

ANNUAL **REPORT** 2024-2025



—ALBERTA—
OMBUDSMAN





To the Honourable Speaker
of the Legislative Assembly

The Alberta Ombudsman's office is pleased to
present its 58th Annual Report to you and through
you, to the Legislative Assembly.

The Report has been prepared in accordance with
section 28(1) of the *Ombudsman Act* and covers the
activities of the Alberta Ombudsman's office for the
period of April 1, 2024 through March 31, 2025.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'KB' with a stylized flourish.

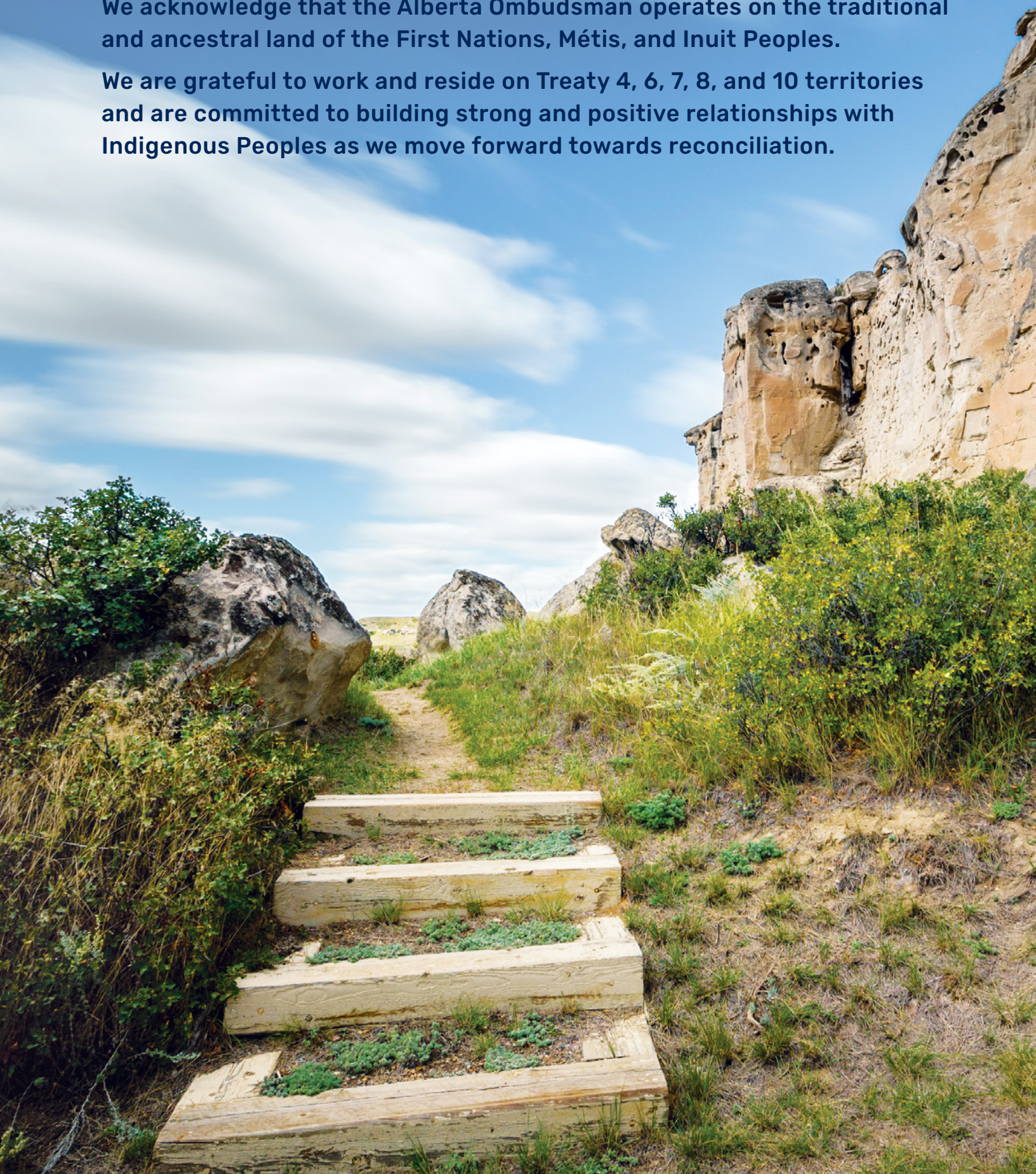
Kevin Brezinski
Alberta Ombudsman

September 2025
Edmonton, Alberta

2024
2025

We acknowledge that the Alberta Ombudsman operates on the traditional and ancestral land of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples.

We are grateful to work and reside on Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10 territories and are committed to building strong and positive relationships with Indigenous Peoples as we move forward towards reconciliation.





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MESSAGE FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

I am proud to present the *2024–2025 Annual Report*. This report reflects my office's commitment to upholding fairness and advancing accountability within public agencies. I invite you to explore these pages, which outline my office's operational achievements, resource allocations, and the standout initiatives that defined the year.

This past year continued the trend of significant growth of case volume. Altogether, my office managed 5,647 cases—marking a 10% rise from 2023–2024. Notably, 2,215 of these were complaints, setting a new record and surpassing last year's record high by 26%. Despite the significant increase, my investigators kept pace and in fact increased the number of complaints resolved by 26%. Efficiency remained strong: 94% of complaints were closed within three months, maintaining the standard established by my office in recent years.

The increase in cases is largely attributed to greater public awareness of the role of our office, supported by an enhanced communication and outreach strategy. Alongside a public media campaign, my staff and I engaged firsthand with government agencies, public bodies, and community organizations. These interactions facilitated the exchange of information, promoted the understanding of fair policies and procedures, and informed Albertans about how to raise concerns of unfair treatment.



This annual report includes numerous examples of investigations completed by my office. One such example is *Programs Adrift*, a public report involving the Alberta Adult Health Benefit and Alberta Child Health Benefit programs. Initial complaints from vulnerable and frustrated Albertans identified systemic problems, which prompted my office to open an expansive investigation. While the programs were among the most generous of their kind in Canada, the investigation revealed widespread issues affecting individuals' access to essential health benefits. The resulting report made recommendations regarding the application process, methods and adequacy of communication, as well as ineffective IT infrastructure.

Programs Adrift is a prime example of the important work being done by my office. By conducting investigations and issuing public reports, my office sheds light on unfair practices by public agencies and makes recommendations to ensure fair treatment and equity for all Albertans.

Our investigations and reports are the result of a true team effort, reflecting the collective dedication and expertise of everyone in our office. Each case highlighted in this report represents the concerted efforts of a team that specializes in resolving conflicts, supporting change, and adding value to people's lives.

Improving administrative fairness strengthens oversight and public trust in our democratic institutions. This past June, the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman—which includes our office—endorsed a set of key principles to ensure the independence, effectiveness, and accountability of Ombudsman institutions. These foundational principles inspire the work and efforts of my office as I enter my third full year in this role.

In closing, I want to express my gratitude to Albertans who came forward with their concerns about unfairness, to public sector employees for their efforts in improving program administration, and to my staff for their expertise and hard work. Together, we are working toward better outcomes for all Albertans.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'KB' with a stylized flourish.

