

Speaking Up for Fairness

Au service de l'équité

2024/2025 Annual Report of
the Northwest Territories Ombud

Rapport annuel 2024-2025
du Bureau du protecteur du citoyen
des Territoires du Nord-Ouest

*Le présent document contient la traduction française
du sommaire et du message de la protectrice du citoyen.*



Northwest Territories
Ombud

We speak up for fairness

July 1, 2025

HONOURABLE SHANE THOMPSON
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, 2024 to March 31, 2025.

Sincerely,

Krista Carnogursky
Ombud

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Message from the Ombud

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

This year started with the departure of the NWT's first Ombud, Collette Langlois on July 1, 2024. I want to thank Ms. Langlois for building the foundation for this office and wish her all the best in her next chapter.

The Ombud is an independent officer who speaks up for administrative fairness in territorial government authorities and someone who can affect positive change for residents and improvements within government systems. With those factors in mind, I went into this year with two goals.

The first goal was to connect with residents and build trust with our office. This is especially important to do with Indigenous residents who make up approximately half of our population and who historically may not have trust in governments institutions. One way this can be achieved is by travelling to communities and hearing directly from residents. This report will detail the visits made to 11 communities and the immediate results received after visiting each community.



The second goal was to increase the data our office collects. As of July 1, 2024, our office will now ask persons to identify their ethnicity, and we have updated our forms to reflect this change. It is important for us to know the demographics of the people who contact our office. Knowing this information can signify if systemic barriers might be present for minority groups and can highlight key areas we should investigate. Using this information to complete "own motion" investigations is another way to build trust, as it demonstrates that we monitor trends and take the time to look deeper into issues affecting a large number of residents.

This year included the merger of the Ombud and Office of the Official Languages Commissioner. The previous Language Commissioner advised she would not be

seeking re-appointment. Her departure provided an opportunity to consider how to move forward to fill this upcoming vacancy and to research how other jurisdictions fill the roles of Statutory Officers, such as Language Commissioners. Many Statutory Officers throughout Canada, hold dual roles. An example of this includes the Yukon Ombud who is also the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner. Dual appointments can streamline operations, enhance administrative efficiency and helps to build capacity within that office.

The role of the Language Commissioner and Ombud are similar in that both receive complaints from the public regarding compliance with legislation, policies and regulations. Additionally, both Offices provide oversight to government authorities to ensure they are complying with legislation and policies. Both roles also include the ability to conduct investigations which include recommendations for change or improvements. With these factors in mind, on January 10, 2025, the Speaker of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly appointed the Ombud of the Northwest Territories, as the Acting Official Languages Commissioner, thus holding dual roles.

The acceptance of a dual appointment was not a decision I made lightly.

The responsibility and significant impact each role can achieve were factors I wanted to ensure I could achieve equally. One of

the factors I considered, was how my role as the Ombud of the NWT can positively support complaints that are initially received through my role as the Acting Languages Commissioner. By holding dual roles, it allows me to consider if the complaint can be addressed through the Ombud Act, if it falls outside the jurisdiction of the Languages Commissioner. This streamlines operations and enhances efficiency as I would not have to turn the person away or tell them to repeat their complaint to another office.

The second factor, that the Legislative Assembly would not have been aware of when considering this appointment, is that my grandmother Sarah Ann Gardlund of Aklavik, NT, was one of the first to translate the news over the radio in Loucheux (Gwich'in). Gwich'in is one of the 11 Official Languages of the NWT, so to be in a position where I can work to ensure the rights, privileges and status of each Official Language are respected and protected, is one I am truly invested in achieving.

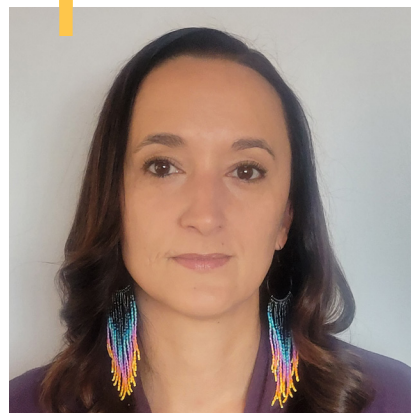
I commit to fulfilling each role to the best of my ability and to seeking assistance and additional support when required. I look forward to receiving complaints from residents and working with departments to address the concerns in meaningful ways.

Krista Carnogursky
Ombud

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Message de la protectrice du citoyen

J'ai le plaisir de présenter le rapport annuel 2024-2025 du Bureau du protecteur du citoyen des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (TNO).



Cet exercice a commencé avec le départ de la première protectrice du citoyen des TNO, Collette Langlois, le 1er juillet 2024. Je tiens à remercier Mme Langlois d'avoir établi les fondements du Bureau du protecteur du citoyen et je lui souhaite le meilleur pour la suite.

Le protecteur du citoyen est un agent indépendant qui défend l'équité dans les mesures administratives au sein des administrations publiques territoriales et qui peut susciter des changements positifs pour la population ainsi que des améliorations au sein des systèmes gouvernementaux. En gardant ces responsabilités à l'esprit, j'ai entamé cet exercice avec deux objectifs.

Le premier était d'établir un lien avec les Tënois et de renforcer leur confiance envers notre bureau.

Cet objectif est particulièrement important vis-à-vis des Autochtones, qui représentent environ la moitié de la population et qui n'ont pas toujours confiance dans les institutions gouvernementales. L'un des moyens de créer ce lien de confiance est de se rendre dans les collectivités et de parler directement aux gens. Le présent rapport détaille les visites effectuées dans neuf collectivités et les résultats immédiats de chacune de ces visites.

Le deuxième objectif était de multiplier les données recueillies par le bureau. Depuis le 1er juillet 2024, nous demandons désormais aux gens d'indiquer leur origine ethnique, et nous avons mis à jour nos formulaires pour refléter ce changement. Il est important pour nous de connaître les caractéristiques démographiques des personnes qui communiquent avec notre

bureau. Ces informations peuvent nous indiquer si des obstacles systémiques rebutent certains groupes minoritaires et mettre en évidence les domaines clés sur lesquels nous devrions nous pencher. Ces informations nous permettront de mener nos propres enquêtes, un autre moyen d'instaurer la confiance en montrant que nous suivons les tendances et que nous prenons le temps d'approfondir les questions qui touchent un grand nombre de résidents.

