



Seniors Outreach Program Continues in 2012

Our province's seniors have numerous concerns specific to their age, including: financial security, housing, drivers' licenses, elder abuse and long-term care. Since 2009, the OCR has actively engaged seniors across our province through regular meetings with representatives from the Seniors' Resource Centre and their Peer Advocates outside of St. John's. The OCR is also currently involved in focus groups examining seniors' experiences in accessing long-term care, home care and respite care for themselves or loved ones. In addition to these consultation initiatives, we continue our outreach to seniors who may wish to contact the OCR for assistance with difficulties they may be having in their daily lives with other aspects of the public service. In this regard, we have placed posters and promotional materials in over 50 public and private long term care homes from St. John's to Corner Brook. If you are a senior, or know of a senior who could benefit from our services, please call us toll free at 1-800-559-0079.



The Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) for Newfoundland: 1975-1990

In the March edition of *OCR Insights*, we described the origins of the *Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) Act*. By the summer of 1975, government had passed the law and had appointed Mr. Ambrose Peddle to a ten year term as the first Ombudsman for Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Peddle was a former businessman and Mayor of the (then) Town of Windsor who had also served as an MHA and MP. He opened an office on Elizabeth Avenue in St. John's in August of 1975 and commenced work with a secretary and a telephone. Mr. Peddle was unanimously appointed to a second ten year term in 1985 by the Members of the House of Assembly, but served only five years of his mandate before the Office was eliminated in the 1990 provincial budget. The government of the day stated the closure was an austerity measure. *Hansard* reveals that Mr. Peddle was out of the country on holiday when the closure was announced. He returned to an office that had to have its affairs clued up by December 31, 1990. The announcement met with stiff resistance, notably from the press, the opposition and academics. Government was not swayed and in 1990 Newfoundland and Labrador became the first government known to have established and revoked Ombudsman legislation. The hiatus of a functioning Parliamentary Ombudsman lasted for eleven years. In our next edition we will highlight the 2001 rebirth of the Ombudsman concept and the passage of the *Citizens' Representative Act*.

This day in...1986

As a tribute to our forerunner office, we feature a case study from Mr. Ambrose Peddle's time as Ombudsman from 1975 to 1990. Twenty-six years ago, in 1986, Mr. Peddle was asked by a group of fishermen to intervene with the provincial Department of Fisheries in case number 86/1400/3...

(They) complained because they were told they could no longer unload their catch at the Marine Centre which they had been accustomed to doing when conditions at the regular wharf were overcrowded. Department policy stated that those centres must be used for servicing long-liners rather than for unloading fish. However, because of extenuating circumstances, discretion was exercised and after an investigation of the situation, the fishermen were again allowed to unload their fish at the centre when necessary.



Did you know?

Our jurisdiction extends to over 70 line departments, agencies, crown corporations, boards, commissions and authorities of the provincial government, employing over 50,000 public employees.

Seeking Fairness

An inmate filed a complaint with the OCR alleging that the Adult Corrections Division of the Department of Justice did not provide timely medical attention for a serious injury detected while he was in custody. The OCR initiated an investigation but placed it on hold pending the outcome of an internal Department of Justice review. The OCR found the Department's review to be thorough and timely. The Department acknowledged the delays incurred in seeking treatment for the inmate. At his request, we recommended they apologize in writing. The Department agreed and issued an apology.



Finding Solutions

Like many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, a citizen leased land from the Crown for his cottage. For fifteen years he diligently paid his lease rent before he was given an opportunity to apply for a full grant of the land. He ran into problems when he was unable to get the required approval for a septic design. Given the location of his cottage, the only place the septic planner could find for the disposal field was under a provincial road reserve. Policy prohibited disposal fields on these road reserves. The citizen's problem was compounded by the fact that Crown Lands had issued a new grant for an adjacent cottage lot and the new owner had ideas of how his septic system should be designed. The OCR brokered a number of meetings with the cottage owners and senior regional officials. Together they altered the course of the road reserve to accommodate the wishes of the owners and honour the Crown's legal responsibilities as stewards of provincial lands. The citizen's septic design was approved and both owners received grants.



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 *Insights*? Call us at 1-800-559-0079 or (709) 729-7647, or e-mail citrep@gov.nl.ca.

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