



Citizens' Representative Message



In late October of this year our Office released a systemic investigative report entitled "By A Thread." The title was borne out of our team's assessment of how parents and caregivers of complex needs children were hanging on. Having spent hours listening to their concerns in person, by phone and through correspondence, and consulting with the province, I thought it was critical to go public with just how important it is for us to support this subsection of our population in the coming years. Parents and caregivers of complex needs children and adults are exhausted, isolated and underfunded while they are caring daily for our most vulnerable citizens. Our final report

made 12 recommendations to government in the areas of crisis situations, quality respite care, future planning, navigating systems, inclusion, therapeutic services, networking, information sharing and lessening the financial and psychological impact the culmination of all of these concerns has on families and caregivers who nurture and love medically complex children. I invite you to visit our website to read the report and its findings at <https://www.citizensrep.nl.ca/pdfs/CaregiversReportOct5-2023.pdf>



As we head into the Holiday Season, the staff and I wish you nothing but peace and enjoyment and all the best for 2024.

Bradley Moss

Sharing With the Citizens of Nunatsiavut and Statutory Offices

The OCR joined the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and the Office of the Seniors' Advocate to receive a learning opportunity from Hilary Blake, Inuit Cultural Justice Educator of the Department of Health and Social Development, Nunatsiavut. Hilary travelled from Happy Valley-Goose Bay to share with our staff about the Inuit culture. Her presentation examined the historical trends of colonization for the Inuit, including statistical information helping our staff realize the impact of colonization for the Inuit of our province. Our offices provide services to citizens from all communities of our province. We welcome citizens of rural and remote communities and those of diverse experience. We recognize the importance of valuing each citizen in the most respectful manner and receiving them with a trauma-informed lens. We strive to ensure we have adequate knowledge and skills to support

our learning of effective communication with all citizens.

Sincere thanks to Hilary Blake and the Department of Health and Social Development, Nunatsiavut, for providing our staff with this valuable opportunity and for adding to our collective skill set. Thank you, as well, to the staff of the House of Assembly for enhancing the opportunity to share with our colleagues in the physical space of the Chamber of the House.

What We Offer

We have numerous presentations available for public servants and the general public on our full range of services, including the provincial whistleblower program, and tips on how to navigate difficult complaints for frontline workers. Presentations are available by calling (709) 729-7647 or via email at citrep@gov.nl.ca

Seeking Fairness



The Income Support Division (the Division) provides financial benefits and other services to eligible low-income people and families to assist in meeting daily living expenses.

A citizen in receipt of income support contacted the OCR stating they had requested consideration of a special diet allowance. They had provided medical documentation on two different occasions from two different physicians requesting additional funding for a low histamine diet, consisting of fresh meats, organic fruits and vegetables, due to a recent diagnosis of Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS).

Under Income and Employment Support policy, a low histamine diet did not clearly fall under the prescribed list of approved diets. The policy further stated that special diets should not be approved for conditions that can be ordinarily controlled by following Canada's Food Guide (CFG). Further,

in cases where a condition cannot be controlled by following CFG, a Client Services Manager may approve requests.

While the requested diet did appear to be controllable by following Canada's Food Guide, neither the CFG, nor the assessment of the requested diet considered the significant higher cost of organic fruits and vegetables compared to non-organic.

The OCR requested reconsideration of the denial of a special diet by a Client Services Manager taking into account the additional cost of purchasing organic fruits and vegetables as a medical requirement to treat the rare diagnosis. This request was reviewed by Provincial Office and the diet was subsequently approved by the Client Services Manager. A retroactive payment was issued to the original date of the request and the special diet was included with future eligible benefits.

Finding Solutions



A citizen providing respite care to children in receipt of support through Child Protection and Youth Services alleged they had been experiencing regular delays in receiving pay for respite provided. It was alleged that the employer who was responsible to pay the hired respite staff, repeatedly contacted the assigned social worker who acknowledged the delay being with the Department of Finance. The frustration intensified as the delay was occurring regularly and required regular calls to the social worker.

The OCR suggested to the citizen to make a connection with the Department's Provincial Inquiries Coordinator as a means of attempting to resolve the recurring delay in payment issued. The citizen later advised that the Provincial Inquiries Coordinator provided contact information for the Manager of Financial Services who arranged to ensure the outstanding payment was processed without further delay. The citizen was assured that payment would be on time in the future.

Happy Holidays!

Questions / Comments?

Is your department, agency or community group interested in learning more about the OCR, its services and processes? Do you have a suggestion or question to be addressed in a future edition of *OCR Insights*? Call us at 1-800-559-0079 or (709) 729-7647, or e-mail citrep@gov.nl.ca

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