Kevin Brezinski
Alberta Ombudsman

CORE COMMITMENTS

VISION

Equitable treatment for all.



MISSION

The Ombudsman promotes fairness and accountability in the public sector by conducting impartial investigations, addressing systemic issues, making effective recommendations, and providing education to Albertans.



VALUES

INTEGRITY

Doing the right thing for the right reasons.

INDEPENDENCE

Achieving our mandate without yielding to external pressures or interference.

IMPARTIALITY

The commitment to ensure equal consideration and equitable treatment for everyone, without exception.

INNOVATION

A culture that fosters the assessing, developing, and embracing of new ideas, processes, and technology.



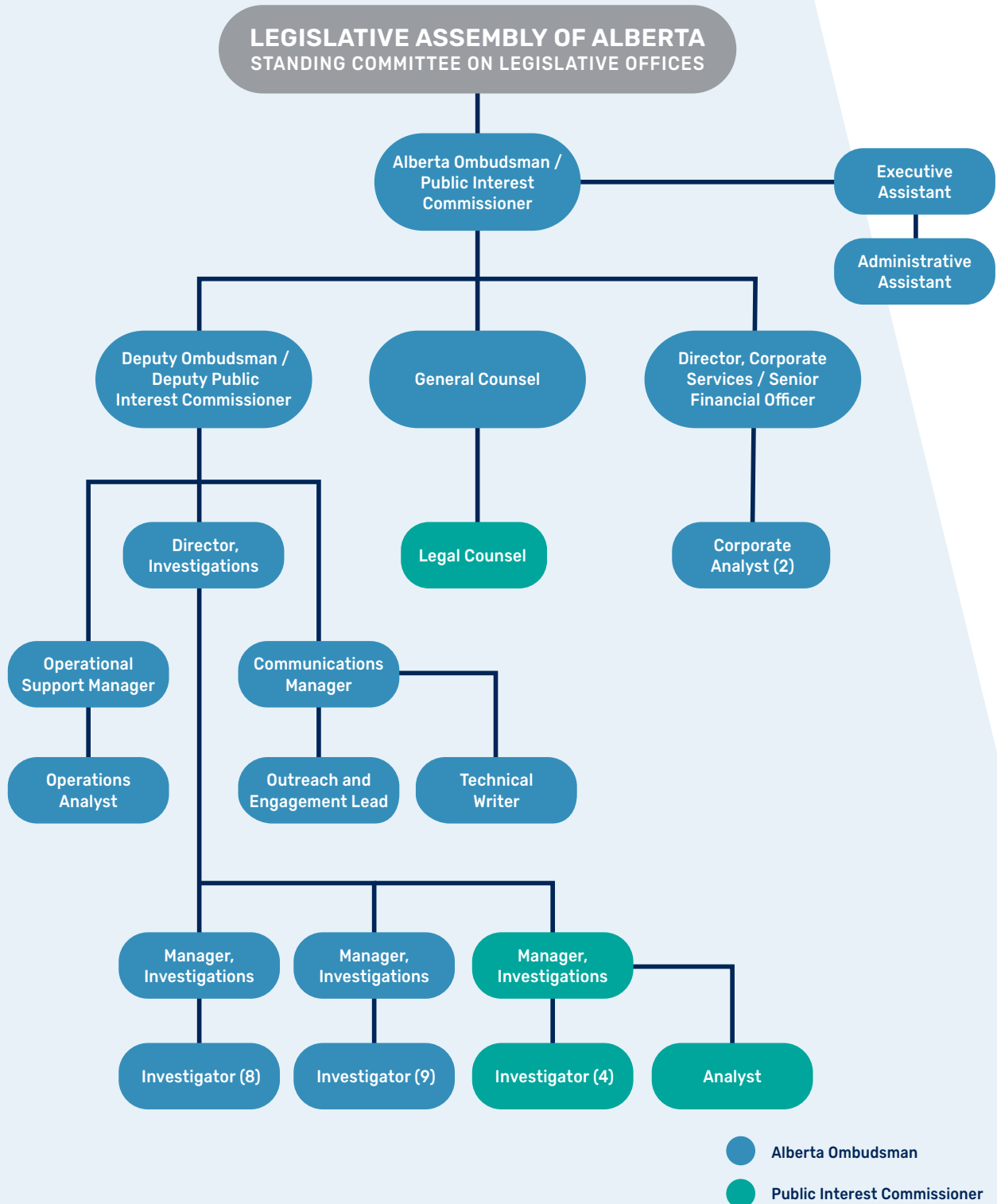
YOUR VOICE OF FAIRNESS

The Alberta Ombudsman was established in 1967 as the first parliamentary Ombudsman office in North America. The Ombudsman is an Officer of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, reporting directly to the Assembly. His office is impartial and operates independently of the Alberta government, political parties, and individual elected officials.

Each and every Albertan has the right to be treated fairly in the provision of public services. The Ombudsman protects this right by promoting standards of fairness and has the authority to make recommendations if an investigation reveals unfairness.

OUR GOAL IS TO ENSURE EVERY ALBERTAN RECEIVES FAIR TREATMENT AND THAT THEIR VOICES ARE HEARD.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



WHO WE OVERSEE

Provincial Government

Maintaining public trust and confidence in government operations and decisions.

By promoting fairness, accountability, and integrity, we help improve policies and services that directly impact the lives of millions of Albertans. Our investigations and recommendations help resolve individual complaints and improve systemic issues within government departments.



Municipalities

Advancing fairness and transparency in local government decision making.

In 2018, the Ombudsman's jurisdiction expanded to include the impartial review of municipal decisions. Through strong relationships and effective complaint resolution, we contribute to accountability, fairness, and transparency in municipal governance.



Patient Concerns Resolution Process

Upholding patient rights and improving accountability within the healthcare system.

Since 2006, the Ombudsman's jurisdiction has included investigations into the Patient Concerns Resolution Process (PCRP) of Alberta Health Services. Patients and family members who feel they have been treated unfairly by the PCRP have a right to complain to our office, following all avenues of review and appeal.



Self-Regulated Health Colleges

Supporting health colleges in the governance of regulated members to serve and protect the public interest.

In Alberta, professional health organizations are regulated under the *Health Professions Act*. Our oversight includes investigating complaints and recommending improvements, ensuring that regulatory bodies uphold legislated standards.



Other Designated Professional Authorities

Promoting fair oversight of professional regulators to strengthen and emphasize fair governance.

The Ombudsman's jurisdiction includes the following designated professional authorities: Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta, Alberta Institute of Agrologists, Association of Alberta Forest Management Professionals, and Alberta Veterinary Medical Association.



HOW WE WORK

INITIAL CONTACT

Inquiries are received through our intake line and complaints are received in writing.



ASSESSMENT

A first step is assessing whether the complaint falls within our jurisdiction. If it does, we proceed with a detailed review of the complaint. If not, we provide referrals that direct people to the appropriate place.



After a detailed review, we work to resolve any issues identified at the earliest point possible. We may speak with the authority and attempt to resolve the issue through our early resolution process. If the case is more complex, we may open a full investigation.

