

January

2010

The RecOrd

ANNUAL REPORT ISSUE

Office of the
OMBUDSMAN
CITY OF TORONTO



I just want to say...

It's our first Annual Report!

We have released our first Annual Report '*Advocating for Fairness*', in which you will find a review of our first nine months of operation. It is a privilege to advocate for fairness in the administration of local government on behalf of all Toronto's residents.

Just as it was for the rest of the city and many of its residents, 2009 – our start-up year - was one of fiscal prudence. We opened our doors carefully, so we could *start* managing the business of being responsive to public demands for fairness in administration.

We developed policies, procedures and standards even before we opened our doors. Once we opened in April, our focus shifted to service delivery. In our first nine months, we received 1,057 complaints and enquiries, 958 of which have been processed and closed. Six formal investigations were launched, two of which are completed.

Continued on page 2

In this issue...

- page 3 Building service
New publication coming soon...
- page 4 The Ombudsman's Strategic Plan
2010 - 2012
- page 5 2009 Report Card
- page 6 A summary of inquiries
and complaints

The Record

I Just Want to Say... continued

We got to know Toronto's public servants, the vast majority of whom have been willing, cooperative and helpful in their interactions with us.

We started looking for trends that could lead to systemic investigations in the coming year. While individual remedies are important, it is the systemic fix that helps everyone. It saves the public money, reduces frustration and enables public servants to get on with other work. It also demonstrates good governance on the part of legislators and a responsive public service.

2010 a watershed year

Balancing the need to meet our mandate with the ongoing constraints of city finances will be a major challenge. I am committed to launching systemic investigations that will have results for a broad swath of residents. To do so, we need the appropriate staffing for a mature organization, so that we can also continue to manage individual complaints.

I am grateful to the members of City Council, all of whom have shared their insights and expertise with me, as well as the senior ranks of the City's administration, and many representatives from community organizations. I also appreciate to the hundreds of public servants who have helped us understand their work.



Fiona Crean
Ombudsman



Get in touch with the Ombudsman ombuds@toronto.ca or call 416-392-7062, TTY 416-392-7100.

The Office treats all communications in confidence

To see the complete report, go to www.ombudstoronto.ca, 'News' or 'Resources & Publications'.

The Record

Building service

One overwhelming trend emerged last year in the Ombudsman's dealings with the public – lack of access to and clear communication with the public service.

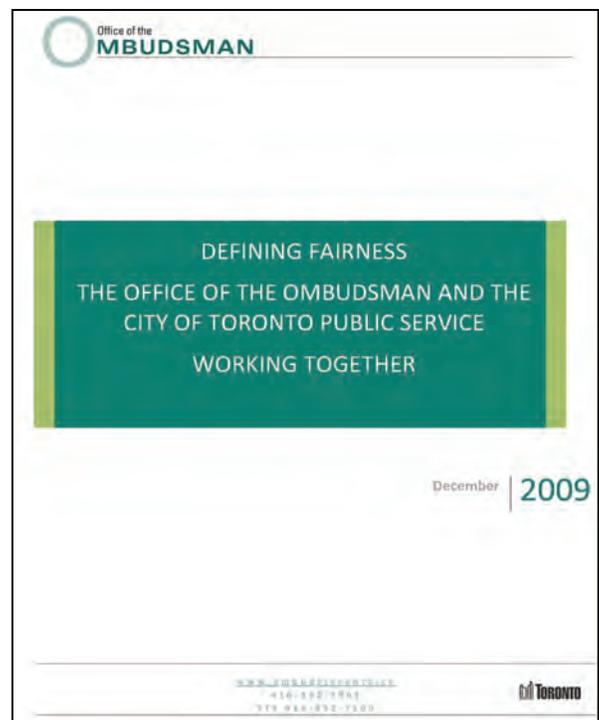
Early on, many areas in the Toronto Public Service (TPS) shared their complaints systems with the Ombudsman's office. Some have not. Most importantly, only a few have effective, detailed systems that are shared with the public and kept up to date.