Cet exercice a été marqué par la fusion des fonctions de protecteur du citoyen et de commissaire aux langues. La précédente commissaire aux langues ayant fait savoir qu'elle ne renouvellerait pas son mandat, son départ nous a donné l'occasion d'examiner le processus de nomination des titulaires d'une charge publique, comme celle de la commissaire aux langues, en étudiant la démarche adoptée dans les autres administrations au Canada. Bon nombre de titulaires d'une charge publique occupent deux postes simultanément. C'est le cas, par exemple, de l'ombudsman du Yukon, qui est également commissaire à l'information et à la protection de la vie privée, et commissaire aux divulgations dans l'intérêt public. Les doubles nom-

inations permettent de rationaliser les activités, d'améliorer l'efficacité administrative et de renforcer les capacités des bureaux concernés.

Le commissaire aux langues et le protecteur du citoyen sont des postes similaires dans la mesure où ils reçoivent tous deux des plaintes du public concernant le respect de la loi, des règlements et des politiques. En outre, ils surveillent les actions des instances gouvernementales pour s'assurer qu'elles respectent la loi et les politiques, et ils ont la possibilité de mener des enquêtes et de formuler des recommandations en vue d'apporter des changements ou des améliorations. Compte tenu de ces facteurs, le 10 janvier 2025, le président de l'Assemblée législative des TNO m'a nommée en tant que protectrice du citoyen des TNO et commissaire aux langues officielles par intérim, me conférant ainsi un double mandat.

Je n'ai pas accepté ces deux charges à la légère. Je voulais m'assurer de pouvoir assumer les responsabilités de chaque poste également, car ils ont tous deux une importance significative. Voici l'un des critères que j'ai retenus pour prendre ma

décision : dans mon rôle de protectrice du citoyen, je peux contribuer à répondre aux plaintes reçues dans mon autre rôle, celui de commissaire aux langues par intérim. Le fait d'être titulaire de ces deux charges me permet d'examiner si la plainte peut être traitée en vertu de la Loi sur le protecteur du citoyen, si elle ne relève pas de la compétence du commissaire aux langues. Cela permet de rationaliser le fonctionnement des bureaux et d'améliorer l'efficacité, car je n'aurais pas à refuser la plainte ou à orienter le plaignant vers un autre bureau.

Le deuxième critère, dont l'Assemblée législative n'aurait pas pu avoir connaissance lors de l'examen de ma nomination, est que ma grand-mère Sarah Ann Gardlund, d'Aklavik, aux TNO, a été l'une des premières à traduire les nouvelles à la radio en loucheux (gwich'in). Comme le gwich'in est l'une des 11 langues officielles

des TNO, le fait d'occuper un poste qui me permet de veiller à ce que les langues officielles soient respectées et protégées, et que leurs locuteurs aient les mêmes droits et privilèges, est un objectif qui me tient vraiment à cœur.

Je m'engage à remplir chaque rôle au mieux de mes capacités et à demander de l'aide, si nécessaire. C'est avec plaisir que je traiterai les plaintes des résidents et que je travaillerai avec les ministères pour répondre de façon concrète à leurs préoccupations.

Krista Carnogursky
Ombud

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Executive Summary

The Office of the Ombud is 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.

Administrative fairness is the standard of conduct that we use to hold government organizations accountable.

From April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, the Office received 273 inquiries, of which 266 were case files (potential complaints) and 51 progressed to the complaint stage. This represents an increase of 28 case files from 2023/2024, but an overall decrease in files moving to the complaint stage, which was 54 last year. The number of files progressing to the complaint stage is still more than double the number from 2022/2023. The overall number of inquiries is a new record high for the Office.

We completed 1 complaint-related investigation, with recommendations yet to be finalized and a response from the authority pending. In addition, we completed 1 own-motion investigation that was on going from the prior year, 5

recommendations were made, and all were accepted by the authority.

This year, our Office has started to fully leverage and embrace our Early Resolution, collaborative complaints resolution model. We completed one systemic Early Resolution with the Department of Finance related to fairness in equivalencies in job postings and job descriptions. As a result of this combined work from our Office and the Department, now all job posters/advertisements will outline the equivalencies of education and experience that will be considered for the position. This change will improve access to applicants, further open up hiring supports, and improve transparency and understanding in the hiring process.

This past year we targeted smaller communities in the Sahtu and the Beaufort Delta with our outreach and education

efforts. We have seen smaller centres come forward with complaints, some where we have never had a complaint from in the past. We know that our in-person outreach efforts are working, and our time spent in the Sahtu and Beaufort Delta region has been time and effort well spent.

Our public outreach events were very extensive for 2024-2025 and included the Newcomers' Welcome Evening in Yellowknife, the Christmas Craft Sale in Inuvik, "meet and greets" with the Ombud in Tulita, Délı̨ne, Fort Good Hope, Fort McPherson, Tuktoyaktuk, Tsiigehtchic, and Norman Wells. We also participated in the 2025 NWT Association of Communities annual general meeting in Yellowknife, and the 2024 Yellowknife Spring Trade Show. It was a very busy year with extensive outreach to smaller communities but it was quite rewarding. Our overall complaint numbers from the smaller communities show that outreach is effective.

