

## Annual Report 2025-2026 Facts and highlights

### By the numbers – cases (complaints and inquiries) received

Total cases received between April 1, 2025 and March 31, 2026: **35,023**  
(up 14% from fiscal 2024-2025, up 30% since 2023-2024)

**48%** of all cases were closed within one week, **60%** within two weeks

### Cases by topic

- Correctional facilities: **5,960** cases, down from the previous year's record of 6,870; top issues include overcrowding, lockdowns, access to health care, and use of force (p. 28)
- Municipalities: **4,898** cases – a record and a 25% increase from previous year, including 87 complaints about closed municipal meetings where the Ombudsman is the investigator (p. 36)
- School boards: **1,346** – a record and 6% increase from previous year (p. 53)
- Post-secondary: Universities – **334**; colleges of applied arts and technology – **530**, a record and 22% increase from previous year (p.53); Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) **306** – a 64% increase from previous year (p. 58)
- Social services: Family Responsibility Office (FRO) – **616** (p. 47); Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) **1,599** (p. 45) – the highest number in a decade; Ontario Works – **618** (p. 46)
- Children and youth: Children's aid societies – **1,664**; youth justice centres – **436**, a record and 3% increase from previous year (p. 62)
- Tribunals Ontario – **1,104** cases, including **779** about the Landlord and Tenant Board (20% decrease from previous year) and **255** about the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (28% increase from previous year) (p. 34)
- French language services: **266** (p. 84); **460** cases handled in French about a variety of other issues (p. 85)
- ServiceOntario: **407** (p. 81)
- Registrar General: **257** – more than triple the previous year (p. 81)

See *also*: Top 15 case topics (p. 27) and Top 10 provincial government programs and Top 10 correctional facilities by case volume (p. 97)

## Key developments

- **Indigenous Services Plan:** Launched in March 2026, Ombudsman Ontario's Indigenous Services Plan includes five core commitments to improve Ombudsman Ontario's services to Indigenous peoples in the province. The Office assisted 674 people who self-identified as Indigenous or with complaints about Indigenous programs or services, including issues related to access to disability benefits, delays obtaining essential documents and identification, school board policies and financial aid for post-secondary education. (p. 10)
- **New resources for children and youth, outreach:** New information cards for 16- and 17-year-olds about Voluntary Youth Services Agreements and the Ready, Set, Go program, as well as an updated guide for professionals on sharing information in child welfare risk cases. The Ombudsman hosted a Youth Rights Conference for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in the Greater Toronto Area, focused on helping youth understand their right to be treated fairly when receiving public services, and how to access supports. (pp. 61-62)
- **Outreach to Francophone communities:** The French Language Services Commissioner and his team participated in more than 20 public events, gave presentations and attended outreach events, and held 60 meetings with Franco-Ontarian organizations. (p. 85)
- **New oversight of Local Services Boards:** As of August 1, 2025, the Ombudsman can investigate closed meetings held by Local Services Boards (LSBs), which provide services to rural areas outside municipalities. To help Ontario's 46 LSBs meet the open meeting requirements, the Office hosted English and French webinars and created a dedicated "tip card." (p. 43)

## Systemic work

- **Systemic issues in correctional facilities:** Ombudsman investigators continued visits to correctional facilities across the province (Central North Correctional Centre, Maplehurst Correctional Complex, Niagara Detention Centre, North Bay Jail, Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre, Sudbury Jail, Thunder Bay Jail and Toronto South Detention Centre). The Office also identified several systemic issues and raised them with senior officials at facilities and the Ministry of the Solicitor General, including concerns about the fairness of the SAFER risk assessment tool, failure to investigate serious incidents and delays in internal investigations, and a lack of Indigenous services and cultural supports in some facilities. (pp. 29-31)
- **Delays at Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario:** The Office continues to actively monitor efforts to reduce the Tribunal's backlog and worked with the tribunal to streamline its processes and improve timelines – such as reassigning cases and mandatory mediation. (p. 34)
- **Victim Witness Assistance Program communications:** After the Ombudsman shared complaint trends and best practices with the program's senior leadership, it revised its written communications to clarify how victims can receive updates and information during the court process and afterwards. (pp. 34-35)
- **Right of newcomers to appeal Ontario Works benefits decisions:** The Ombudsman flagged an issue in the Ontario Works online application process which was preventing

individuals with certain immigration statuses from applying and receiving a decision, which they could subsequently use to appeal the Social Benefits Tribunal. (p. 47)

- **Voluntary Youth Services Agreements (VYSAs):** A VYSA can be an important and vital option for youth at risk of harm, neglect, or unsafe living conditions. Ombudsman staff met with leaders in the Children’s Aid Society sector to highlight recurring problems in VYSA cases, such as inadequate communication and inappropriate housing options offered. The Ombudsman is also working with the sector to ensure 16- and 17-year-olds know they can contact our Office with questions or complaints whenever they request voluntary services from a CAS, including when they request a VYSA. (p. 63)
- **Strip searches in youth justice facilities:** The Ombudsman continues to receive complaints from youth about inappropriate strip search procedures, despite new regulations meant to ensure dignity in the process. The Office is monitoring the impact of the new regulation, as well as Ministry efforts to address the problem and meeting with affected youth to hear directly about their experiences. (p. 65)
- **Bilingual local police alerts:** Alerts issued by municipal police services using the OPP’s alert system are now automatically sent in both English and French after a Francophone complained to the Office that the French version of an alert by her local police service was not issued until 10 minutes after the initial English one. (p. 88)

