days later, Andrea received an email saying that a final decision had been made and her exemption request was denied.

Andrea still could not tell whether the decision maker had really considered the details of her specific case. She did not know who made the decisions in her case, or whether there was any further appeal process she could try. The situation was stressful for her because she was not sure whether she should cancel her travel plans or what to tell her employer. She contacted our office for help in understanding what had happened and to find out if there was anything else she could do.



One principle of administrative fairness is that people should receive clear and meaningful reasons for decisions that affect them. Good reasons explain how and why an authority arrived at a decision. They can help lead to greater acceptance of decisions, transparency in decision-making, and increased public accountability.

For example, a response like “your application is denied”, is not an adequate reason. A person receiving a decision should not have to guess who made it, how it was made or fill in gaps to understand it. The communication should also tell the person about any appeal, reconsideration or review process that is available to them if they are dissatisfied and/or have further information for the decision-maker to consider.

In Andrea’s case, we were able to confirm that her initial request for an exemption was considered by an exceptional circumstances exemption review committee made up of OCPHO staff the next day. We also confirmed that a review committee in the OCPHO reconsidered Andrea’s request on two further occasions based on the additional information she put forward each time.

Our Office reviewed the documents from Andrea’s application. We found that the OCPHO did properly consider Andrea’s circumstances, that their decisions were made with the proper authority under the Order, and that they did have reasonable grounds for refusing Andrea’s request for an exemption. The problem was that they did not communicate any of this clearly to Andrea.

We let Andrea know what we found out. While Andrea still disagreed with the decision, she did appreciate knowing that the decision-makers had used the proper process and had reviewed and considered everything that she said. She was relieved to know that it was not just an automatic “no”, and that there was nothing further she could have done. She said that knowing this at the time would have relieved a lot of the stress and frustration she had experienced.

To help prevent similar complaints, the Ombud provided four suggestions to improve communication of decisions under the COVID-19 Public Health Orders. The specific suggestions were that responses to applicants:

- will say clearly who made the decision;
- will say clearly what review or reconsideration process is available and how to access it;
- will include links to public health orders and other relevant documents, so people do not have to search the website for them; and
- will give reasons that demonstrate the decision-maker considered the applicant’s information and circumstances.

The Department confirmed that they accepted and were implementing the Ombud’s suggestions. Our Office did not receive any further complaints about this or similar issues.



Example #7

Help with Isolation Centres

(Early resolution)

Adam was a resident who had returned from travel outside of the NWT and was isolating in a hotel. He had concerns about the food the hotel was providing. His friend, who was isolating in a different hotel, was able to order from their regular room service menu. At Adam's hotel, however, people in isolation were all given the same meal unless they called to order one of the limited options from a special menu for isolation guests only. People staying there while in isolation did not have access to the regular room service menu.

Adam's main concern was the lack of healthy options available. The breakfast meals were very sugary, and the lunches and suppers did not include any vegetables. While people with medical conditions or special dietary needs could be accommodated if they provided advance notice, Adam felt there needed to be an improvement in the nutrition of meals for everyone in isolation. He pointed out this would be better for people's health, in addition to helping the well-being of people already dealing with the stress of 14 days isolation in a hotel room.

We contacted the Department of Health and Social Services. They were already in the process of making changes to the meal and accommodation arrangements for isolation centres. They agreed with the importance of the concerns Adam identified. The Department told us they were entering into new agreements with service providers to establish consistency across the different isolation centres. The new agreements required that service providers send their meal plans to a GNWT dietician for review to ensure they met the daily nutrition requirements of the Canada Food Guidelines. They also required that people be offered three different options for each meal.

Adam's isolation ended before these changes were implemented, but he was happy to hear that the Department had recognized the importance of these issues and had made changes for others going forward. He also said he appreciated being able to contact our Office and speak with someone while he was in isolation and feeling stuck without any recourse.

2020/2021

Public Education and Outreach

In 2020/2021, our public education efforts were limited by COVID-19 restrictions. We were unable to do any of the community or site visits we had planned, and public events, such as trade shows and festivals, that we would have participated in were canceled. We hope to be able to start in-person public education activities again within the current fiscal year.

Instead, we focused on advertising, distributing print materials, and expanding the content on our website, www.nwtombud.ca. The Fairness 101 webinar offered by the Office of the British Columbia Ombudsperson continues to be available to public servants through the GNWT's human resources training calendar. The Ombud also made several presentations through videoconferencing.

**2100 pamphlets distributed
to 177 organizations**

**1572 website users and
4412 page views**

Presentations

The Ombud made online presentations to the following groups:

- Aurora College Senior Management Team
- Deputy Ministers Committee
- GNWT Policy Directors
- Lands Senior Management Team
- Municipal and Community Affairs Senior Management Team
- Ontario and Manitoba Legislative Interns
- Tłıchq Community Services Agency Senior Management Team

The Ombud also had an online introductory meeting with a representative of the NWT Disabilities Council.

