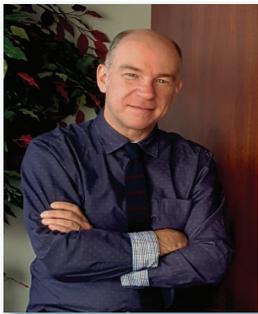


## Citizens' Representative Message



*Bradley Moss*

Throughout the year, the member offices of the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman take turns offering continuing education to management and staff using free hour-long webinars. Each month, staff member(s) from a different

office present at no charge to participants across the country. It's a great way for offices to learn from each other, network and enhance our collective knowledge of trends in Ombudsman work.

In May, it was our turn again. This time we presented on our work with "designates" in Government. This is not a widely-known term, but it is one coined in Newfoundland and Labrador; and it is the envy of other jurisdictions across the country. Simply put, a designate is our go-to person in a department or agency who helps us resolve citizen complaints quickly and fairly whenever they can. If the problem cannot be solved between

our Investigator and the designate, the designate becomes our main contact throughout a statutory investigation. That means they help us coordinate and procure documents, contact witnesses and provide us with the policy and subordinate legislation that guides the work of the public body or division under investigation. Both OCR and the public bodies benefit from the work of these dedicated officials: complaints are solved on a more rapid basis, there is less paperwork and red tape, and we are able to access the information we need to assess the complaint (often in one phone call or email). Most importantly, however, citizens benefit from this system as their complaints most often don't get backlogged like many other complaint management systems out there. Indeed, not all complaints can be solved quickly and easily, however, the ones that do get solved quickly have probably involved a departmental designate at some point. We appreciate them, and we appreciate the cooperative spirit of public bodies in appointing them to liaise with our Office. The staff and I wish you a safe and enjoyable summer. Fingers crossed for the weather!

## Citizens' Representative's Annual Digest

The 2022-2023 Annual Digest is now available. Our Annual Digest reports on statistical information in addition to an overview of some of the work that our staff engage in on behalf of the citizens of the province. For the fiscal year, our Office received a total of 995 complaints and inquiries, a 28% increase from the year previous.

The Digest provides information of the types of investigations that fall within our mandate; the types of matters that can be investigated; and the specific public bodies that we can't investigate. It outlines what you can expect from our complaint process and how we handle complaints by early resolution, investigation and navigation, self-advocacy and referral. It provides information regarding the recommendations made by the OCR to various public bodies for the fiscal year, inclusive

of an update on the implementation of these recommendations and those from previous years.

If you are interested in the work of our Office or you are thinking of contacting us to make a complaint, the Digest is a great tool to respond to your curiosity and help you decide whether your matter is an appropriate one for our Office. In addition, we welcome your contact directly to our Office at any time to discuss a complaint or provide you with information about our mandate.



## Seeking Fairness



Adult Corrections is a Division of the Corrections Branch of the Department of Justice and Public Safety. Adult Custody in the Province is comprised of five correctional facilities and two detention centres that provide services and programs for sentenced, remanded and detained offenders. Programs and services are delivered to assist offenders in reintegrating into the community following release from custody.

During a period of excessive hot weather, the OCR received calls from several individuals at Her Majesty's Penitentiary (HMP) alleging unbearable heat and poor ventilation on one specific unit. It was described as the worst they had experienced at HMP and there were concerns expressed for their well-being, including dehydration. Individuals

## Finding Solutions

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing (NLH) is a crown corporation whose mandate is to develop and administer housing assistance policy and programs for the benefit of low to moderate income households throughout the province.

A citizen submitted a complaint related to concerns about an NLH initiated move from a four-bedroom housing unit to a three-bedroom housing unit. The move was required to enable necessary upgrades to the four-bedroom unit. The citizen presented the move was unsuitable and would not meet the needs of their family due to the family composition. The citizen noted there was limited time to move and down-size and was unsure whether the move was temporary until upgrades to the four-bedroom unit were complete and whether the family would have an ability to move back into the four-bedroom unit.

with asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) experiencing the rise in temperature and lack of air flow described concern as their symptoms were worsening. There was a further allegation that there wasn't any drinking water available in the cells. The OCR acknowledged that infrastructure issues tend to present in the summertime that impact the temperature control of the institution, however, this situation was very early in the summer and appeared more extreme than any typical complaints received in the past.

HMP acknowledged the complaint and advised that the company to service the ventilation system had visited and repaired the air conditioner. A malfunctioned computer had been reset to enable its proper operation. As well, the issue of providing additional water to the cells was also addressed.

Upon inquiry, NLH advised the move was necessary to balance the need to have necessary repairs completed to the four-bedroom unit occupied by the family. Unfortunately, there weren't any four-bedroom vacancies available at the time and the only available option was the offer of the three-bedroom unit. Subsequent to the inquiry, NLH identified a four-bedroom unit and extended the time for the family's move to ensure the needs of the family would be met.

### What We Offer

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

### 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)

 [www.citizensrep.nl.ca](http://www.citizensrep.nl.ca)

### Office of the Citizens' Representative

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

Tel: 709-729-7647  
Toll Free: 1-800-559-0079  
Fax: 709--729-7696

 [Office of the Citizens' Representative](https://www.facebook.com/citizensrepnl)

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