



## WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF OCR INSIGHTS!

**OCR INSIGHTS** is a quarterly newsletter of news, updates, case summaries and other short bursts of information from the Office of the Citizens' Representative (OCR). Our editions will be released to the public, across select departments and agencies, and to our connections in the community-based and volunteer sectors, with whom we have contact. **OCR INSIGHTS** will be found on our website at [www.citizensrep.nl.ca](http://www.citizensrep.nl.ca) and in hard copy upon request.

### What is the "Office of the Citizens' Representative"?

Opened in 2002 after the passage of the *Citizens' Representative Act*, the Office of the Citizens' Representative (OCR) is an Office of the House of Assembly that is independent of the political process and provides a free-of-charge, province-wide Ombudsman service. An Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints from the public regarding matters of government administration.

The term "administration" is best described as a Department's performance of duties under their governing laws. Typically, the Citizens' Representative reviews actions, errors, omissions or decisions made from the level of Deputy Minister/CEO down to the front lines of an organization.

In 2008, the Office was named the Investigator of public interest disclosure (whistleblower) complaints within the House of Assembly.

With a permanent staff of eight, OCR is based in St. John's, but frequently has investigators in various parts of the province conducting information and public intake sessions of complaints, and performing duties in relation to ongoing investigations.

Barry Fleming, Q.C., is the Citizens' Representative for Newfoundland and Labrador and was appointed by a unanimous resolution of the House of Assembly in December 2006. Barry formally reports to the House of Assembly, and the public, once per year, in the Citizens' Representative's Annual Digest. Copies of previous Digests are available on the OCR website at [www.citizensrep.nl.ca](http://www.citizensrep.nl.ca) and hard copies are available on request at 1-800-559-0079.

### The Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman

On April 13, 2011, Barry Fleming was elected Vice-President of the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman. The Council is comprised of the ten Parliamentary Ombudsman in Canada. By definition, a Parliamentary Ombudsman is appointed by a legislature, has the authority and power to investigate complaints, is independent of the executive branch of government, has authority to report publicly and the power to make recommendations.

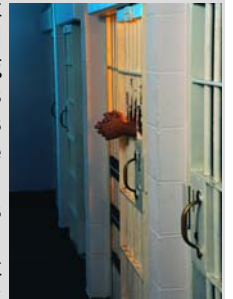


The purpose of the Council is to promote the concept of Ombudsman, develop professional standards for Ombudsman work, develop consistent strategies among jurisdictions to address common problems and to offer support and collegiality for its members.

Barry said "I am pleased to take an executive position with the CCPO. It has provided me with valuable insight and encouragement in the past and I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that similar insight and encouragement is available to newer Ombudsmen."

### Tour of Provincial Correctional Facilities

Beginning in January of this year, OCR staff have been visiting correctional facilities throughout the Province, and have been meeting with corrections officials as part of its oversight role in the correctional system. Institutional visits took place on January 19, 2011, at the Corner Brook Lock-Up and the West Coast Correctional Institution in Stephenville. In February, two staff attended at the Bishop's Falls Correctional Centre and in March they visited the Labrador Correctional Centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. These visits have proven very beneficial and have allowed our staff to have detailed discussions with corrections officials on the mandate of the OCR and the manner in which inmate complaints are handled. With the cooperation of all facilities, inmates were notified in advance that OCR staff would be visiting and were given an opportunity to meet with us.



### Case Summary

The parent of a quadriplegic teenager contacted the OCR when community support cheques were not being issued by her local health authority. This was causing economic hardship to the family. The explanation the parent was given was that since the teen had turned 18 years of age, the authority's policy dictated that cheques would be issued to only those persons who had a Social Insurance Number. The problem was that the teenager had no SIN and it would be some time before one was issued as no application had yet been completed. The health authority seemed bound by its policy. After exploring options with OCR, the authority's finance department agreed to issue a cheque manually and would continue to do so in this extraordinary circumstance until the SIN could be obtained.

### Case Summary

A woman was approved for an NLHC rental supplement. She had a mental health issue and (rightfully) declined to provide a prospective private landlord with information relating to her diagnosis. Her refusal to accept the private unit, however, resulted in her being placed on the rental supplement waiting list for one year. Working with NLHC, the OCR discovered NLHC was unaware of the circumstances of the woman's refusal of the private unit. A letter explaining the situation led to her being moved to a new apartment.



## We Deliver

If your department, agency, community or umbrella group would like to learn more about the Office of the Citizens' Representative, our staff would be pleased to facilitate an information session.

We will explain how we help people resolve their administrative problems with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Participants will learn about the Ombudsman concept, how to complain to us, who and what we investigate, as well as the most common types of complaints. We will provide information kits to all participants.



For further information or to book an information session, please contact Jocelyn Walsh, Office Manager, at 729-7647, 1-800-559-0079 or via e-mail at [citrep@gov.nl.ca](mailto:citrep@gov.nl.ca).

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