UNFAIRNESS



INVESTIGATION

If a full investigation results in a finding of unfair treatment, the Ombudsman may provide recommendations to the authority aimed at addressing the issue. We communicate both formally and informally throughout the process to ensure the complainant understands the outcome.

If the Ombudsman has concerns of a systemic nature, he may open an own motion investigation. This type of investigation is initiated at the Ombudsman's discretion to address a trend or pattern with the administrative fairness of a program or department.

SYSTEMIC ISSUES

An investigation may also be launched at the direction of a committee of the Legislative Assembly or a Minister of the Crown.

PARTNERS

The Alberta Ombudsman is an active member of national and international communities of Ombuds offices dedicated to improving public administration and governance.

We are inspired by the frameworks laid out in the *Venice Principles* on the protection and promotion of the Ombudsman institution and the *United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Role of the Ombudsman*.



Alberta Ombudsman Kevin Brezinski (right) at the annual meeting of the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman. Photo credit: CCPO



International Ombudsman Institute (IOI)

Established in 1978, the IOI is the only global organization for the cooperation of more than 200 independent Ombuds institutions from more than 100 countries worldwide.

The Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman (CCPO)

The CCPO represents 11 provincial and territorial Ombuds offices across Canada. It brings members together to promote fairness, share knowledge, and strengthen the capacity of independent oversight institutions.

The CCPO recently endorsed a set of key principles designed to ensure the independence, effectiveness, and accountability of Ombudsman institutions across Canada. The Alberta Ombudsman was a signatory to these principles, which cover: independence and autonomy, appointment and security of tenure, mandate, powers of investigation, transparency, accountability, and interpretation.

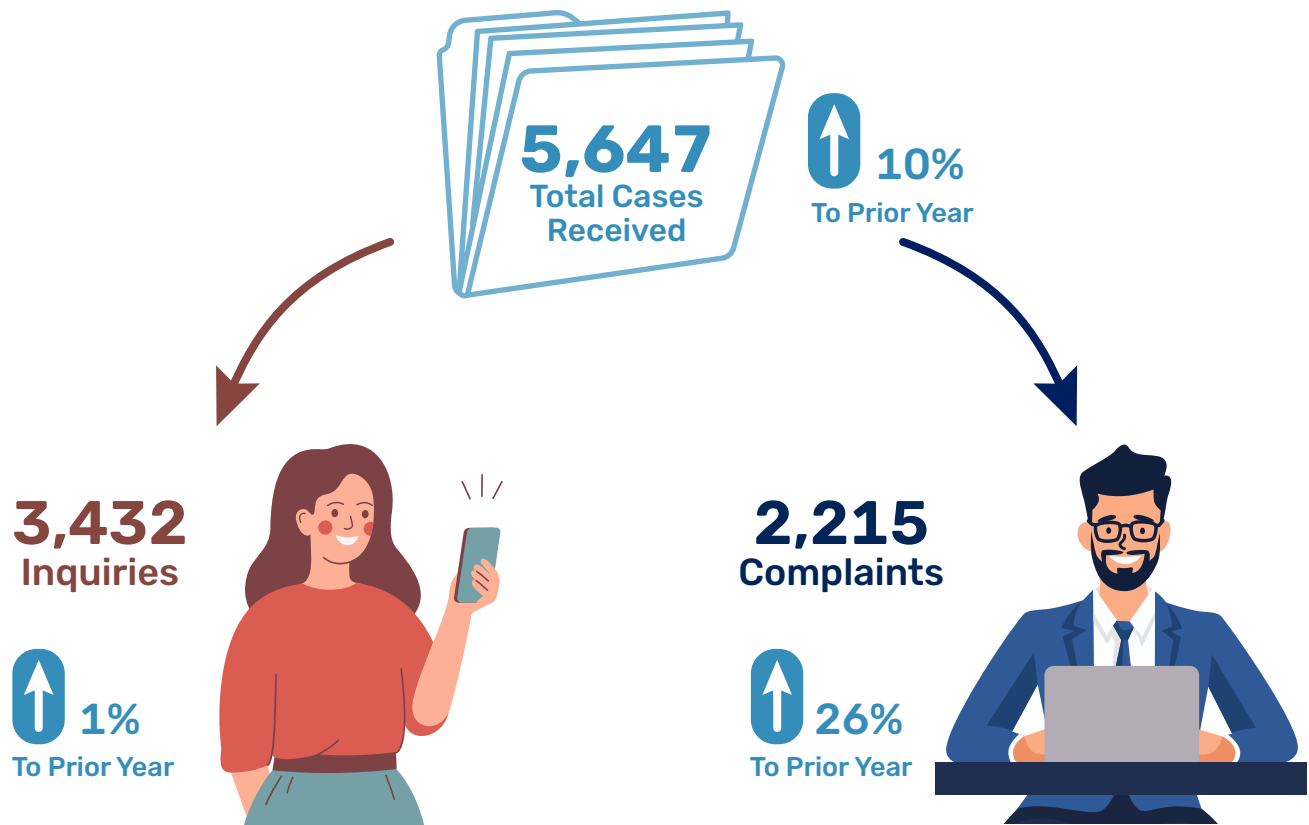
The Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO)

Formed in 2000, the FCO is composed of more than 600 private and corporate members from a broad range of organizations with the objective of fostering the exchange of information and support in order to promote fairness, social peace, justice, and the protection of human rights.

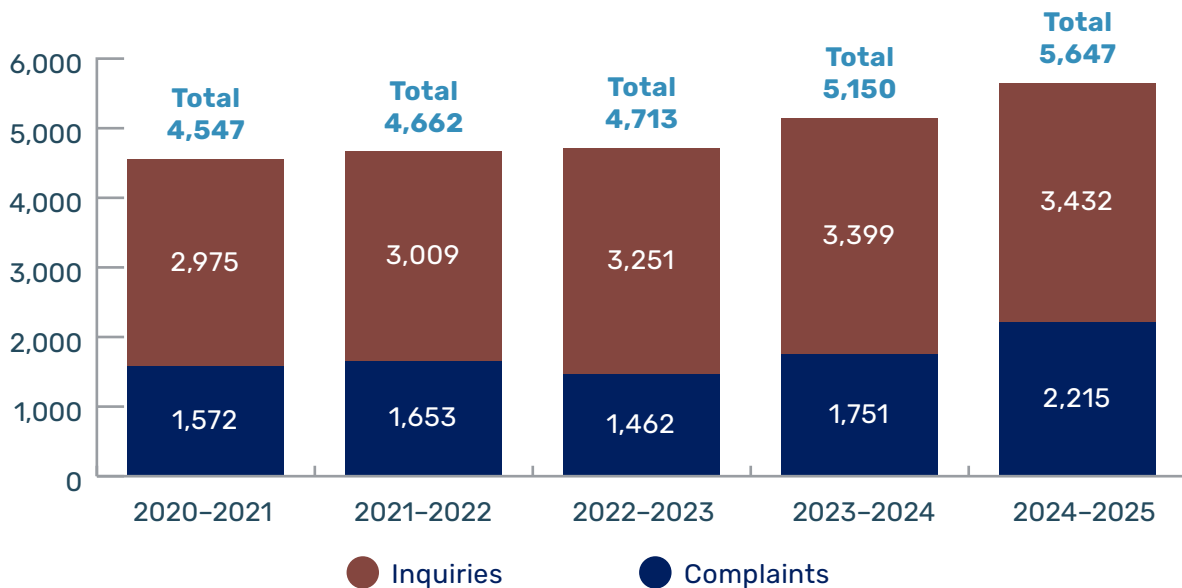
The United States Ombudsman Association (USOA)

Founded in 1977, the USOA gathers global public-sector Ombuds offices together around the shared purpose of improving Ombuds operations.

