

UPDATE FOR CITY COUNCILLORS

May 2009



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Our Team

Fiona Crean, Ombudsman, was appointed in November 2008 by the Toronto City Council as Toronto's first Ombudsman.

Alwyn Martins, Advisor, Conflict Resolution, has worked in business, law, investigations and conflict resolution over a 25 year career in the private and public sectors.

Zalina Deodat, Intake Assistant, has extensive experience in complaints resolution in a variety of intake roles, including the management of a complaints Call Centre in 2005-2006.

Deb Wharton, Senior Advisor, has worked for the City of Toronto for 18 years in Public Health, where her focus was on community outreach, economic development and nine years as a program manager in Public Health Inspections.

Anne Matti, Administrative Assistant, has 19 years of progressively senior administrative posts at the City of Toronto with extensive customer service experience.

Kwame Addo, Director of Investigations and Conflict Resolution, brings more than 18 years of complaint resolution experience as an investigator at Ombudsman Ontario.

Winsome Cain, Advisor, Conflict Resolution, has extensive experience in conflict resolution and conducting investigations, having worked for over nine years at the provincial Ombudsman's Office and in the not-for-profit sector.

Responsive and Accountable

Program Mandate

- The authority of the Ombudsman is derived from the *City of Toronto Act*
- The Ombudsman is an Officer of Toronto City Council, independent from the municipal administration
- The Office of the Ombudsman investigates complaints about decisions, actions or recommendations made or omitted by the public service (including its agencies, boards and commissions) in the course of implementing City policies and administering City services
- The Office opened its doors in early April, upon receiving City Council's 2009 budget allocation

The Office is independent, impartial, free and offers its investigative services on a confidential basis.



Some Stats

- 250 complaints and enquiries* received to April 30 2009
- 117 complaints have been resolved employing various dispute resolution mechanisms
- 133 are in progress including formal investigations
- Introductory meetings with every elected representative (45)
- 11 orientation sessions with senior staff
- 1 orientation session with City Clerk staff
- 2 orientation sessions with political staff
- 3 sessions with community organizations
- Consulted on creation of internal complaint systems within the Toronto Public Service

*Enquiries include matters that may be jurisdictional but are premature for this office to deal with.

Responsive and Accountable



Ombudsman Public Speaking

- Remarks at Ryerson Speaker Series: 'Ethics in Government'
- Remarks at Forum of Canadian Ombudsman: 'The Once and Future Ombudsman'
- Remarks to Transportation Services AGM: 'Ombudsmanship: A New Term in Toronto's City Government'
- Remarks to Toronto Legal Clinic Executive Directors' Group
- Remarks to Social Assistance Action committee – Toronto Legal Clinics

Other Activities

- Agreement with Toronto Public Library to have on line complaint capacity and Ombudsman information in place for greater public access to the Office
- Website launched
- Education materials developed
- Positive coverage in print & electronic media

Projected outcomes by the end 2009

- Efficient, credible office known to all elected officials, senior public servants and key community leaders
- Office infrastructure in place (policies, standards and procedures)
- Adequate budget and a staff that understand and reflect the City's diversity
- An effective complaints process established with individual complaints resolved that represent cross-section of issues and communities
- Systemic issues identified and several investigations completed
- First Annual Report
- Multi-year strategic plan (2010-2012)

Principles & Standards

The Office of the Ombudsman is committed to being responsive and accountable to the people it serves. Part of that commitment is making sure you know what standards we adhere to in our work, and what principles form the basis for our work

OUR PRINCIPLES

Independent

This means that the Ombudsman's Office is independent from City Hall – both the elected representatives and the staff. Nothing can interfere with the Office's ability to thoroughly investigate complaints.

Impartial

The Office investigates and resolves complaints in a fair and balanced way, providing equitable opportunities to Toronto residents and to staff. This Office is not an advocate for either the complainant or the government.

Credible

This is about how you perceive us. We are committed to demonstrating that we offer a sound, reasonable and transparent process in a consistent way. You will tell us if we are credible.

Accessible

We will ensure that you can access our services in ways that you find easy. This includes being flexible about meeting times, multiple access points, accommodation and language support.

OUR STANDARDS

There are many different types of standards – customer service standards, standards related to equitable service delivery, standards of timeliness, and standards related to administrative fairness. We are committed to making these standards public as we develop them.

Customer Service Standards

- We will answer our phones in three rings
- Voicemail and E-mail is available
- We will update our voicemail routinely, so you will know our availability
- We will return phone calls within 24 hours of receipt (48 if at weekends)
- We will acknowledge e-mails within 24 hours of receipt (48 hours on weekends)
- We will acknowledge regular mail within 48 hours of receipt

Over the coming year we will establish standards for how long it takes, on average, to resolve different types of complaints. We will also create standards for our public reports so that you will be able to learn from other complaints.

Equitable Service standards

- We are committed to giving residents equitable access to our services. Equitable access means that our services will take into account the needs, location and circumstance of each individual person who comes to the Office of the Ombudsman
- We will be alert to systemic barriers, which work against each person's situation being taken into account

- Equitable service standards do not mean equal or identical treatment, since working with diverse communities and individuals often means providing different treatment to get equal results
- We will be sensitive to the possible implications of the complainant's background and not stereotype or make assumptions

Standards of Timeliness

- The Office of the Ombudsman intends to treat each individual case in a timely manner
- While there are certain steps that need to be taken to ensure fairness for all concerns, and while there can be unavoidable delays, we will treat each case in an expeditious yet thorough manner
- We will develop these standards over the coming year. We want to ensure that the turnaround time we commit to is realistic – both to ensure a thorough review and to meet appropriate expectations for results

Standards for Decision-Making

- Anyone personally affected by a decision will have a chance to give information and evidence to support their position
- Each complaint is considered on its own merits
- You will be kept informed about what is happening and why it is happening
- When a decision is made, you will be informed why the decision was made



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