

Dear City

It's been two months since we opened our doors and we need to talk...

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The Ombudsman is out in the community. Find out where she will be...

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June 2009



I JUST WANT TO SAY...

Welcome to the first issue of our newsletter. As the Ombudsman for the City of Toronto, my job is make sure you have been treated fairly by our public service.

To do that I need to know what is bugging you. What you think can be improved. Where you think you've been treated unfairly. I also want to hear from you about stellar service you have received from the City.

This newsletter is YOUR SPACE.

We will publish it 10 times a year, online. All you have to do is have an e-mail address and then you can sign up or simply view it on our website. If you don't have a computer, go to your nearest library and look up ombudstoronto.ca

Starting small

When I googled the words 'customer service government' the other day, I got almost 92 million results.

*Why it's important, how to achieve excellence, training videos, seminars, conferences, good examples, bad examples...*and this was just the first 20 links!

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STAFF STUFF



CAN WE TALK?

Since we first set up shop at 112 Elizabeth, the Ombudsman has met with many of you in information-sharing sessions. And since we opened to the public on April 6, we have spoken to more of you, as we follow up on complaints from Toronto residents.

One thousand down, another fifty-one thousand to go! Obviously, that's unrealistic. So that's why we're devoting a section of our newsletter to you - the men and women who make the City work every day of the year.

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I just want to say cont...

My office is committed to making good service a top priority.

What do we mean and what does it mean to you?

First of all, our commitment to good service is part of our overall commitment to be responsive and accountable. Doing a good job means responding effectively and taking ownership for the service we provide – when it's done right and when we need to improve.

In my short time as Ombudsman, one of the most common complaints I've heard about is how and when people at City Hall answer their phones.

So one of the first things staff in my office did was set some **Service Standards** – basic service levels that you, the public, can expect. These are posted on our website and include:

- 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 hours on weekends)
- We will acknowledge regular mail within 48 hours of receipt

Are these standards good enough?

We believe they're reasonable.

Will we always meet these standards?

That's our goal.

We have organised our office so that we can meet these standards. That means the phones are set up to make it easy for us to respond, and everyone has clear, defined responsibilities related to dealing with complaints.

Are these standards good enough?

We believe they're reasonable.

Will we always meet these standards?

That's our goal. There may be times when we don't – for whatever reason – and we rely on you to tell us. We are accountable to you.

I hope to start a dialogue with Torontonians through this newsletter. In future we'll tackle those issues that you consider important. If we work together, we can find solutions.

Fiona Crean

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

MEDIA CORNER



The Ombudsman's Office is committed to being responsive and accountable to the residents of Toronto. To do that we need you!

You play a vital role scrutinizing institutions and informing the public, so we want to do everything possible to make sure you have the information you need from our office, when you need it.

Our commitment is simple. Fiona Crean, Toronto's first Ombudsman, is available as a spokesperson. She can be reached at fcrean@toronto.ca or by calling 416 392 7062.

Got a question from a member of the public? Wondering about service in your own backyard? Want to get a read on the latest statistics? Doing a story on how the City is improving accountability? The Ombudsman will respond to calls the same day. No kidding.

In exchange, what we expect from reporters is understanding of and respect for our duty to keep private information private. We can't release details about cases that are in progress even if you already have some of them. We may not confirm or deny the existence of a complaint. Sometimes, we just have to say 'no comment.'

We need you... NOW!

On a lighter note, we want your help naming this publication. So far, the only suggestion that's tickled our fancy is "Toronto Beefs," but we feel it's a bit casual and not entirely clear if English isn't your first language.

So bring on your best serious (or witty) suggestions for this publication. We will announce the new name in our September issue!



Staff Stuff continued...

As you know, the Ombudsman advocates for effective public administration in the best public interest. She does not advocate for individual complainants or defend City staff.

So we need your help and your understanding. We would also like your feedback. We can work best together when we know each other's needs.

"Staff Stuff" will be an occasional feature in our 10-time-a-year newsletter. We hope to be able to highlight stories of service excellence, answer your questions, and talk about service standards and how you can meet them.

Thanks and welcome to the Ombudsman's Office.

WHERE TO FIND THE OMBUDSMAN

June 20 Employment Plus Information Fair – No Frills at Victoria Park and Lawrence

June 20 Crescent Town Playground official launch

June 21 Aboriginal Awareness Day

June 25 Urban Alliance on Race Relations AGM

June 26 Downsview Community Legal Services

June 27 Pride Weekend

June 30 Meet the Ombudsman, Social Planning Toronto

July 1 Councillor Shelley Carroll's Community Event

Councillor Cesar Palacio's Community Event

Councillor Francis Nunziata's Community Event

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