YEAR AT A GLANCE



Five-Year Comparison of Total Cases Received

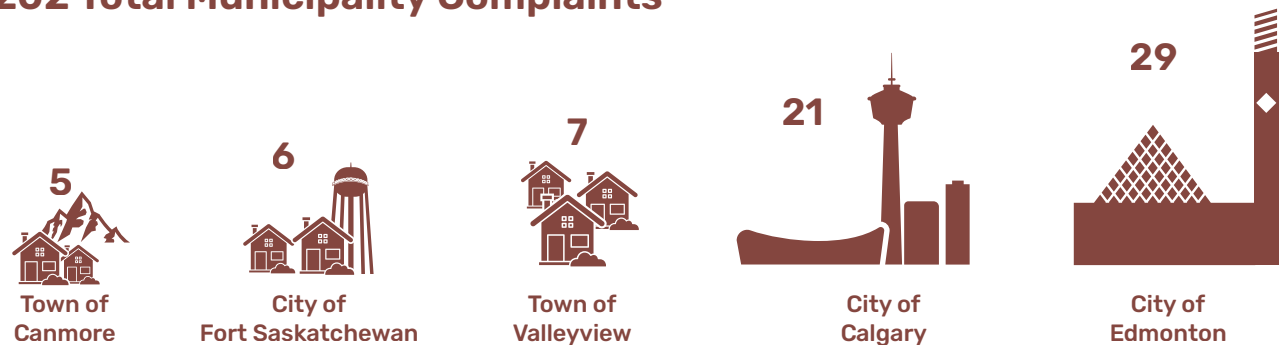


Top Five Entities Per Jurisdictional Sector

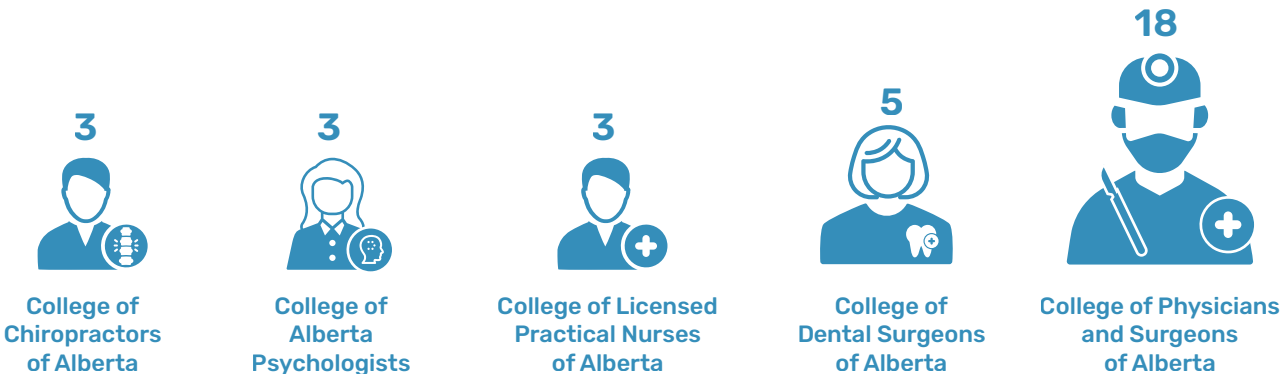
887 Total Provincial Government Complaints



202 Total Municipality Complaints



42 Total Professional Organization Complaints



BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS

Progress Report

This progress report tracks our office's achievements on the goals we identified in the *2024–2025 Business Plan*. These results reflect our team's commitment to ensuring fair treatment for all Albertans.

Goal 1: The Alberta Ombudsman's office will advance Ombuds practices within Canada and abroad.

In 2024–2025, leaders from our office actively participated in national and international engagements, deepening professional ties with fellow Ombuds offices across different regions.

Our office presented two sessions at the United States Ombudsman Association's 43rd Annual Conference, on the topics of cultural responsiveness and early resolution.

Our managers were instructors for the prestigious Osgoode Hall Law School's *Essentials for Ombuds* course.

We also joined our peers from the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman in discussing issues facing Indigenous Peoples across Canada through the Indigenous Initiative Network.



Closed Cases at a Glance

Complaints Closed
2,145 Cases

Early Resolution Cases
196 Closed

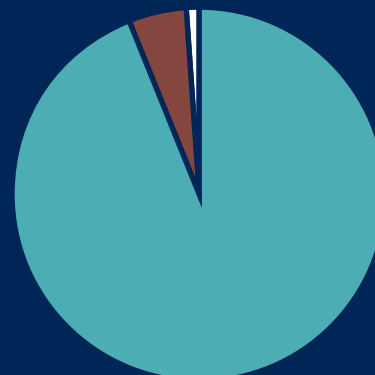
Full Investigations
9 Closed

Recommendations
54 Made
48 Accepted

Unfairness Identified
30% Early Resolution Cases
100% Full Investigation Cases

Time to Close Complaints

- 94% within 3 months
- 5% within 12 months
- 1% over 12 months

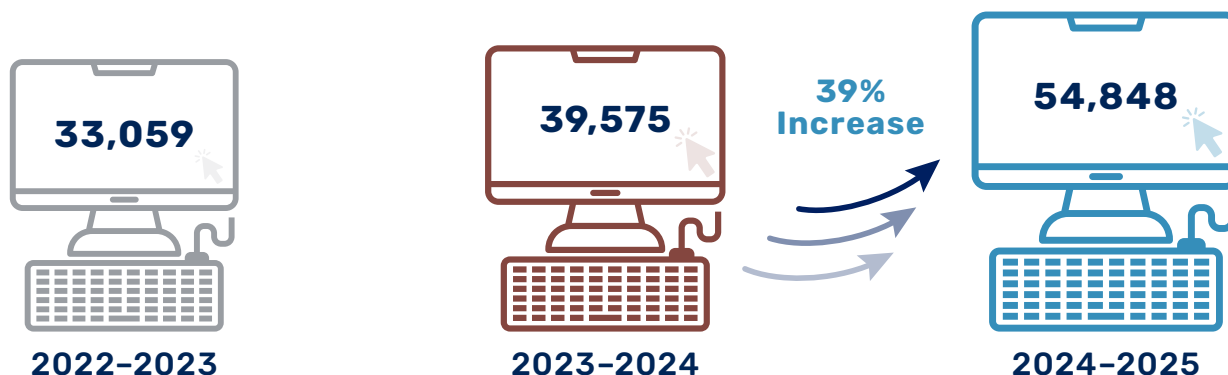


Goal 2: Albertans are aware of the mandate of the Ombudsman and the requirement for fairness in the public sector.

