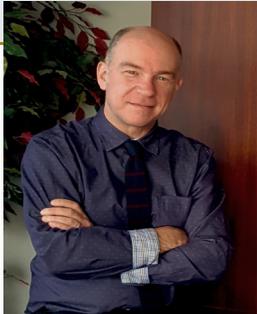




## Citizens' Representative Message



*Bradley Moss*

Welcome to our latest edition of *Insights*. After ten plus years of producing a quarterly newsletter, we have elected to publish twice per year going forward so that we can focus more on core mandate services and organizational development while still making our work as transparent and informative as possible to the public. To learn more about our work, visit <https://www.citizensrep.nl.ca/>

As the holiday season approaches, and most people turn toward the festivities and activities normally associated with it, we notice that for those on the margins the increased financial pressures and associated inability to meet those pressures leads to stress; and in some cases leads them to contact us for referral information or access to government services. While we are a complaint management organization with a focus on the provincial government, we have also served as a place to turn

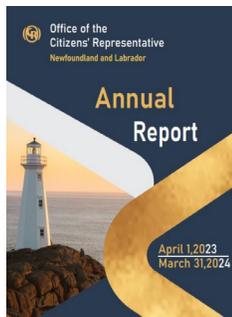
when citizens are unsure of where to go to access the help they need in the community. This “traffic cop” function is not new to Ombudsman offices, and is a service our staff are happy to provide. In an era where it is more difficult to get a live person on the phone, or get an email answered, we take pride in our ability to provide timely responses to citizen inquiries. If we can't help, chances are we know someone who can. I want to thank all staff members for continuing to provide this service when it is so easy to tell someone it's “not your department.”

Finally, this holiday season I encourage everyone to take the time to help someone else. Whether that's volunteering, donating, or even something as simple as holding a door or being kind to a server or retail worker. As we move about our daily lives we have no idea what weight the people we meet are carrying. Look for those opportunities to make a difference for someone else, and make someone's day better in some small way.



## Citizens' Representative Annual Report 2023-2024

The OCR released its Annual Report for 2023-2024 in September 2024. For the first time, the OCR has combined its Annual Digest with its Annual Performance Report, thereby meeting its obligations under the Citizens' Representative Act and the Transparency and Accountability Act in one singular report. This combined Report now highlights not only the progress and activities in carrying out our mandate under the Citizens' Representative Act (the Act) for the fiscal year, but also includes additional activities undertaken in the course of our work. Such activities include opportunities for learning about government programs and processes, community supports and services, and strategic planning efforts of the OCR. In addition to a look at the work we do in response to citizen complaints, one can get a look at our efforts that encourage our organizational growth and desire to provide a most respectful and knowledgeable level of service to citizens that contact our Office, including those with whom we interact in the process of fulfilling our mandate.



our Office receives from five provincial correctional institutions and two provincial holding facilities or “lock-ups”.

The Report is available on our website: <https://www.citizensrep.nl.ca/pdfs/OCRAnnualReport2023-2024.pdf>

## Coming Soon

The OCR is seeking information to develop an outreach plan that will promote its services to as many citizens as possible within the province. We have partnered with the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency to administer a survey to a random sample of citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador to gain an understanding of citizens' familiarity and perception of the services offered by our Office. It also includes an opportunity to provide suggestions to support our outreach efforts. Those selected to participate will receive a letter in the mail from the Statistics Agency. The OCR appreciates the participation by those selected and we look forward to learning from the data acquired to help guide our efforts to provide our service to all citizens of the province when needed.



Also, for the first time, our Report takes a “closer look” at a breakdown of the types of complaints that



## Seeking Fairness

The Department of Digital Government and Service NL (DGSNL) provides accessible, responsive services in the area of public health and safety, environmental protection, occupational health and safety, consumer protection, and in the preservation of vital events and commercial transactions. This includes the Motor Registration Division (MRD).

A citizen contacted our Office with a complaint regarding a roadside suspension on their driver's abstract. It was alleged that the citizen was wrongly charged with impaired driving by the police during a roadside stop which resulted in a 24-hour suspension of their driver's licence. It was indicated that the charges were eventually dropped due to a lack of evidence; however, the roadside suspension still appears on the driver's abstract. The citizen presented that the roadside suspension was unfair and since the charges had been dropped, the suspension should be removed. Upon representation

directly to MRD, the citizen was advised there was no ability to remove the suspension.

Upon OCR inquiry to MRD, a legal opinion was acquired which confirmed there is no discretion under the **Highway Traffic Act** to remove an administrative suspension following an acquittal of a Criminal Code charge. The citizen has a right of Judicial Review before the Supreme Court.

MRD suggested that although there is no authority to remove the suspension, there is an ability to provide a letter to confirm the citizen has a driving record without convictions, despite the roadside suspension, if it was needed for employment or insurance purposes. As MRD was complying with legislation and was offering a resolution to mitigate the impact of the suspension on the driver's abstract, this resolution was found to be reasonable.

## Finding Solutions

NL Health Services provides quality health care to all residents of the province through its broad range of programs and services, facilities, clinics and community services, overseen by five zones: Eastern-Rural, Eastern-Urban, Central, Labrador-Grenfell and Western.

A citizen contacted our Office stating they were concerned that a family member was going to be released from the Waterford Hospital, despite the individual being homeless. The Waterford Hospital primarily provides support and services to people living and working each day with mental illness, addictions, and mental health issues. The citizen alleged the family member was providing false information to staff to allow for their release. Concerned family members were experiencing additional frustration as they were unable

to acquire any information about the patient due to privacy rights under the **Public Health Information Act**.

The citizen was advised there was no role for our Office in relation to clinical decisions resulting in a medical discharge from a hospital. In light of the concern of the family, the OCR made contact with a staff person at the Waterford Hospital who supports the navigation of programs and services. Family members were encouraged to contact the hospital unit of the patient to provide any relevant information to assist staff with discharge planning. This information would be carefully considered in the decision-making process. The OCR was assured that social workers would be taking steps to confirm the address identified by the patient and ensure the patient would not be homeless upon discharge.



# Happy Holidays!



### 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](mailto:citrep@gov.nl.ca)

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