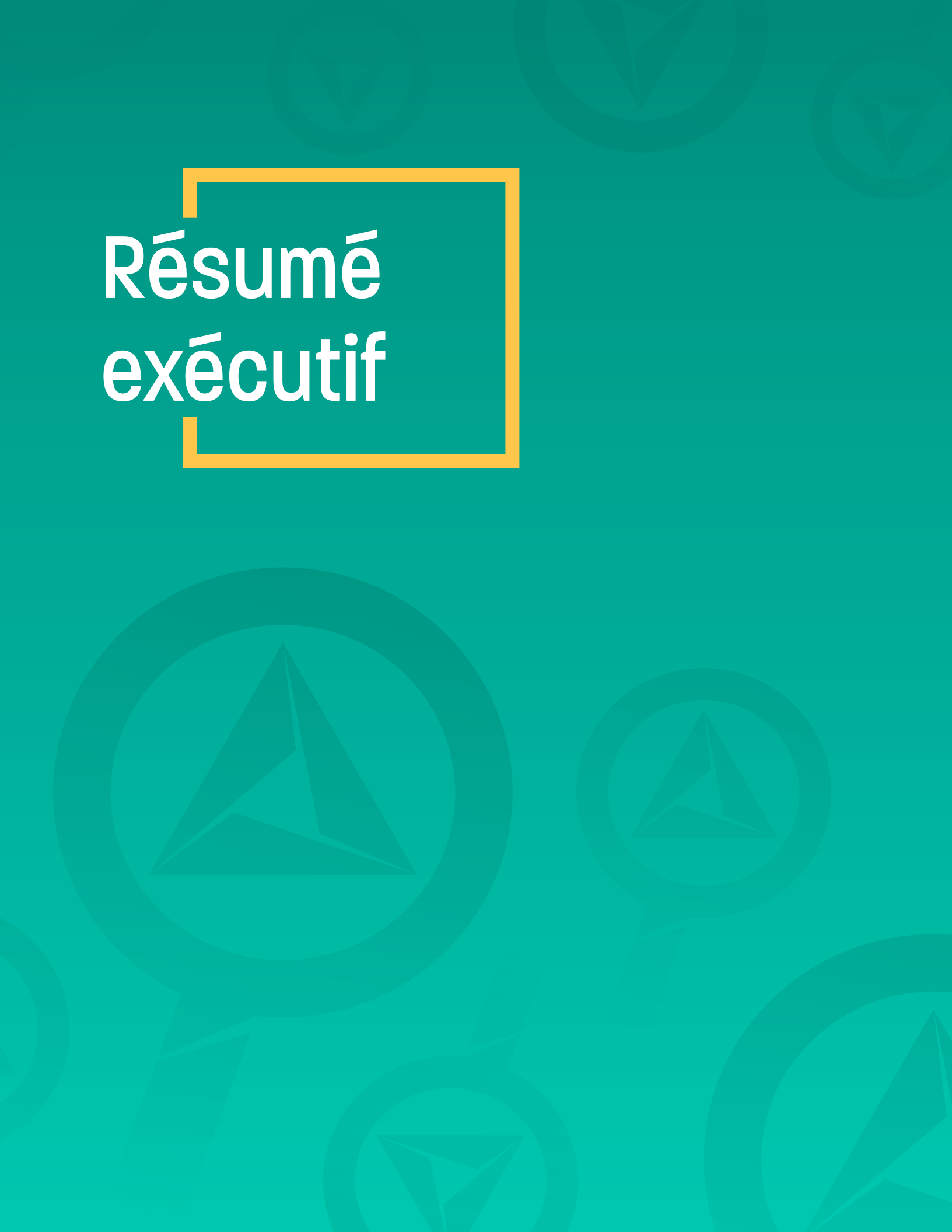
In 2024-2025 we shifted our education efforts slightly towards management level staff and above. The brief 2-hour presentation that we provide is still designed to help participants better their knowledge of administrative fairness but with a focus towards how we can collaborate towards resolving complaints

together and how we do our work at the Office of the Ombud. We completed 7 of these sessions to 5 different departments.

Additionally, we did provide our full-length **Working Together for Fairness** training course for 2 groups, once in Inuvik and once in Hay River.

As always, we continue to take as many opportunities as possible to deliver our pamphlets and posters to agencies and offices in person. All of our materials are available in the 11 official languages and can be requested from our office.

Résumé exécutif



Le Bureau du protecteur du citoyen est un bureau indépendant de l'Assemblée législative qui défend l'équité au sein de l'administration et des services gouvernementaux territoriaux. Il reçoit les plaintes de citoyens qui estiment avoir été traités de façon injuste par les organismes territoriaux, et mène des enquêtes sur ces plaintes.

L'équité administrative est une norme de conduite que nous utilisons pour tenir les organismes gouvernementaux responsables de leurs engagements. Elle inclut des principes relatifs aux décisions équitables (ce qui est décidé), aux procédures équitables (comment la décision est prise) et aux services équitables (comment la personne est traitée).

Entre le 1er avril 2024 et le 31 mars 2025, le Bureau a reçu 273 demandes, dont 266 sont devenues des dossiers à traiter (plaintes potentielles) et 51 ont atteint le stade de la plainte. Cela représente 28 dossiers à traiter de plus qu'au cours de l'année 2023-2024, mais une diminution générale des dossiers qui atteignent le stade de la plainte, qui se chiffraient à 54

l'an dernier. Le nombre de dossiers passant au stade de la plainte a plus que doublé par rapport à 2022-2023. Le nombre global de demandes a atteint un nouveau record pour le Bureau.

Nous avons mené à bien une enquête à la suite d'une plainte; les recommandations qui en découlent doivent être finalisées et une réponse de l'autorité concernée est attendue. De plus, nous avons conclu une enquête à l'initiative du Bureau qui était en cours depuis l'année précédente et qui a donné lieu à cinq recommandations, lesquelles ont toutes été acceptées par l'autorité.

Au cours de l'année écoulée, nous avons fait des efforts de sensibilisation et d'éducation auprès de plus petites collectivités

dans les régions du Sahtu et de Beaufort-Delta. Par la suite, des plaintes nous sont venues de plus petits centres, y compris certains dont nous n'avions jamais reçu de plaintes auparavant. Cela confirme que nos efforts de sensibilisation portent leurs fruits, et que le temps et l'énergie que nous avons consacrés aux régions du Sahtu et de Beaufort-Delta en valaient vraiment la peine.

Nous avons participé à un nombre soutenu d'activités afin de sensibiliser public durant l'année 2024-2025, dont la soirée d'accueil des nouveaux arrivants à Yellowknife, une vente d'artisanat de Noël à Inuvik ainsi que des rencontres avec le Protecteur du citoyen à Tulita, Délıne, Fort Good Hope, Fort McPherson, Tuktoyaktuk, Tsiigehtchic et Norman Wells. Nous avons également pris part à l'assemblée générale annuelle 2025 de la NWT Association of Communities (Association des collectivités des TNO) ainsi qu'au Salon professionnel printanier 2024 de Yellowknife. Ce fut une année très occupée, lors de laquelle nous avons beaucoup travaillé à sensibiliser les plus petites collectivités, mais fort enrichissante. Le nombre global de plaintes provenant de ces petites collectivités témoigne de l'efficacité de nos efforts de sensibilisation.

En 2024-2025, nous avons légèrement réorienté nos efforts d'éducation vers les gestionnaires et les membres du personnel de direction. La courte présentation de deux heures que nous offrons reste conçue pour aider les participants à parfaire leurs connaissances de l'équité administrative, mais elle est plutôt axée sur la manière dont nous pouvons collaborer pour résoudre des plaintes ensemble et dont nous effectuons notre travail au Bureau du protecteur du citoyen. Nous avons assuré sept séances de formation comme celle-ci dans cinq ministères différents.