We continue to focus on increasing awareness of our work among Albertans in order to achieve this goal.

A key part of our strategy is leveraging social media to increase traffic to our website. Efforts this year resulted in 860,000+¹ impressions on LinkedIn and Facebook along with a 39% increase in new user traffic to our website.

Three-Year Comparison of New User Traffic to Website



Another pillar of our plan is building relationships with organizations serving vulnerable populations and newcomers to our province. This year, we expanded our network with new organizations across Alberta, including:

- Between Friends
- Blackfoot Confederacy
- Care For Newcomers
- Catholic Social Services
- Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre
- Ermineskin Cree Nation
- Family Services of Central Alberta
- FRAP-Region Red Deer
- Kindred Society
- Lifelong Learning Council
- Louis Bull Tribe
- Montana First Nation
- Red Deer Cultural Heritage Society
- Red Deer Local Immigration Partnership
- Red Deer Public Library
- Samson Cree Nation
- Turning Point Society
- United Way of Central Alberta
- Women's Emergency Shelter

¹ Impressions are the number of times a user has viewed a post or profile.

Goal 3: Jurisdictional authorities understand and embrace fairness in the delivery of public services.

Over the past year, we observed a 23% increase in complaints outside of our authority to address—cases we refer to as non-jurisdictional complaints. Our investigators routinely refer these complainants to the appropriate agencies or processes.

In 2024–2025, we also provided guidance to authorities on administrative fairness, effective decision writing, and the Ombudsman’s role. We held regular meetings with the City of Calgary, Assisted Living and Social Services, and the Custody Operations Branch of the Correctional Services Division, to discuss emerging trends and reinforce the importance of fairness at the local level.

At the Alberta Municipalities fall convention, we participated in a panel discussion and engaged with delegates on effective policies for managing complaints, emphasizing the importance of fairness in municipal governance.

Additionally, we presented to municipal councils, the RCMP Detachment Commanders for Central Alberta, and the Blackfoot Confederacy: Children and Family Services Working Group.

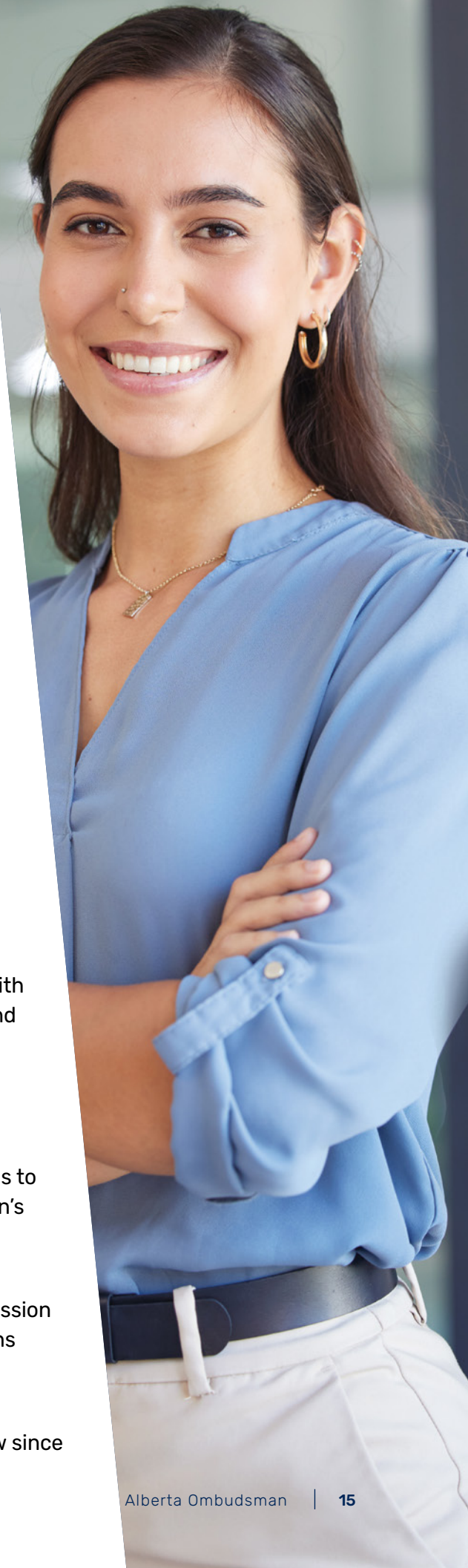
Goal 4: The Ombudsman will ensure the relevant legislation is meeting the needs of Albertans and his office can fulfill its roles and responsibilities.

Albertans are best served with a legislative framework aligned with advancements in government procedures, technical capacity, and essential improvements in investigative methods.

Incidental changes have modified the *Ombudsman Act* over the years, largely for the purpose of expanding the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction. At the time of this writing, Bill 40—the *Professional Governance Act*—has received Royal Assent. This legislation aims to consolidate multiple statutes that would expand the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction to include 18 additional professional regulatory organizations.

Concurrently, Alberta is establishing a new Police Review Commission designed to enhance accountability in municipal and First Nations policing. We expect the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction will expand to include this new, independent body, as early as December 2025.

The *Ombudsman Act* has yet to undergo a comprehensive review since its inception in 1967.



PUBLIC REPORTS

Public reports take a closer look at complex and often systemic issues that affect more than just one person. They help show where public service systems may have shortcomings and what needs to change to prevent the same problems from happening again.



Own Motion Results in Improvements to Health Benefit Programs

The Ombudsman's biggest investigation of 2024–2025 resulted in a public report that exposed systemic flaws in the administration of the Alberta Adult Health Benefit (AAHB) and Alberta Child Health Benefit (ACHB) programs. Published in July 2024, *Programs Adrift* identified the urgent need for modernization and increased oversight within these programs, which help Albertans living in low-income households cover health-related costs such as dental care, prescription drugs, and diabetic supplies.

Up until recently, the administration of the programs was shared between two ministries: Alberta Health and Seniors, Community and Social Services (SCSS). Today, the programs fall under the purview of the Assisted Living and Social Services (ALSS) Ministry and the Ministry of Primary and Preventative Health Services (PPHS).

The Ombudsman's own motion public report detailed 28 recommendations and five observations to improve the administrative fairness of AAHB and ACHB.

Since the publication of *Programs Adrift*, most of the recommendations have been accepted and considerable steps have been taken to make improvements. Meaningful steps taken include:

- ALSS has increased transparency. All applicants who are either denied or required to provide additional information now receive a brochure explaining eligibility criteria, outlining drug costs and the process for the reassessment of prescription requests. Further, ALSS now provides additional information about how to appeal decisions.
- the application process has been enhanced. Before the investigation, applications could only be submitted via mail and fax. Now, the programs' websites accept submissions through email as well. ALSS has also reported reduced wait times and expanded translation services to over 200 languages, including many Indigenous languages. Further, they have implemented quality controls as well as escalation and training processes.

We recognize that improvements of this magnitude will take time and will continue to monitor the programs for ongoing improvements.

*"Assisted Living and Social Services appreciates the effort the Alberta Ombudsman's office invests in reviewing programs like Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Alberta Adult Health Benefit and Alberta Child Health Benefit to ensure continuous improvement and successful outcomes."*²

— Dennis Cooley, Deputy
Minister of Social Services

² Email correspondence between Deputy Minister Dennis Cooley and the Alberta Ombudsman's office, June 2025.

