

Citizens' Representative Message



Since our last edition of *Insights*, I was honoured and privileged to submit our Annual Digest to the House of Assembly. This report is required to be tabled in the House under Section 43 of the **Citizens' Representative Act**. It offers an encapsulation of our work during the previous fiscal year, and provides statistics on the number, source and subject areas of the complaints registered with our Office. During 2020-21, we received 656 public complaints on a wide array of subjects, which we either resolved informally, investigated or referred out to agencies or appeal mechanisms that were better equipped to deal with the complaints. In addition to our public complaints mandate, we also considered a number of complaints under the two provincial whistleblower programs and the new anti-harassment program implemented by the House, under which our Office acts in a mediation and investigation role.

In addition, I took the opportunity in the Digest to reiterate my request of the House of Assembly to amend the offence provisions of the **Citizens' Representative Act** to increase fines for misleading investigations to \$10,000, and to insert "discoverability" language into the Act. By this, I meant we seek to be given two years to detect cases in which our Investigators may have been misled or find evidence that has been purposely hidden to evade our Office and protect respondent agencies or individuals from being held to account in cases where there has been misconduct. While this is, by no means, a widespread issue, it is incumbent on the House to protect its Officers from evasion so that they may report factual, evidence based issues back to the Members. Having spoken directly with all party leaders and independent Members of the House, I have received unanimous support for these changes, and look forward to having them implemented.

For more information, you can find the Office of the Citizens' Representative Annual Digest in the Publications section of our website at <https://www.citizensrep.nl.ca/pdfs/OCRAnnualDigest2020-2021.pdf>

Thanks for taking the time to read our latest newsletter.

Bradley Moss

Social Work Internship Student, Madison Patey

I would like to begin by stating my gratitude and appreciation to the OCR for providing me with an amazing learning opportunity for my final field placement. This opportunity has allowed me to build on my social work skills to become prepared and well equipped for my future social work career.

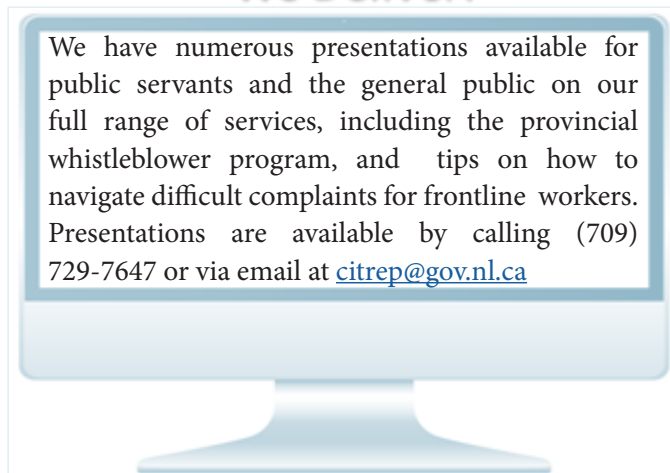


A particular strength of the Office that stands out to me is the application of systems theory into practice. This allows us to understand concerns from a systemic perspective and offers a more holistic understanding of the concerns brought to our attention. Further contributing to my learning is the vast diversity of areas of work we are engaged in at the office. I have been engaged in research related to informal caregiver recognition and support, which helped to develop my interest and appreciation for the value and importance of family caregivers and the critical role they play in supporting their loved ones. I have also been engaged in research relating to release planning from correctional institutions. This provided me with an understanding of the importance of planning for successful reintegration into the community, as well as some of the barriers which may hinder attempts of rehabilitation.

In the short time I have been at the Office, it has been an incredibly valuable experience and I already feel more prepared for my future social work career. I look forward to the learning opportunities that will continue to arise during the rest of my time at the OCR, as well as during my future social work career.

We Deliver!

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

A citizen contacted our Office alleging a family was wrongly denied resettlement money by the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs when the community they lived in was resettled. Prior to the resettlement taking place, the family moved to another community for medical reasons and to be closer to a hospital. As a result of this move, the family was no longer deemed to be permanent residents of the community in accordance with the Community Relocation Program.

The Community Relocation Policy provides financial assistance to permanent residential property owners of the relocating community. The policy defines permanent residency as living in the community year round. There are allowances for temporary absences from the community for medical reasons, including absences of more than six months in the one-year period preceding the relocation for those accessing ongoing health care treatment substantiated by medical documentation.

The family was denied relocation assistance in accordance with this policy and appealed the decision of the Department. During the appeal process, the family advised their move from the community was a permanent one, solidifying the Department's determination of residency, as the family did not intend to return to the community. Therefore, the family was no longer considered to have permanent residency in the community.

Upon review of the evidence, the OCR concurred the family did not meet the definition of permanent residents. We found the Department properly applied policy in this situation and the family was not entitled to financial support for resettlement.



Finding Solutions

A citizen reached out to the OCR expressing concern for a friend with a medical condition, who required 24-hour care. The citizen was concerned as the friend's health continued to decline and there was a limited network of support available.

The OCR contacted the appropriate Regional Health Authority, Eastern Health, for guidance on assessment beyond the maximum allowable home care funding under the Community Supports Program. Through the inquiry process, we learned the citizen did not have an assessment in quite some time. It was further learned that the determination of the level of support that a recipient is approved for is made based on the outcome of a clinical assessment by professional staff of the Regional Health

Authority. In cases where the clinician may feel the person needs a high level of support that exceeds the maximum support allocation, the clinician must review the case with a manager and/or director prior to approval of the support plan. The clinical assessment considers the physical, mental and social needs of a person and the availability of other formal and informal supports in determining support allocations.

The OCR asked Eastern Health for an expedited clinical assessment by staff to ensure the citizen had not fallen through the cracks. Eastern Health completed an assessment, which resulted in approval of additional hours of support per week.

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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