Nous avons en outre offert notre formation Ensemble pour l'équité à deux groupes : l'un à Inuvik, et l'autre à Hay River.

Comme toujours, nous continuons de profiter de toutes les occasions possibles pour transmettre nos dépliants et nos affiches aux organismes et aux bureaux en personne. Tous nos documents sont disponibles dans les 11 langues officielles des TNO et on peut en faire la demande à notre bureau.

The background is a solid teal color with a pattern of overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in various shades of teal and yellow, creating a modern, abstract design. A yellow rectangular frame is positioned in the upper left quadrant, with the text 'About the Office of the Ombud' centered within it.

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 can look into "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 care professionals, such as diagnosis and treatment decisions.

The Schedule to the ***Ombud Act*** sets out the government departments and agencies that are within the Ombud's jurisdiction, and includes GNWT Departments, Housing NWT, education, health, and housing authorities, and many other agencies. With the coming into force of Bill 61 ***An Act to Amend the Ombud Act*** on July 1, 2023, the Ombud's jurisdiction now includes a number of other territorial public agencies such as housing associations and the rental office.

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 Office of the Ombud is located in Hay River, and is made up of Krista Carnogursky, Ombud (center), Michelle Staszuk, Deputy Ombud (left), and Ian Thiesson, Early Resolution and Education Officer (right).

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.

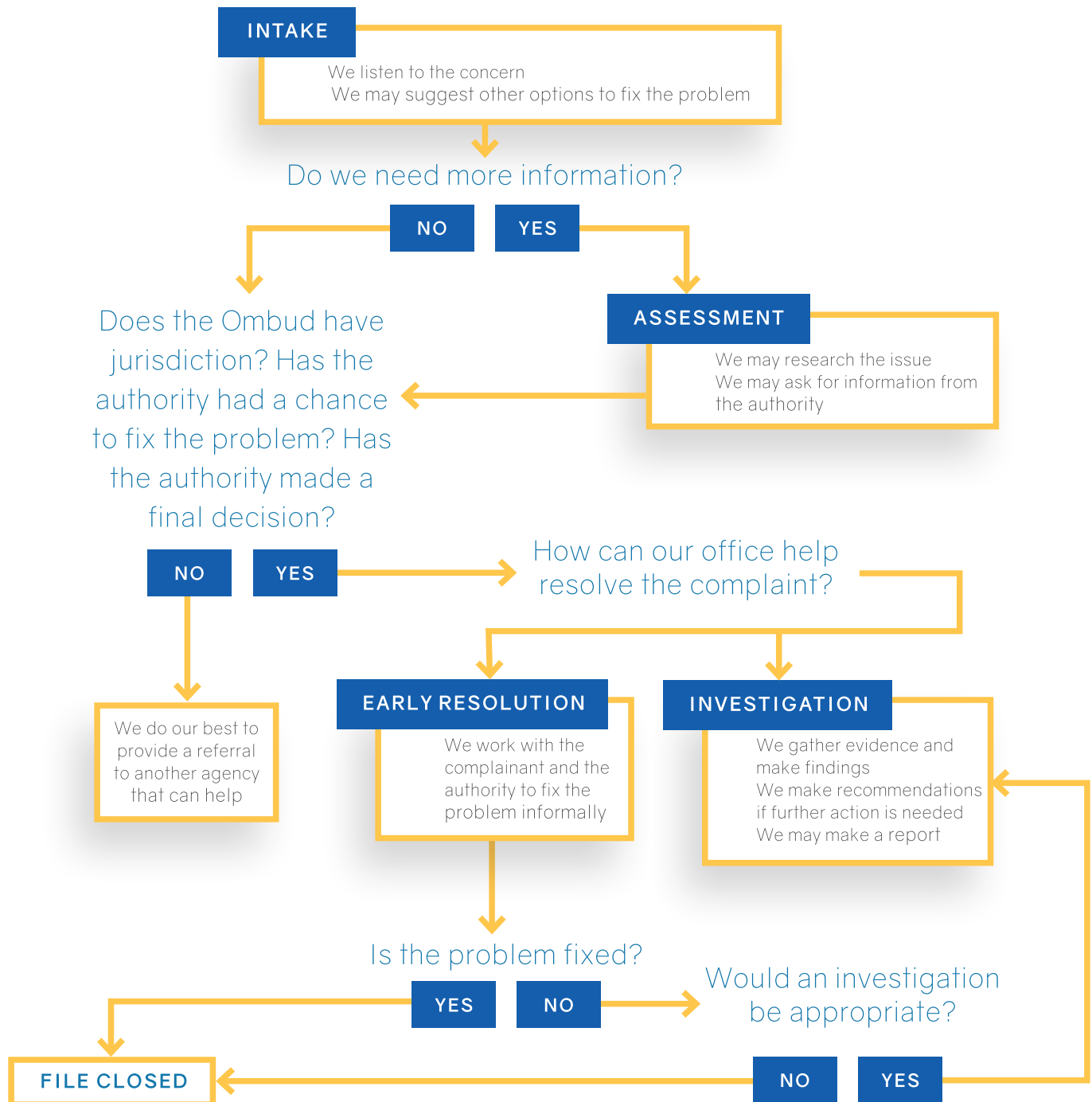
People and government authorities are not always able to work out problems themselves. If the matter is within our mandate, we see what we can do to help solve the problem. Our Office does not take sides with either the complainant or the public authority. Our role is to speak up for fairness.

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 many areas of 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 Fairness²

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.

² 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.

2024/2025

2024/2025

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.

Own-motion investigations are investigations that are started on the Ombud's initiative and are not limited to a specific complaint.

From April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, the Office received 273 inquiries, of which 266 were case files and 51 progressed to the complaint stage. As of fiscal year-end, 14 complaint files remained open. We closed 252 files (including 10 files carried over from the previous fiscal year).

This represents a more than 10% increase in the number of case files from 2023/2024, and a new record high since the Office's opening. The number of files progressing to the complaint stage is slightly less than the number from 2023/2024. Our in-person outreach allowed us to reach many more individuals directly as well as other service providers who now know they can refer people to us.

