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Ombudsman's top 10 stories of 2016

It's been a year of historic change for our office, as the Ombudsman's mandate doubled and we were able to help Ontarians with a whole new range of issues in the broader public sector. Here are 10 of the key developments of the past year.



DECEMBER 2016

1. New Ombudsman



Paul Dubé was unanimously approved by the Legislature as Ontario's seventh Ombudsman and began his [five-year term on April 1, 2016](#). He launched a new monthly "Ombudsman's Message" [on our website](#), spearheaded the creation of the office's [Values, Mission and Vision statements](#), and released his first [Annual Report](#) in November.

The Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Ontario legislature who conducts oversight of provincial government agencies and municipalities, universities and school boards. Ombudsman Paul Dubé began his five-year term on April 1.

[FILE A COMPLAINT ONLINE](#)

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WHAT'S NEW?

2. New mandate

Our office's jurisdiction was expanded for the first time in 40 years, taking full effect in 2016. [We now oversee](#) Ontario's 444 municipalities, 82 school boards and 21 universities, in addition to more than 500 provincial government organizations, and we are [growing our team](#) to handle the influx of cases in these new areas.



3. Consultation and submissions



The Ombudsman was invited to comment as part of several government

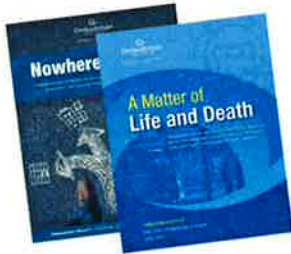


What's new at our office? Check out the [Ombudsman's latest post](#) about his most recent speeches and reports, and other activities by our team.

consultations on new legislation and reforms related to policing, correctional services and municipalities. In October, he called for stronger, more consistent oversight of police in his submission to the Independent Police Oversight Review. [Read more here.](#)

› [Read the submission](#)

4. Systemic investigations



Our office released reports on two major systemic investigations this year. In the first report, [A Matter of Life and Death](#), the Ombudsman recommended the province improve police training in de-escalation techniques during conflict situations. The second report, [Nowhere to Turn](#), called for the province to overhaul the services and supports for adults with developmental disabilities in crisis. Between both reports,

we made 82 recommendations – all of which were accepted by the province.

5. Making a difference



Most of the **22,000**-plus cases we receive every year are resolved without need for investigation, but our staff achieved significant results for many Ontarians by working proactively behind the scenes. For example, here's how we deal with the top source of complaints to our office, [the Family Responsibility Office](#).

› [Read more about our work](#)

ONE YEAR OF OVERSIGHT: MUNICIPALITIES & UNIVERSITIES

As the new year approaches, the Office of the Ontario Ombudsman is set to mark one year of oversight of municipalities and universities. Since the historic new jurisdiction took effect Jan. 1, the office has received some **3,191** public complaints and inquiries about municipalities, and **232** about universities.

“In the first year of our oversight of municipalities and universities, we have worked to build productive and collaborative relationships with stakeholders, which has helped us to resolve many difficult issues without formal investigation,” said Ombudsman Paul Dubé. “We have been able to help thousands of people by providing the information they need or by making informal inquiries about their issues, just as we do in our oversight of provincial government bodies.”

More than one-third of cases were resolved by Ombudsman staff providing referrals to the appropriate officials. The Ombudsman is an office of last resort that seeks to resolve issues at the local level wherever possible, and recommends all municipalities and universities have clear internal complaint procedures.

6. Segregation of inmates in Ontario jails



The Ombudsman [made a submission in May](#) to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional services to abolish indefinite segregation in Ontario jails. In early December, our office [launched an official investigation](#) into how the province tracks and reviews the placement of inmates in segregation.

[Read more](#)

WANT TO WORK WITH US?

We're looking for talented people to join our **investigations and early resolutions** teams, and an **executive administrative assistant**.

Learn more about early resolutions [here](#). Learn about investigations [here](#).



7. Municipalities



This year saw the expansion of our mandate to municipalities. Among the **3,191** cases received to date, the [most common complaints](#) were about councils and committees, Ontario Works, by-law enforcement, municipal hydro and housing, and most were quickly resolved. We launched one systemic investigation, related to the [City of Brampton's](#) non-competitive procurement practices. Our office is also the closed meeting investigator for some 218 municipalities, which you can read more about [here](#).

STAY CONNECTED

Ombudsman Ontario has **4,524** [Facebook](#) likes and **37,682** [Twitter](#) followers! Please continue to reach out to us on social media, or drop us a line at thewatchdog@ombudsman.on.ca.

8. Universities



While we have always been able to take complaints about colleges, our office also took oversight of the province's 21 universities this year, and received **232** cases. The most common topics of complaints were academic appeals and exams, fees and financial assistance, employee issues, instructor and staff conduct and safety and security.

› [Read more about universities](#)

And stay connected with our office in both official languages! Follow our

French Twitter account: [@Ont_OmbudsmanFR](https://twitter.com/Ont_OmbudsmanFR).

9. School boards



In addition to municipalities and universities, we took oversight of the 82 school boards in Ontario. Our most commonly received complaints - out of more than **1,100** - were about staff and trustee conduct, special education, transportation, boundary issues, employment issues and student safety. We also [launched a systemic investigation](#) in September to examine the school bus

problems that were occurring in the GTA.

› [Read more about school boards](#)

10. Spreading the word



This year, the Ombudsman and Ombudsman staff attended more than **125** outreach events, making speeches and presentations and meeting stakeholder groups representing provincial organizations, municipalities, universities, school boards and many others. For example:

<https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/Resources/Speeches/2016/All-you-need-to-know-if-the-Ombudsman-calls.aspx>

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