Update to the Ombudsman's Public Report: *Denied by Design*

In May 2024, the Ombudsman issued a public report, *Denied by Design*, about the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program, which is administered by the Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services, or ALSS (formerly known as Seniors, Community and Social Services).

Denied by Design was inspired by a complaint from Janice Zenari, an advocate for her son, Evan, who was denied PDD supports on the grounds that his IQ exceeded the maximum eligibility score indicated in the *Developmental Disabilities Regulation* (the Regulation).

The Ombudsman determined that the over reliance on the IQ score to determine eligibility for benefits was unreasonable and improperly discriminatory. He provided two recommendations to address the unfairness: amend the Regulation to align with current psychological standards for assessing intellectual capacity; and reconsider Evan's application.

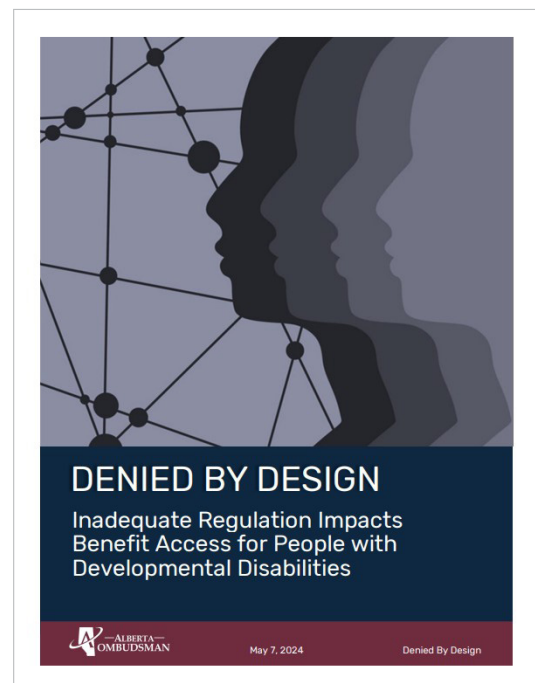
The Ombudsman's first recommendation was connected to the scheduled review of the Regulation in September 2024. There was concern that leaving the Regulation unchanged created potential for others to experience similar barriers to accessing PDD program services.

The Ombudsman's recommendations were not implemented, and since the publication of *Denied by Design*, our office has received numerous complaints on behalf of applicants who were similarly denied PDD benefits.

The ministry's view, based on an internally directed program review, is that PDD program eligibility is guided by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*, which factors IQ score along with adaptive functioning to determine intellectual capacity.

The Ombudsman maintains that Section 3 of the Regulation is discriminatory and unreasonable.

Updating the Regulation would help prevent future applicants from falling through the cracks, left without the support they need. We will continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and provide the public with an update in a future annual report and on our website.

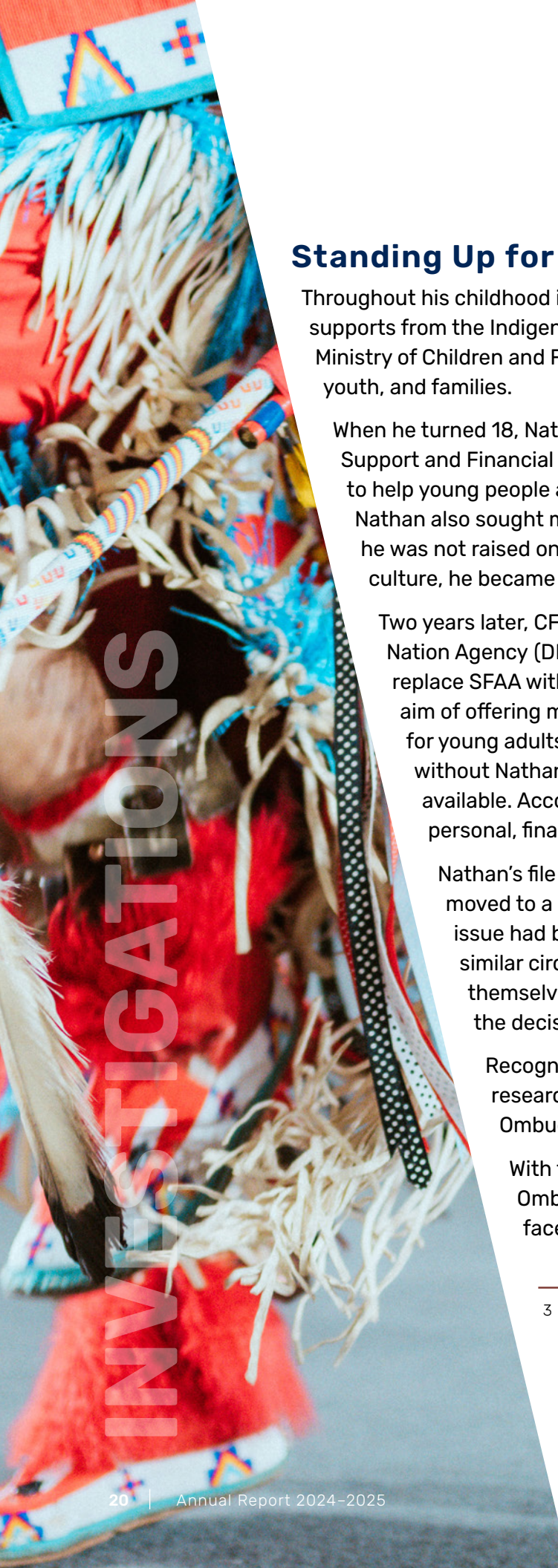


INVESTIGATIONS

Investigations are at the core of the Ombudsman's work to ensure fairness and accountability.

Through referral cases, early resolutions, and full investigations, the Ombudsman addresses concerns efficiently and thoroughly. Each step is an opportunity to strengthen trust and ensure that systems serve the people they were designed to support.





Standing Up for the Future

Throughout his childhood in government care, Nathan P. received financial supports from the Indigenous Services Office (ISO), a centralized office of the Ministry of Children and Family Services (CFS) serving Indigenous children, youth, and families.

When he turned 18, Nathan continued to receive assistance in the form of a Support and Financial Assistance Agreement (SFAA), the program designed to help young people as they transitioned into adulthood. Around this time, Nathan also sought membership in a designated First Nation. Even though he was not raised on a First Nation and was largely unfamiliar with the culture, he became a member with the encouragement of the ISO.

Two years later, CFS decided to transfer Nathan's file to a Delegated First Nation Agency (DFNA).³ The government, meanwhile, also planned to replace SFAA with the Transition to Adulthood Program (TAP), with the aim of offering more specialized, coordinated, and consistent services for young adults formerly in government care. This decision was made without Nathan's consultation, it was final, and no review process was available. According to Nathan, the decision negatively impacted his personal, financial, educational, and emotional well-being.

Nathan's file was eventually transferred back to CFS when he moved to a different city in the province. Although his individual issue had been resolved, Nathan was concerned for others in similar circumstances who might not be able to advocate for themselves. Nathan wrote to the Ombudsman, complaining that the decision to move his file was unfair.

