

The RecOrd

New Complaints System

The City Clerk's Office has a new system. Check it out!

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Quarterly Report

Here's what we've achieved this quarter

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April 2010

Office of the
MBUDSMAN
CITY OF TORONTO

I just want to say...

Our office marked its first anniversary of operation a few weeks ago, and this edition of the newsletter will bring you up to date on what we've been doing. Our quarterly statistical report has the details on page 3.

Our first quarter was exceptionally busy with more than 650 calls and complaints.

Many of these calls were information requests, asking this office's help to *find* the right *department and process* at City Hall to make a complaint about unfair service. This is pretty standard fare for an Ombudsman's office, especially at the beginning.

In fact, most Canadian ombudsman's offices report that they spend between 30-40 per cent of their time handling information requests, making referrals, giving advice, handling complaints that are premature and managing issues that are beyond their jurisdiction.

In any case, the nature of the calls we get confirm that a transparent, easy-to-access "city complaints system" made sense as one of our key recommendations in our Annual Report.

And the City is making progress.

The Clerk's Office has recently revamped its own complaint system, having consulted with our office. Details of their new, improved process are included on page 4.

Our staff have met with another three departments - Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS), Emergency Medical Services, Shelter, Support and Housing, as well as the Aboriginal Affairs Committee of City Council and the Don Mills Community Resources Group to discuss what we do.

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I just want to say cont.

The Ombudsman for Peru invited me down to help her provide advice and technical assistance in strategic planning and meeting of objectives in promoting its human rights program. The City of Toronto and its taxpayers will not be paying one cent for this mission.

The trip is coordinated by the Institute for Public Administration, and paid for by the feds.

As you may know I'd done quite a bit of international work in Latin and South America, Eastern Europe and southern Africa prior to joining the City. It's a real privilege that these jurisdictions want our input and the opportunity to learn best practices from Toronto.



Fiona Crean
Ombudsman

Get in touch with the Ombudsman
ombuds@toronto.ca
or call 416-392-7062, TTY 416-392-7100.
The Office treats all communications in confidence.

Ever wondered what **SNAFU** means?

How many ways are there to say “bureaucratic mix-up”?

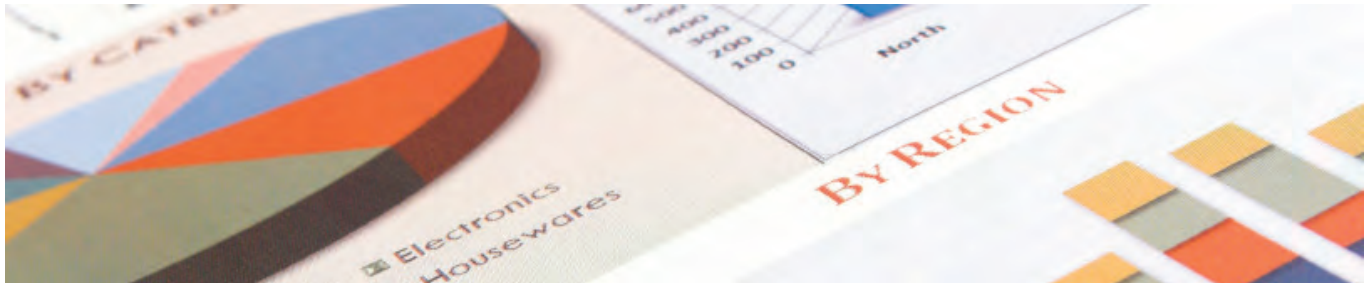
If the mainstream media is any indication “snafu” is the word of choice, with the Globe and Mail, CNN and the New York Times all using it at a regular clip.

Where did SNAFU come from?

It's an acronym for *Situation Normal: All Fouled Up* (or thereabouts). The U.S. Army used it extensively during World War Two although its origins as American or British are still in dispute.

It is now commonly used (even in polite discussion) to describe a mix-up by both governments and the private sector. There's even a character on an HBO TV Show (The Pacific) named Snafu.

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Quarterly Report: Three-Month Update

Projected Outcomes

COMMITMENT	RESULT
Complete THREE (3) investigations in spring	✓ 3 investigations completed as of March 31
Ensuring the Toronto Public Service “first resort” complaint systems are thorough, measurable and publicly available	✓ On track
Continuing to build relationships with the public, Toronto communities, business, public service and legislators	✓ On track
Conducting systemic investigations	✓ On track

Statistics - Complaints and Enquiries

- 669** received January - March 2010
- 606** processed and closed January – March 2010
- 142** in progress* (including 79 from 2009)

*Why are so many files still in process?

Last year, in our first nine months of operation, the combined number of calls and investigations exceeded what our one front-line staff and two investigative staff could handle.

In June 2010 we will be getting a second intake assistant and another investigator to help manage the work.

This will help us balance the immediate demands for help from the public with the more time-consuming, detailed investigations that will result in the systemic fixes, we committed to in our first Annual Report.

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Staff Stuff

What's so good about the City Clerk's Complaint Handling Process?

City Clerk's Office has posted their new process for handling complaints from the public about their office. The new procedure can be found at

http://www.toronto.ca/city_clerk/complaints.htm. It's also updated on our website, www.ombudstoronto.ca.

The clearly laid out process is a big improvement, which is especially important in an election year, when the volume of complaints increases. When the public knows what to expect and where to go, it makes everybody's job that much easier.

What's so good about this system?

- 1. It lays out the steps in the process clearly and in plain language*
- 2. It describes the process of reviewing complaints*
- 3. All complaints are logged and tracked*
- 4. It sets out timelines and notice periods so the complainant knows what to expect*
- 5. There's a mechanism for resolving complaints quickly before escalating the matter to management*
- 6. There is opportunity to escalate the complaint to more senior staff if the complainant is not satisfied*
- 7. It references the resident's right to file a complaint with the city's Ombudsman should they remain dissatisfied.*

Our Office welcomes a new staff member

The Ombudsman's office filled its legal advisor/senior investigator position in November 2009.



Marie Chen was the winning candidate. Marie is a lawyer with considerable experience in administrative and anti-discrimination law at appellate courts and administrative

tribunals. She worked for many years as a community legal clinic lawyer conducting test case litigation in systemic racism, human rights and equality rights. Prior to that, she practiced immigration and refugee law for more than eight years.

You can find the Office of the Ombudsman at

112 Elizabeth Street

Toronto, Ontario

Telephone: 416-392-7062

TTY: 416-392-7100

Fax: 416-392-7067

E-mail: ombuds@toronto.ca

ombudstoronto.ca