We completed 1 complaint-related investigation, recommendations from

which are still pending with the Department. We completed 1 own-motion investigation which was carried over from fiscal year 2023/2024. All recommendations from the own-motion investigation were accepted by the authority.

Last year we identified a growing rise in the complexity of the files coming to our office. This was both in terms of the issues raised and complainants' needs. This trend has continued for this year. To reinforce what we discovered from last

year, it should not be assumed that case files that do not reach the complaint stage are quickly and easily addressed. Many files that do not meet the threshold of a formal complaint can and often do still take hours to complete. This involves research and/or several discussions or written exchanges with a complainant to ensure we fully understand the concerns and issues they are bringing to us and can identify appropriate referrals or help them navigate to the right program or service. In fact, many files that do not progress to complaints are often the ones that take up the most time, because of the research needed to determine jurisdiction, and the number of explanations that sometimes are required.

The files that do reach the complaint stage take many more hours of research, discussions, back and forth exchanges with the relevant authorities and complainant and overall, more time to complete. Many of these files are incredibly complicated and often involve multiple government authorities.

Of important note, we have started to increasingly leverage our ability to resolve complaints through our Early Resolution process rather than resolving them with an Investigation. Addressing questions through this process not only builds relationships, provides an opportunity

for dialogue and understanding, but it also reduces the time and scale of work involved, compared to a full investigation. It also showcases the internal work the department is completing and allows recognition for these important changes to stay within the department.

We conducted one systemic Early Resolution with the Department of Finance. The systemic complaint we sought to address involved the confusion in job advertisements and the use of equivalencies when comparing someone's qualifications for a position.

The Department had previously considered equivalencies when applicants applied for positions; how the Department calculated these equivalencies was until now not completely evident. Through our collaborative model we were able to come to a resolution that will create more transparency for job seekers and strengthen elements of procedural fairness. We would like to applaud the Department for their commitment to improving their processes and thank them for their full cooperation throughout the Early Resolution process.

2024/2025 Inquiries

2024/2025 INQUIRIES	CARRIED OVER /OPENEND	CLOSED	CARRIED OVER TO NEXT FISCAL YEAR	
Carried over from previous fiscal year	10	10	15	
Information Requests	7	7	0	
Case Files	266	252	STATUS AT YEAR END	
			At intake	10
			At early resolution	4
			At investigation	1
TOTAL	283	269		

Case Files (Potential Complaints)

Two years ago, we identified that the Sahtu and North Slave region of the territory were underrepresented in terms of complaints based on their populations. Sadly, we were unable to travel for outreach to these regions until this past year. Years previous, we had not had any or very few complaints from the Sahtu and North Slave. Over the course of our 5 years of being open, some communities were never once represented in our statistics. Our outreach efforts were effective and this year our numbers saw a 500% increase from the Sahtu. A massive increase, from 7 complaints to 35 complaints. Our outreach to the Beaufort

Delta was also effective and generated a total of 36 complaints on the year, which is an increase of 7 complaints from the year previous.

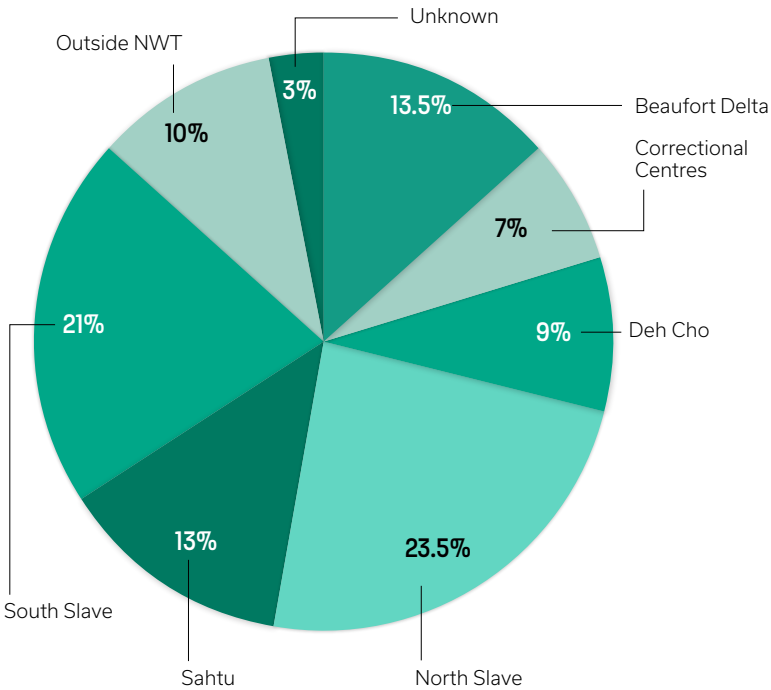
Historically, based on a percentage of the Territory’s population, our complaint numbers have been close to mirroring population numbers. For example, Yellowknife with a population of 20,800, makes up just under 50% of the population of the Territory (44,900). Last year, Yellowknife residents accounted for 37% of our complaint numbers. We do not expect an even distribution, especially

when we undertake targeted outreach activities in the regions, however we do expect complaints to come from all regions. As we surmised in our annual report from 2023-24, in-person outreach works. The 500% increase of complaints coming from the Sahtu is a direct result of this outreach.

In 2024/25 we also started to track the number of complaints we received from Indigenous complainants. This was started on July 1st, with the transition to Ombud Carnogursky. Based on census numbers from 2022, we would expect complainants with an Indigenous background to represent around 50% of our total numbers. (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2022) Although the numbers do not represent a full year, Indigenous complainants represent about 55% of our clients. These numbers should be taken with some caution, as these numbers represent only those clients who self-declared their ethnicity which is not mandatory when making a complaint to our office, some chose not to disclose this information.