Recognizing the complexity of the issues and the detailed research and interviews required in this case, the Ombudsman's office opened an investigation.

With the full cooperation of CFS and the DFNA, the Ombudsman identified several areas of concern. CFS faced unique practical challenges in this case, such as

³ A Delegated First Nation Agency (DFNA) is delegated by the CFS statutory director to deliver child and family services to First Nations communities and members.

the impending leave of Nathan's long-time case worker with whom he had established a meaningful connection. Additionally, the implementation of the new TAP program required the transition of almost 80 young adults to other service agencies. While these challenges may have complicated the transfer of his file, the Ombudsman determined that the process was still unfair because Nathan did not have an opportunity to participate in the decision.

The Ombudsman made recommendations for CFS to improve their process when seeking to transfer people to other government assistance programs.

CFS agreed that future file transfers will be guided by a collaborative and inclusive process that provides affected youths with:

- adequate notice of an intention to transfer their file;
- the ability to respond to the transfer, including a family/natural supports meeting;
- consideration for their personal circumstances, including cultural considerations; and
- documentation of the decision-making process and reasons for the decision.

Decisions should not be made in a vacuum, particularly when they involve a vulnerable population and have a significant impact. A fair process includes participation rights, which means having notice and the opportunity to make representations before an unbiased decision maker. Also, when there is no review or appeal process, depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate to take the extra step of consulting with the parties to consider alternative outcomes before making a final decision.

Thanks to Nathan's decision to complain to the Ombudsman, young people in a similar situation will have a fairer experience.





How the Ombudsman Helps Shape Policy

Through our investigations and recommendations, we often acquire subject-matter expertise into a particular policy or set of policies that we share with organizations who may be looking to develop something similar. The Ombudsman's expertise on the topic of complaints involving complex behaviours is an example of how our office can provide this type of guidance.

Improving the Fairness of the *Complex Client Policy* at Children and Family Services

Beverly G.'s two children were in foster care, overseen by the Ministry of Children and Family Services (CFS). Beverly repeatedly contacted CFS to complain about a range of concerns regarding the care of her children. CFS determined, based on multiple interactions with employees, that Beverly's conduct was inappropriate and presented a potential risk to their staff. CFS, therefore, activated its *Complex Client Policy* (the Policy), which guided its actions with Beverly. These actions included a *Communication Protocol* (the Protocol), which placed limits on how often Beverly could contact their office as well as on the mode of communication.

Beverly complained to the Ombudsman about the Policy and the Protocol. Specifically, Beverly believed that CFS was excessively inflexible and prevented her from contacting anyone about her file. She complained that the communication restrictions were unfair, that CFS should have provided notification about the Protocol before it was implemented, and that they should have let her know the process for removing the Protocol.

The Ombudsman conducted a full investigation into both the Policy and its administration, including the Protocol. He noted that the Policy was comprehensive and detailed, with a transparent decision-making process and clearly defined roles. Further, the communication restrictions that were previously placed on Beverly were in keeping with the Policy.

While this was encouraging, the Ombudsman also determined there were certain elements of the Policy that were unfair and provided the following recommendations:

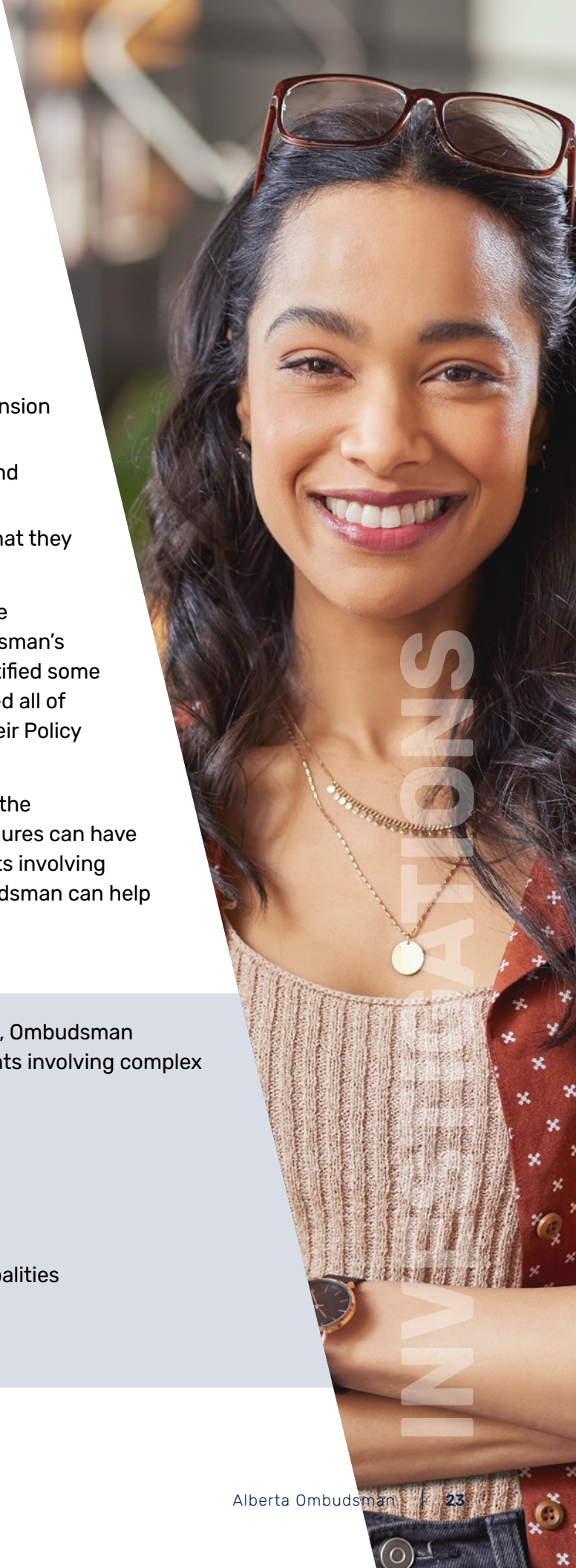
- the Policy should be updated so that CFS provides reasons for the implementation, renewal, or suspension of the Protocol;
- the timelines for the Protocol should be clarified and consistently applied;
- CFS should differentiate some templated letters that they used to communicate with complainants.

Through the investigation, revisions to the Policy were already underway. CFS staff were open to the Ombudsman's involvement, easy to work with, and had already identified some of the same concerns. CFS accepted and implemented all of the Ombudsman's recommendations and updated their Policy shortly thereafter.

While developed with the best intentions, sometimes the administration of new or different policies and procedures can have unintended consequences. As we saw with complaints involving complex behaviours in this past fiscal year, the Ombudsman can help refine and improve government policy.

Through case work, engagements, and presentations, Ombudsman investigators have shared their insights into complaints involving complex behaviours with the following organizations:

- Alliance of Pigeon Lake Municipalities
- ATB Financial
- Ministry of Children and Family Services
- Forum of Canadian Ombudsman
- Municipal Governance Committee, Alberta Municipalities
- City of Lethbridge and surrounding communities
- Workers' Compensation Board



Fairness Through Collaboration

The Ombudsman's work is collaborative and involves working regularly with authorities to facilitate administrative improvements as part of an incremental process.