### **Investigation reports**

Lost in Transition (November 2025): The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and Ministry of Health accepted all 24 recommendations stemming from this investigation into cases of adults with developmental disabilities being appropriately housed in hospitals. (pp. 49-50)

Catching up on Fairness (released today, June 25, 2026): The Ministry of Education agreed to consider all 14 recommendations in implementing any future direct payment programs, in light of this investigation into hundreds of complaints about the five programs it delivered to support families during school disruptions between 2020 and 2023. Many parents and guardians complained they were denied payments for their children because someone else had applied for and received the money first. (pp. 56-57)

Municipal closed meeting investigations: Ombudsman staff conducted reviews of complaints about 75 meetings of 55 different municipalities and local boards, resulting in 33 Ombudsman reports and letters, including findings of 13 illegal meetings, 33 procedural violations, and 16 best practice suggestions. (p. 42)

### **Ongoing investigations**

Maplehurst Correctional Complex December 2023 incident: This investigation examines the Ministry of the Solicitor General’s response to an incident in which nearly 200 inmates were stripped to their underwear, had their wrists zip-tied and were forced to sit on the floor facing the wall. The event has led to numerous incidences where inmates have had their sentences reduced and/or charges stayed. (p. 32)

Frontline service in French at ServiceOntario: Focused on in-person services in French at ServiceOntario locations to determine the extent to which ServiceOntario complies with the *French Language Services Act*, this investigation is complete and the French Language

Services Commissioner's report and recommendations are in the process of being drafted. (pp. 86-87)

Child welfare agencies placing youth in unlicensed settings: More than 140 interviews have been conducted so far in this investigation into the practice of child welfare agencies placing children and teens – many with complex special needs – in hotels, motels, offices and trailers. (pp. 65-66)

### **Updates on completed investigations**

*Missed Messages* (July 2024): As of January this year, Cabinet Office reported to the French Language Services Commissioner that five government outdoor advertising campaigns in 2025 included messages in French. (p.87)

*Rights Unrecognized: Mia's Story* (April 2024): York Children's Aid Society has now fulfilled all 20 of the recommendations in this report and made significant changes to its policies and procedures. The case also prompted improvements across the sector in training and communication about Voluntary Youth Services Agreements. (p. 66)

*Administrative Justice Delayed, Fairness Denied* (May 2023): Legislative changes and ongoing improvements by the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) in response to this report's 61 recommendations have resulted in a substantial drop in complaints, while efforts to reduce the backlog continue. As of May 1, the LTB had a full complement of adjudicators. (p. 70)

*Missing in Inaction: Misty's Story* (April 2023): The foster care agency which failed to provide proper services to 13-year-old "Misty" has repaid \$44,000 to her Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agency, and that agency has fulfilled all of the recommendations addressed at it in this report. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has also amended legislation and regulations provincewide in light of this case. (p. 66)

### **Individual case highlights – how Ombudsman intervention helped**

- Indigenous inmates at a correctional facility can now access smudging. (p. 31)
- An inmate who had gone three weeks without his diabetes medication or blood sugar monitoring received prompt medical attention. (p. 31)
- After Ombudsman staff confirmed a correctional facility had not followed proper strip search procedures, staff were re-trained and policies were updated to ensure such searches are conducted in designated areas with privacy screens. (p. 35)
- A mother secured a municipal housing unit to accommodate the specific needs of her daughter with autism. (p. 41)
- A woman's ODSP file was corrected to remove an erroneous \$48,000 overpayment charge. (p. 46)
- A mother secured a \$5,450 payment for her son after waiting six months for ODSP staff to approve his application. (p. 46)
- A 66-year-old man received Ontario Works benefits just in time to pay his rent. (p. 46)

- A mother who was struggling financially was reimbursed \$5,500 by the Ontario Autism Program. (p. 48)
- A mother received \$4,300 in child support payments after the Family Responsibility Office recalculated her ex-husband's support obligations. (p. 52)
- A woman who lived two hours away from her college received a tuition refund after the college changed her program to in-person classes only. (p. 58)
- An Indigenous Grade 6 student who experienced cyberbullying and racist comments at school was able to transfer to a new one where she felt safer. (p. 59)
- A 9-year-old boy living in a foster home was helped to reach his social worker to confirm his foster family was developing a plan to adopt him. (p. 67)
- Youth living in a foster home said their situation improved after a complaint to the Ombudsman triggered an unannounced inspection by the Ministry and more frequent visits. (p. 67)
- We helped a youth who had been living in shelters obtain a VYSA after his initial request was denied because his mother would not co-operate. (p. 67)
- A woman received her weekly grocery allowance from the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee after it was delayed due to a system error. (p. 69)
- A first-time homeowner received \$4,000 under the new Land Transfer Tax Refund for First-Time Homebuyers after six months without a response. (p. 71)
- A man's driver's licence was quickly reinstated after Ombudsman staff inquiries with the Ministry of Transportation revealed it had been suspended by mistake. (p. 74)
- A man with a rare muscle condition was able to get funding from the Ministry of Health's Exceptional Access Program for a particular medication after his initial application was denied. (p. 80)
- A transgender woman was able to update her social insurance number and register for college with her preferred name after the Registrar General expedited her name change certificate. (p. 82)
- The Ministry of Natural Resources now meets regularly with community members in the White Lake area about how it monitors the state of the fisheries after Ombudsman staff raised a complaint from an Indigenous group about the management of freshwater walleye. (p. 90)