

Citizens' Representative Message



Does anyone else out there feel like this summer passed too quickly? It seems like yesterday that the days were getting longer and we were hoping for some nice weather, and perhaps the first real summer vacation in two years. Mother

nature certainly delivered on the nice weather to go along with the children's break from school. One major drawback, however, dominated our news and that was the terrible forest fires in the central part of the island that devastated the wilderness and caused some central Newfoundland communities to be placed on high alert.

This undoubtedly placed the vacation plans of many municipal workers, healthcare workers, and of course firefighting crews, on indefinite hold. Public servants don't always get a fair shake in the court of public opinion; but in times of crisis especially, Newfoundland and Labrador public sector workers are always there for us. Kudos to all of those workers and managers who were forced to delay their plans, and worked tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of central and south coast citizens during those hard weeks. In addition, we recognize the dozens of volunteers from service clubs, religious and community organizations that worked so hard to feed and house those crews. We're lucky to have them.

Have a great fall season!

Bradley Moss



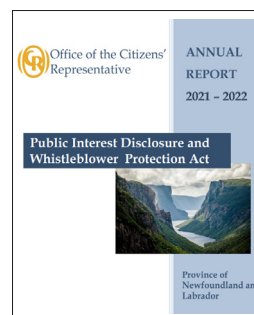
Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act

The OCR released its Annual Report for 2021-2022 in July, 2022. This report highlights the progress and activities in carrying out our mandate under the **Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act** (the Act) for the fiscal year, including statistics and compliance results. The Act provides a confidential process for public service employees to disclose wrongdoing and to be protected from reprisal for doing so. This report provides useful information including the disclosure process and definitions that may assist in understanding requirements of the program. Additionally, it provides an overview of the services available under the Act and what can be expected upon contact with the OCR. Contact is confidential and welcomed by the OCR for any employee who may have questions about making a disclosure under this Act, including if the contact may be for advice only.

Please feel free to review this Report available on our website:

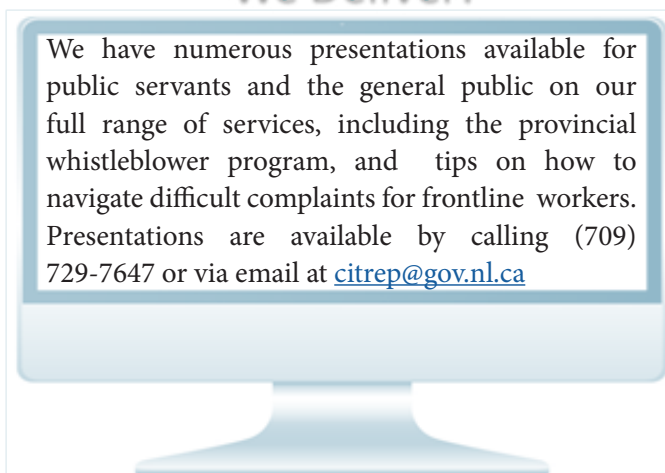
<https://www.citizensrep.nl.ca/pdfs/PIDAReport2021-2022.pdf>

Copies can also be produced upon request.



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 an undue delay by the Department of Environment and Climate Change in processing his application to construct a wharf. The citizen stated that he was advised by departmental officials that his application appeared to be without issue or concern and that it was at the Director's level for a signature to approve. After five months, the application had not been approved and the citizen was unable to acquire any information on its status.

Upon contact by the OCR, the Department confirmed the application was in the queue and was being assessed according to its 90 business days standard for processing. The COVID-19 public health restrictions had resulted in delays of processing applications. The OCR was advised that all applications are processed in the order they are received. This particular application would be processed in the near future.

The citizen appreciated the clarification and assurance that the application was being processed correctly and in the near future.

Finding Solutions

A citizen complained to the OCR about barriers experienced when accessing health services at Western Health. Many of the challenges experienced were language and communication barriers and related to a lack of Deaf cultural awareness. The citizen asserted that Western Health fell short of meeting their specific communication needs, including access to an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter and access to assistive technologies.



The citizen's complaint highlighted the need for health care providers to be culturally aware. Specific to this situation, health care providers would benefit from learning about the Deaf culture. This investigation also raised awareness of the importance of facilitating effective communication in the delivery of healthcare services by identifying communication

needs of individuals and documenting preferences in their medical records to support all future medical interactions.

The citizen's experience in the system was very unfortunate. It did provide, however, an opportunity to explore the needs of the Deaf community and their experiences in accessing healthcare. Western Health acknowledged the importance of offering sign language interpreters and subsequently informed the OCR that a new Language Translation and Sign Language Interpretive Services policy had been drafted. Western Health committed to communicating the policy, upon arrival, to all employees. It further committed to reaching out to the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for the Deaf (NLAD) to explore how it can improve its services to meet the needs of deaf individuals. In light of the appropriate pre-emptive measures taken by Western Health, the OCR concluded that it did not breach s.37 of the **Citizens' Representative Act**.

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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