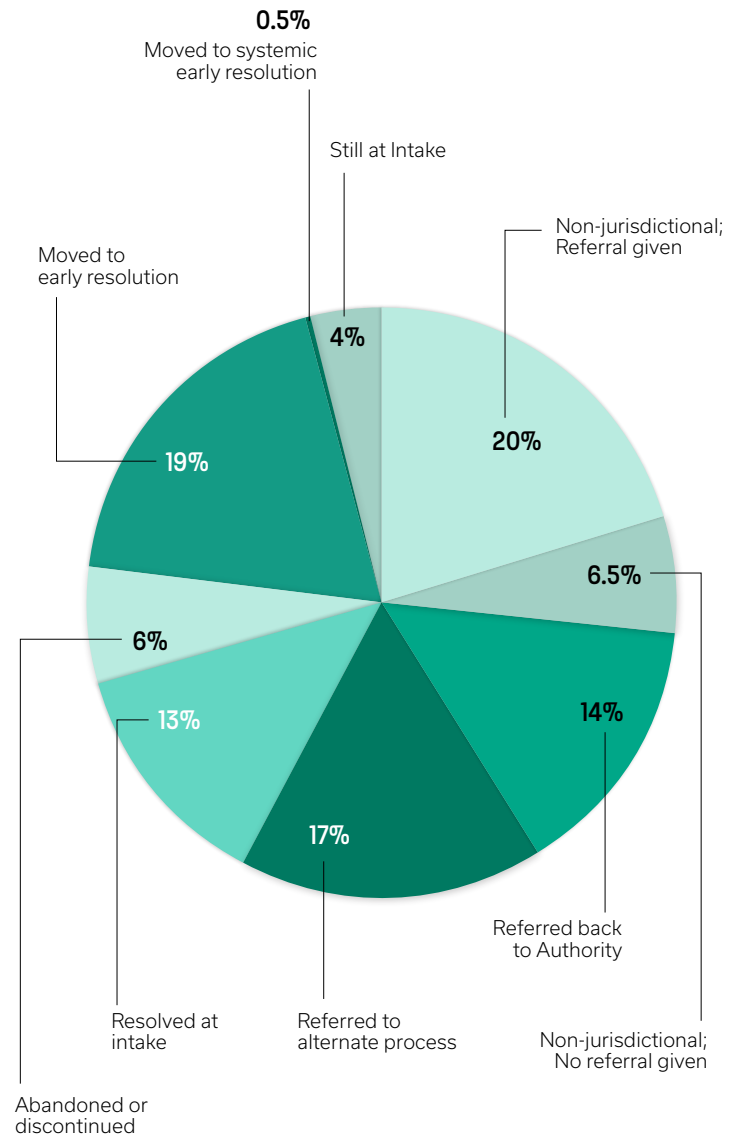
Inquiries by Location

Beaufort Delta	36
Correctional Centres	18
Deh Cho	24
North Slave	63
Sahtu	35
South Slave	55
Outside NWT	27
Unknown	8
TOTAL	266



Case Files by Outcome at Intake

NON-JURISDICTIONAL	71
• Referral given	54
• No Referral given	17
JURISDICTIONAL	185
• Referred back to authority	39
• Referred to alternate process	44
• Resolved at intake	34
• Abandoned or discontinued	17
• Moved to early resolution	50
• Moved to systemic early resolution	1
• Moved directly to formal investigation	0
STILL AT INTAKE AT FISCAL YEAR END	10
TOTAL	266



Case Files by Organization

NON-JURISDICTIONAL	
• Business	9
• Federal government	23
• Indigenous government	3
• Municipal government	4
• Non-government organization	2
• Not a matter of administration	1
• Other Provincial/Territorial government	4
• Private Individual	7
• Professional Association	1
• Territorial office	12
TOTAL	66

JURISDICTIONAL	
• Aurora College	2
• Prosper NWT	1
• District Education Authority	2
• Divisional Education Councils	4
• Education, Culture & Employment	15
• Environment & Climate Change	10
• Finance	22
• Hay River Health & Social Services Authority	7
• Health and Social Services	11
• Housing Authority	9
• Housing NWT	9
• Infrastructure	5
• Industry, Tourism & Investment	0
• Justice	23
• Lands	1
• Legal Aid Commission	2
• Liquor Commission	0
• Municipal & Community Affairs	12
• NWT Health & Social Services Authority	42
• NWT Power Corporation	2
• Tłıchq Community Services Agency	3
• Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission	10
• Unspecified/Other	6
TOTAL	200

Complaints by Outcome*

RESOLVED AT EARLY RESOLUTION	
• Voluntary action by authority	33
• Abandoned or discontinued by complainant	2
• No unfairness	18
INVESTIGATIONS	
• Complaint not substantiated	0
• Complaint substantiated - recommendations	1
• Complaint substantiated - no recommendations	0
• Investigation discontinued - voluntary action by authority	0
STILL OPEN AT FISCAL YEAR END	
• In early resolution process	6
• In investigation process	1
TOTAL	61

*includes complaint files carried over from 2023/2024

Investigation Timelines

We consider investigations complete as of either 1. the date we notify the complainant and the authority that we are discontinuing the investigation, or 2. the date we provide the complainant and the authority with a final report. We are in the process of completing one complaint-based investigation and have completed one own motion investigation in 2024/2025; both took less than one year.

2024/2025

Examples of Our Work

" Thank you so much for your quick response and for some ideas on where to take these issues, it is much appreciated even if this isn't where you can help.

Thank you for looking into this for us. It is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your kind assurance. I really appreciate your help.

Under the circumstances it seems that you (you're office) are the only way to have answers.

Out of all the people I have spoken to, your Office has been the most helpful." "

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

Sometimes people are not sure who to talk to about their concerns and need a referral to point them in the right direction. 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. Sometimes government does not communicate with people in a way that works for them. 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."⁵

The following are a few specific examples of cases that we resolved in 2024/2025. We have changed names to protect people's privacy.

Example #1

Early Resolution

Jake

What Happened

Jake runs a business in the Northwest Territories. He came to us after his business had gone through a few bidding processes with the Department of Finance and their Standing Offer Agreements (SOAs). He felt that he was being unfairly treated as his business numbers were not as busy as the previous years. Even though his business was not the successful bidder on the proposals, as second or third bidder, he felt like more business should be coming his way.

⁵ *British Columbia Development Corporation v. Friedmann (Ombudsman)*, [1984] 2 S.C.R. 447.

* All names in this section are changed for privacy.

Example #1 Continued

What We Did

We agreed to look into Jake's case. We found out that second and third bidders are listed on the government procurement website. They are generally separated by trade or service being offered. Jake's listed service, however was not broken down by successful bidder and in fact none of the successful bidders were listed publicly.

We worked with the Department of Finance and asked about why this particular service wasn't ranked like the others on their website. We suggested that to meet fairness standards it would be best to include a ranking for all of the listed services. They agreed with us and committed to updating their website. We also learned that using the ranked businesses from the Standing Offer Agreements is not compulsory for the government, since an SOA is not a contract but just an agreement for how much that business will charge the government for its services if the government chooses to use them. However, using businesses with an SOA is considered best practice as these often lead to cost savings for the government.