In 2020/2021, 121 employees accessed the *Fairness 101* course through the GNWT training platform.

COMMUNITY	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
Behchokò	2
Déline	1
Fort Good Hope	1
Fort Providence	2
Fort Resolution	1
Fort Simpson	7
Fort Smith	13
Hay River	7
Inuvik	10
Łutselk'e	3
Norman Wells	4
Tsiigehtchic	1
Tuktoyaktuk	1
Tulita	3
Wekweeti	1
Yellowknife	64
TOTAL	121

AUTHORITY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Aurora College	3
Divisional Educational Councils	2
Education, Culture & Employment	11
Environment & Natural Resources	9
Executive	2
Finance	23
Health and Social Services	1
Industry, Tourism & Investment	3
Infrastructure	9
Justice	21
Lands	9
Municipal and Community Affairs	4
NWT Health and Social Services Authority	19
NWT Housing Corporation	3
Tłıchq Community Services Agency	2
TOTAL	121

Other Highlights

The Northwest Territories Ombud was formally approved as a member of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) in May of 2020.

International Ombudsman Institute

The IOI has more than 170 member institutions from over 90 countries around the world. It was established at the University of Alberta in 1978, and is now headquartered in Vienna, Austria.

The IOI promotes the Ombudsman concept by: encouraging the creation of Ombudsman institutions where they do not exist; promoting information exchange and shared learning through conferences and training initiatives; and funding research and regional projects. It also considers policy areas that are of specific importance to its members and issues statements with a view to improving public services worldwide. Membership

benefits include free training, funding of individual projects, and free access to IOI publications, research material and an online case database.

On December 16, 2020, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a new Resolution on the Ombudsman institution. The resolution was welcomed by the IOI, as it represents a strong endorsement of the key principles of ombudsman institutions, including independence, objectivity, transparency, fairness and impartiality. It is an important further step to strengthen independent and autonomous Ombudsman institutions worldwide, and to secure recognition for the work of Ombudsman institutions in promoting good administration, human rights, good governance and the rule of law.

Professional Development

The Ombud participated in the annual Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman (CCPO) conference in June 2020, which was held online. This year, the CCPO launched a series of monthly webinars for staff development, with each jurisdiction taking a turn at presenting a topic and moderating a question and answer session. NWT Office staff hosted the December 2020 webinar on the subject of "Outreach to Northern Communities".

The Ombud participated in several CCPO and IOI webinars on topics such as the

response to COVID-19, implications of the use of artificial intelligence on administrative fairness, and fairness in indigenous communities. The Ombud also completed an IOI-sponsored media training, and courses on conflict coaching and investigation report-writing.

One staff member completed the "Essentials for Ombuds" course jointly sponsored by Osgoode Hall Law School and the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman. Staff also completed courses on conflict resolution, investigations, business communications, financial administration, and project management.

Financials

ACCOUNT	EXPENDITURES (\$S)
COMPENSATION & BENEFITS	483,591
OTHER EXPENSES	
Travel & Transportation	0
Materials & Supplies	9,898
Purchased Services	38,378
Contract Services	66,007
Fees & Payments	2,963
Controllable Assets	11,744
Computer Expenses	23,199
TOTAL OTHER EXPENSES	152,189
TOTAL	<u>635,780</u>

ʔerihł'ís Dēne Sųlíné yatı t'a huts'elkēr xa beyáyatı theʔą ʔat'e, nuwe ts'ēn yółtı.

Chipewyan

Kıspin ki nitawihtın ē nıhıyawıhk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsınān.

Cree

If you would like this information in another official language, call us.

English

Si vous voulez ces informations dans une autre langue officielle, contactez-nous.

French

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijāhch'uu zhit yinohtan ji', diits'āt ginohkhii.

Gwich'in

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnaqtun

ᑕᓐᑭᑦ ᑕᑕᓐᑭᑦ ᑕᑕᑦᑕᑦ ᑕᑕᑦᑕᑦ ᑕᑕᑦᑕᑦ ᑕᑕᑦᑕᑦ ᑕᑕᑦᑕᑦ ᑕᑕᑦᑕᑦ.

Inuktitut

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqluta.

Inuvialuktun

Edı gondı dehğáh got'ıe zhatıé k'éé edat'éh enahddhę nıde naxets'ę edahlı.

South Slavey

K'áhshó got'ıne xədə k'é hederı ʔedjhtı'é yerıniwę nıde dúle.

North Slavey

Tłıchq yatı k'èè. Dı wegodi newq dè, gots'o gonede.

Tłıchq



Office of the Ombud

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