The TPS has a set of Customer Service Standards but they are not widely available. Publishing these standards would help the public hold the public service to account.

People understand that things go wrong. What they don't understand is the barriers to getting these wrongs righted. The number of complaints about an area is not an indicator of the quality of service it provides.

How mistakes are addressed is the litmus test of good public service. It is equally important that the public understands when the city administration *has* operated properly, within its mandate, as it does on millions of transactions every day.

New publication coming soon...



The Ombudsman will be issuing this new, 38-page publication to the Toronto Public Service in February 2010. It explains the Ombudsman's role and sets out ways public servants and the Ombudsman can work together.

The Record

The Ombudsman's Strategic Plan (2010 – 2012)



The Ombudsman's role is twofold: to address administrative errors and conduct impartial investigations and to support city government in holding the public service accountable for carrying out its directives, agenda and legal responsibilities.

In planning for a mature organization, the Ombudsman has to manage multiple priorities. Conducting value-added systemic investigations is vital. At the same time, being responsive to individuals and reaching out to new communities will continue to be the backbone of the Ombudsman's work.

In planning the next three years, the Ombudsman consulted a wide variety of stakeholders, including elected representatives, public servants, members of the public and community leaders, as well as expert resources such as community legal clinics. That feedback, along with Ombudsman experience and research, informed the planning.

The commitments are made on the premise that the Ombudsman will receive a reasonable full-year budget, in order to meet her mandate to conduct systemic investigations, while remaining responsive to individuals.

Priorities will focus on

- ensuring the Toronto Public Service "first resort" complaint systems are thorough, measurable and publicly available
- creating a high functioning, effective complaints resolution service
- continuing to build relationships with the public, Toronto communities, business, public service and legislators
- conducting systemic investigations

See the Annual Report for the complete plan

The Record

The 2009 Report Card

What We Said – May 2009	What We Did – December 2009
Efficient credible office known to all elected officials, senior public servants and key community leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 9 Community sessions ✓ 30 sessions for TPS staff ✓ More than 100 meetings with all elected representatives
Office infrastructure in place (policies, standards, procedures etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The office has policies, standards and procedures which it published on its website. An interim computerized case management system is in use, with a long term solution in development
Adequate budget and a staff that understands and reflects the city's diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ With a start-up budget of \$1.2 million the Ombudsman recruited experienced staff reflective of the city's diversity.
An effective complaints process with individual complaints resolved that represent cross-section of issues and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ An effective complaints process is in place. Staff managed 1,057 complaints and enquiries ✓ Complaints came from all 44 city wards
Systemic issues identified and at least one major investigation completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The office initiated six investigations, two of which have been completed × Investigations into systemic problems, which result in systemic solutions, require additional trained staff, as requested in 2010 budget.
First annual report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ First annual report released January 2010
Multi-year strategic plan (2010-2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Part of this year's annual report

The Record

A summary of inquiries and complaints

	Early Resolution	Investigations	Total
Processed and closed	956	2	958
Work in progress	95	4	99
TOTAL	1051	6	1057



The Ombudsman greeting a member of the public at a community session in Scarborough

Out and about

The Ombudsman and her staff attended a variety of community meetings to get the word out, hosting community sessions in four quadrants of the city: Etobicoke, Scarborough, North York and downtown Toronto. At these community meetings, the Ombudsman also offers confidential, on-site intake for potential complainants who find it difficult to access the Ombudsman's office in other ways.

Case summaries now available

The 2009 Annual Report contains summaries of some of the complaints the Ombudsman handled in its first nine months of operation. Additional case stories are available on the Ombudsman's web site at ombudstoronto.ca.

The Record

You can find the Office of the Ombudsman at

112 Elizabeth Street

Toronto, Ontario

Telephone: 416-392-7062

TTY: 416-392-7100

Fax: 416-392-7067

E-mail: ombuds@toronto.ca

ombudstoronto.ca