The Result

A few days later the change was made on the Department of Finance's public website.

Why this Matters

The Ombud is not limited to taking complaints from individuals, but can take them from community groups as well as businesses. Although listing the successful ranked bidders may not lead to an increase in business numbers right away for Jake and his company, it certainly may over time. It may also lead to greater cost savings for the government as using the SOAs is often cheaper than using an alternative business that does not have an SOA with the GNWT.

Example #2

Referral back to Government

Brenda

What Happened

Brenda was having many difficulties getting in touch with her Housing Association to complete repairs on her housing unit. She explained to us that she attempted to contact them on separate occasions but could not get answer when her unit would be worked on to complete the necessary repairs. She came to us after a community engagement session with the Ombud.

What We Did

We agreed that it was unusual to not get a response from the Housing Association and would follow up. We contacted the manager and spoke about the issues that Brenda was having with her unit. We inquired about timelines and when she could expect them to complete the work and if she would get a response from the Association about her inquiries.

The Result

After speaking to the Association, we found out that Brenda had not in fact spoken with anyone at the Association. The Association was aware of some of the issues facing Brenda and her unit but not all of them. The Association informed us that they only knew about the issues because of social media posts but had never been formally contacted to make repairs. Despite this the Association was planning on completing the repairs that were mentioned in social media. They provided us with an email address and phone number where Brenda could formally request her outstanding maintenance issues.

The Association also informed us that they were planning on completing repairs that coming week and had attempted to make repairs already, but that Brenda would need to be the sole occupant of the unit when the work was being done.

We informed Brenda about the good news of her unit being repaired soon and the need for her to be the only occupant when the maintenance crew arrives. We provided her with the email and phone number for her future maintenance requests, so that she no longer needed to make requests over social media.

Why This Matters

Breakdowns in communication are often what lead people to come to our Office with their complaints. Commonly, people do not know where to address their complaints or how. Restoring relationships between people and government is often at the heart of our work.

Example #3

Early Resolution

Rosemary

What Happened

Rosemary is an 82 year old elder who applied for the Senior Home Heating subsidy, a program delivered by ECE. She heats her home with a combination of a wood stove and an oil burning furnace, so part of her subsidy was to be paid towards her wood deliveries and part of it was to go towards her fuel costs. There was a mix-up with some of the invoices for the wood. Rosemary talked to her case worker about having that part of the payment go towards fuel instead, and her case worker arranged for her to get an extra fuel delivery. Rosemary still wasn't sure if everything had been straightened out. Her out of pocket fuel expenses weren't adding up.

What We Did

The Ombud was in her community at that time and Rosemary came forward to explain what happened and explained what ECE was going to provide her through the subsidy program. We asked ECE to review her file again, which they agreed they would.

Example #3 Continued

The Result

ECE discovered that she could have been eligible for a further payment for fuel. This amount was held back in anticipation of another invoice for wood. ECE immediately arranged for Rosemary to get that same dollar amount in fuel delivered to her home.

Why This Matters

Holding government accountable for the programs and services they offer is important. Mix-ups and misunderstandings happen. Many times, these errors can be corrected and our Office is able to help coordinate communications between complainants and government agencies. This example also reinforced the importance of our office travelling to small communities, as we likely would not have received this complaint otherwise.

Example #4

Referral to Outside Resource

George

What Happened

George, an elder, contacted our Office wanting help to get a pardon for a criminal offence he had from decades ago. He said it was weighing heavily on his mind to have that record, but he had never been able to figure out where to go to have it dealt with. He couldn't afford a lawyer but knew that he might need one. George was visiting with family in another province when he called us.

Example #4 Continued

What We Did

The Office of the Ombud keeps a list of resources that we can refer people to when we are not able to help or if it is not within our scope of work. Quite often, people are looking at many available options but are not finding the right place to go for help. We cannot help with matters that fall under federal jurisdiction, like a pardon, but we were able to find a free legal help clinic near to where George was staying that could help people with pardon applications.

The Result

We gave George the information and he was glad to know where he could turn. He followed up with us and let us know he was able to get an appointment to start the process with them.

Why This Matters

If we can't help with an issue, then we try to refer people to the best place to resolve their concerns. In this case, it was to a free legal service in another jurisdiction.

2024/2025

Public Education and Outreach

In 2024-2025 we were able to offer several of our Working Together for Fairness workshops to public servants. The course, which we developed in-house and launched in March of 2023, is an interactive program designed to help public servants further their knowledge of administrative fairness and the principles of fair service, fair decisions, and fair process. It provides an introduction to concepts like bias, legitimate expectations, discretion, effective decision making, and trauma-informed service. We held 2 of these courses in 2024/25.

In 2024-2025 we also began offering a

shorter presentation on administrative fairness specifically for Senior Management. It is a condensed overview of the Ombud and our process, based on the Working Together for Fairness workshop. Like the workshop, we still encourage a hands-on approach to the material and include a fairness case study that we discuss together and work through. We were able to deliver this training seven times over the past year and have presented to Human Resources, Finance, Environment and Climate Change, Infrastructure, Education, Culture and Employment and Justice. We had over 130 people take part in these

training events. We would like to thank the Departments for their continued commitment to administrative fairness and their enthusiasm in our training sessions.

The past year was an incredibly busy year for outreach events all across the NWT. The Ombud managed to visit 11 different communities in 9 months. We continued our outreach efforts to the Sahtu region from last year with the help of Sahtu MLA Danny McNeely. The Sahtu has been underrepresented in terms of complaints since the inception of the Ombud Office and we sought to address this perceived gap. Our efforts were fruitful, and we were able to generate further recognition of our Office and the services we provided. This was represented by the numerous complaints we received from the region during and after our outreach.

Further, the Office continued its yearly participation at the 2025 NWT Association of Communities Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Yellowknife. The Ombud hosted a round table event which provided opportunities for AGM participants to engage with the Ombud, ask questions and network. Further Yellowknife outreach activities included a community event welcoming newcomers to Canada and a luncheon hosted by Jody Wilson-Raybould and the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce.



Michelle and Krista in Tuktoyaktuk



Krista with Jody Wilson-Raybould



Ombud office at the YK Spring Trade Show

Fairness Education

A total of 12 public servants completed the Working Together for Fairness workshop. The workshop was offered twice, once in Hay River and once in Inuvik. All of the workshops were at the request of the Departments' – MACA and Finance.

