



OCR Celebrates 10 Years!



2012 marks the 10th anniversary of OCR's opening and 25 years of Ombudsman service in our province. Over the course of 2012 we will be marking this significant milestone in a number of different ways. 2012 editions of *OCR Insights* will feature case studies from our forerunner Office (the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner) and some historical and statistical information on the Ombudsman in Newfoundland and Labrador. First, we will examine the evolution of the concept for the first office, which traces its origins back to the Smallwood government.

An Ombudsman for Newfoundland – Nine Years in the Making

The first official reference to an Ombudsman for Newfoundland and Labrador is found in the 1966 Throne Speech. In the Speech, the Smallwood government announced it was "concerned that the ever increasing size of the civil service may lead to a feeling on the part of individual citizens that they are not invariably treated with the utmost impartiality." The House of Assembly struck a Select Committee to review the Ombudsman concept and give it a "thorough examination in the Newfoundland context." Chaired by the Hon. John Nolan (a Minister and former journalist who had campaigned partially on the value of the Ombudsman concept) the Committee reported in April of 1969 that the creation of such an office "would be advantageous not only to the people of the province as a whole, but to Government, its administrative

facilities, House of Assembly Members, and all public officials." The *Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) Act* was given its third reading on May 19 1970, but would not be proclaimed in effect until 1975. The Office opened in the summer of that year. The next issue of *OCR Insights* will look at the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner, its work and its unexpected demise in 1990.

This day in.....1982

As a tribute to our forerunner office, the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner, we have dipped into the OCR archive to present a case from the files of Mr. Ambrose Peddle, who served as Ombudsman from 1975-1990. Thirty years ago, in 1982 he reported on case 82/700/1.

A man telephoned to say that his son had been arrested by the RCMP under warrant issued by the Provincial Court...and was presently in jail for allegedly having failed to pay a fine imposed by the court following conviction...He claimed that his son had already served a term of imprisonment in respect of that offence. Investigation by the Ombudsman's Office revealed that, notwithstanding the fact that the court record showed the fine as being unpaid, there was sufficient evidence, other than the complainant's contention, to indicate that in fact the prison term had been served in lieu of paying the fine. Prison officials agreed to immediately release the man while the matter could be pursued. It was subsequently established that the complainant was correct.

The Untold Story

Sometimes, the only thing we hear about our correctional institutions are problems associated with inmate conduct and security lock-downs. The general public seldom gets a glimpse of the creative and productive activities undertaken by prison officials and inmates. Here are a couple of examples to illustrate that work.

On Thursday, December 22, 2011, inmates at Her Majesty's Penitentiary, in conjunction with Turnings and Lakeside Players, performed the play "Someone Who'll Watch Over Me". The performance was attended by Department of Justice officials, members of a variety of community groups, and the OCR. It was a powerful portrayal of the full spectrum of emotions felt by those incarcerated. It also highlighted the talent of inmates on and behind the stage. A job well done!

Correctional Official Robyn Styles of the West Coast Correctional Institution organized a fundraiser among staff which netted \$635 and a variety of personal and home supplies for a Christmas hamper which was delivered to the Salvation Army for distribution. The father of the family who came to pick up the hamper was in tears when he saw the generosity shown towards not only his children, but to him and his spouse.

Assistant Superintendent Morris Power of the Bishop's Falls Correctional Centre has been instrumental in having inmates care for and harvest vegetables which are subsequently donated to food banks. He is pictured here with Bob Lewis of the Grand Falls-Windsor Food Bank.



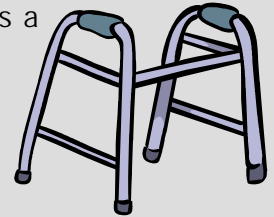
(Photo taken October 7, 2011)

Seeking Fairness

Denise and Andrew are tenants of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, and were on the list for repairs. They were satisfied that their turn would come. However, they purchased a badly needed new lock for their front door and they quickly realized that the front door was so rotten the new lock would be ineffective. With the fall approaching, OCR contacted the Corporation, which quickly dispatched a contractor to view the problem. He supported the claim for a new door and it was quickly replaced.

Finding Solutions

Reginald contacted OCR after waiting more than a month for a walker that had been recommended and approved for him by his doctor. The OCR contacted Eastern Health and spoke with officials from the Special Assistance Program. Within 72 hours Reginald confirmed that the walker had been delivered and that he was a very happy man.



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.

Office of the Citizens' Representative Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

4th Floor, Beothuck Building
20 Crosbie Place
P.O. Box 8400
St. John's, NL
A1B 3N7



Check out
our new
web site!

Tel: 709-729-7647
Toll Free: 1-800-559-0079
Fax: 709-729-7696
E-mail: citrep@gov.nl.ca

Subscribe to **OCR INSIGHTS** at citrep@gov.nl.ca

We're on the web!



www.citizensrep.nl.ca



Office of the Citizens' Representative
Newfoundland and Labrador