Our new Senior Management Fairness Session was delivered 5 times in Yellowknife, once in Ft. Smith and once in Inuvik. Over 130 people attended these presentations including ADMs,

Directors, Superintendents and Managers. All of the presentations were at the request of the departments and a number of presentations were follow-up requests for a second presentation so more staff could be involved.

2024/2025

Other Highlights



Ombud with Internship students from Ontario



Elders in Fort Good Hope

The Ombud met with legislative interns from the Ontario Legislature who were visiting Yellowknife as part of their internship program. They enjoyed their time even in the deepest part of a Yellowknife winter and had great questions about administrative fairness.



Cookout in Délı̄ne



Ombud with MLA McNeely

Professional Development

The Ombud completed the Essentials for Ombuds training session in Toronto, ON. The Essentials for Ombuds is a five-day intensive training course which is a collaboration between the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO) and Osgoode Professional Development at York University.

The Deputy Ombud attended the Annual General Meeting for the FCO held in Victoria, BC. The yearly event hosts ombud staff from across Canada and holds numerous seminars on a wide variety of topics affecting the operations of ombud offices in Canada.

The Ombud and staff attended several monthly CCPO webinars hosted by other Canadian offices and one staff completed training in motivational interviewing. One staff also started the Foundations for Administrative Justice course offered by the Foundation of Administrative Justice. As has been our practice for many years, staff continue to participate in CCPO working groups for Legal Advisors, Deputy Ombudsman and equivalents, and Communications, and occasionally meet formally or informally with officials

from other ombudsman offices. We also continue to participate in the yearly CCPO by hosting a presentation. This past year's presentation was titled "Out of the Flood, into the Fire." It focused on ombud operations in times of natural disasters; sadly, a topic our office is much too familiar with.



*Forum of Canadian Ombudsman
AGM - Victoria, BC*

2024/2025

Financials

ACCOUNT	EXPENDITURES (\$s)
COMPENSATION & BENEFITS	<u>644,317</u>
OTHER EXPENSES	
Travel & Transportation	43,621
Materials & Supplies	3,035
Purchased Services	18,768
Contract Services	68,017
Fees & Payments	7,353
Controllable Assets	1,608
COMPUTER EXPENSES	14,058
TOTAL OTHER EXPENSES	<u>156,460</u>
TOTAL	<u>800,777</u>

Recommendations from the Ombud

It is recommended that additional funding be provided to the Ombud for the addition of a new position, Senior Early Resolution and Investigation Officer. This recommendation is supported by the Ombud Act Section 12 (1) which states:

Section 12(1) The Ombud may employ any person whom the Ombud considers necessary for the effective and efficient operation of the office of the Ombud

This position will ensure we have adequate resources to address the increase of complaints, build the capacity and a career pathway within our office, and will allow us to complete additional "own motion investigations" as currently we do not have the capacity to investigate all systemic concerns brought to our attention.

It will also provide the opportunity to accept referrals from the Legislative Assembly as per Section 16 (1) which states:

Section 16(1) The Legislative Assembly or a Standing Committee may at any time refer a matter to the Ombud for investigation and report, and the Ombud may

(a) Investigate the matter, so far as the matter is within the Ombud's jurisdiction; and

(b) Report back to the Legislative Assembly or Standing Committee as the Ombud considers appropriate

The capacity to accept referrals from the Legislative Assembly is a cost saving measure for the government of the Northwest Territories that can be utilized in situations where there is a need for an independent, external investigation.

Recommandation de la protectrice du citoyen

Nous recommandons d'accorder un financement supplémentaire au bureau du protecteur du citoyen pour la création d'un nouveau poste d'agent principal responsable de la résolution précoce des plaintes et des enquêtes. Cette recommandation est appuyée par le paragraphe 12(1) de la Loi sur le protecteur du citoyen, qui prévoit ce qui suit :

12(1) Le protecteur du citoyen peut employer les personnes qu'il estime nécessaires au fonctionnement efficace de son bureau.

Ce poste nous permettra de disposer de ressources suffisantes pour faire face à l'augmentation du nombre de plaintes, de renforcer nos capacités et d'établir un parcours de carrière au sein du bureau, ainsi que de mener davantage d'enquêtes de notre propre initiative, car nous n'avons actuellement pas la capacité d'enquêter sur tous les problèmes systémiques portés à notre attention.

Il nous permettra également d'accepter les renvois provenant de l'Assemblée législative, conformément au paragraphe 16(1), qui prévoit ce qui suit :

16(1) L'Assemblée législative ou un comité permanent peut en tout temps renvoyer au protecteur du citoyen toute question pour qu'il fasse enquête et produise un rapport. Le protecteur du citoyen peut alors :

(a) (a) d'une part, faire enquête sur la question, dans la mesure où elle relève de sa compétence;

(b) (b) d'autre part, faire part de son enquête à l'Assemblée législative ou un comité permanent s'il l'estime indiqué.

La capacité d'accepter les renvois de l'Assemblée législative est une mesure d'économie pour le gouvernement des TNO qui peut être utilisée dans les situations où il est nécessaire de mener une enquête externe indépendante.

Dëne Sytine

nēhiyawēwin

English

French

Dinjii Zhu' Gijik

Innuiaqtun

Inuktitut

Inuvialuktun

Dene Kədá

Dene Zhatié

Tłuchó

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

Dēne Sų́líné

Kīspin ki nitawihtīn ē nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsīnān.

nēhiyawēwin

If you would like this information in another official lanugage, 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 jì, diits'āt ginohkii.

Dinjii Zhu' Ginjik

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Innuiaqtun

ᑕᑲᑯᑦ ᑎᑎᑦᑲᑯᑦ ᐱᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦ ᐃᑯᑎᑯᑦᑲᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦ, ᐅᑦᑦᑎᑦᐅᑦᑲᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦ.

Inuktitut

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqluta.

Inuvialuktun

Edı gondı dehgáh got'ıe zhatıé k'éé edat'éh enahddhé nıde naxets'é edahfı.

Dene Kədə

K'áhshó got'ıne xədə k'é hederı ʔedıhtı'é yerıniwé nıde dúle.

Dene Zhatıé

Tłıchq yatı k'éé. Dı wegodı newq dè, gots'o gonede.

Tłıchq



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the Ombud

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