An excellent example of the collaborative nature of the Ombudsman's work in 2024–2025 was through the working relationship with the Custody Operations Branch (COB) of the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services (PSES). COB oversees Alberta's adult correctional and remand centres and young offenders' centres, which are an important part of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. The Ombudsman regularly receives complaints of unfair treatment from inmates and individuals housed in provincial correctional facilities, and 2024–2025 was no exception. This year, we received 96 complaints involving PSES, which meant a lot of engagement with COB.

The following two early resolution cases highlight how this type of relationship benefits everyone—the Albertans who engage with an agency receive an improved experience; the agency in turn increases their efficiency and receives fewer complaints; and the Ombudsman's office lends its expertise identifying unfairness and providing suggestions for improvement.

A Complaint Fallen Through the Cracks

The Ombudsman received a complaint from Peter Q., an inmate at the Edmonton Remand Centre (ERC) about the conduct of ERC staff when searching his cell. He contended that the ERC staff threw out his important documents. The inmate first complained to the ERC Director, but he found the ERC Director's response did not address his concerns, so he complained to the Ombudsman.

In this case, the Ombudsman investigator asked the ERC questions about how they reviewed and responded to the inmate's concerns. While gathering information to review and respond to Peter's complaint, the ERC found that it did not follow its own procedures. The ERC proposed a solution: implementing a new review checklist that they can use when responding to similar complaints, ensuring that all future reviews follow the procedure. The ERC also agreed to our request to provide Peter with a new response that addressed his concerns and explained the gaps in their review process.

A Fair Remedy

Another inmate at the ERC, Nick P., complained to the Ombudsman about personal and canteen items that went missing when he was transferred to a new unit. Nick raised his concerns with the ERC but was not satisfied with the response, so he brought his complaint forward to us.

An Ombudsman investigator spoke with both Nick and the ERC Director to understand their perspectives. Through the discussions, the investigator noted there were contradictory versions of events. Nick told us that \$80-\$100 worth of food was never returned to him, while the ERC stated that all personal items were properly transferred. Our review of the records found no clear evidence either way to demonstrate whether the items went missing or were properly returned. The investigator found the ERC's own review of the incident could have been more thorough, and that the responses the ERC provided to the inmate did not address his main arguments.

The ERC also conceded that in this specific circumstance, they could have taken more steps to investigate the complaint in a thorough and meaningful manner. This included reviewing video evidence that was available at the time. Finally, the ERC agreed with our assessment that their initial response to Nick did not address his specific concerns. In the end, the ERC compensated Nick for the value of the missing items and provided him with a more detailed explanation.

As these cases illustrate, the work of the Ombudsman is often collaborative. Authorities like COB who recognize gaps in their own complaint processes and take action to resolve them improve fairness for all. We appreciate the constructive working relationship with COB and all of the agencies we collaborated with in 2024–2025.

INVESTIGATIONS

Working with Municipalities

In 2018, changes to the *Ombudsman Act* expanded our authority to investigate any administrative decision, recommendation, act, or omission of an Alberta municipality. Every year since then, the Alberta Ombudsman has handled a wide range of cases involving fairness at the municipal level. In 2024–2025, the Alberta Ombudsman received the highest number of complaints about municipalities to date: 202 complaints, representing 18% of all jurisdictional complaints, an increase of more than 20% from 2023–2024.

Top Five Entities for Municipality Complaints

Municipality	29	City of Edmonton
	21	City of Calgary
	7	Town of Valleyview
	6	City of Fort Saskatchewan
	5	Town of Canmore
Total Municipality Complaints: 202		

Often, as in the following two cases from 2024–2025, municipal cases are handled through early resolution. Early resolution cases are less formal than full investigations and can provide faster results.

Fairness Flows

One of Alberta's largest cities asked Brayden W. to keep his water running while they worked on a water line near his property. The City did not specify how long the work was expected to take but they assured him that he would be reimbursed for the additional expenses incurred by the increase in water consumption. Brayden cooperated with the request and opened up his taps. Weeks went by with no word from the City about the status of the project. After a month, he stopped running the water.

As the City predicted might happen, Brayden's next bill for utilities reflected the increased water use. But when he brought the bill to the City, Brayden was not reimbursed for the whole cost; the City stated that they were only responsible for a two-week construction period, which they contended was communicated. Brayden complained to the Ombudsman. He argued that he followed the instructions the City provided and was unfairly billed for the water usage.

The Ombudsman's office spoke with both Brayden and the City and reviewed all relevant documentation.

We determined that the City had failed to clearly communicate with Brayden and suggested that the City update their templates to notify residents in writing about how long they should keep water running. Further, we proposed that the City incorporate best practices for reviewing appeals of their decisions. Finally, we asked the City to reconsider its position on reimbursing Brayden for the additional cost.

The City adopted the suggestions and reimbursed Brayden for half of the expenses. While Brayden did not get everything he asked for, the Ombudsman facilitated a positive outcome and helped improve the administrative fairness for future citizens asked to cooperate with similar projects.



A Nose for Fairness

Juanita K. was one of several residents who complained about an agricultural feedlot in a rural Alberta county. Juanita was concerned about the strong, unpleasant smell as well as light pollution, both of which she said were generated by the feedlot. These concerns fell under the purview of different administrative authorities. In Alberta, complaints about odour from a confined feeding operation are a matter for the Natural Resource Conservation Board (NRCB); municipal bylaws, meanwhile, regulate issues related to light pollution.

Regarding the odour complaints, our office looked into the process for complaints with the NRCB and whether the process was followed. Through multiple discussions with the authority, our investigator learned of numerous steps they had taken to address the matter. While no one argued that the odour was unpleasant for residents, the facility had secured the necessary permits to operate the feedlot. The NRCB responded to complaints through regular public updates and had dedicated significant time and resources to working with the facility to identify potential solutions. Ultimately, through our independent, impartial review we found that the NRCB's response to residents was reasonable and in keeping with the rules, making their decisions procedurally fair.

The Ombudsman's investigator also met with the municipality to discuss the light pollution complaints. In this case, the light pollution was in violation of the bylaw, and the municipality was working with the facility to bring the light pollution into compliance. They committed to improve transparency in their communication with residents to clear up confusion about the issue.

Our office explained to Juanita that the processes for handling complaints about the feedlot were fair. While the situation did not change in the short term, our office confirmed that both the NRCB and the municipality took the complaints seriously and were actively engaged in addressing the matters. She accepted the Ombudsman's findings and the additional information and insight we provided.

An Unclear Process Leads to an Unfair Decision

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is the ministry responsible for investigating allegations of workplace violence and harassment at the Government of Alberta. Employees who witness or experience workplace violence or harassment can make a complaint to the PSC, which uses their *Respectful Workplace Policy* (RWP) to guide their investigations. Our office has a history of receiving complaints about decisions from the PSC, including occasions when we have conducted investigations and provided recommendations. The case of Felicia K. is the latest example and highlights the importance of fair administrative practices in human resource departments.

Felicia made an RWP complaint to the PSC, alleging workplace harassment by colleagues and superiors that led to her resignation. Felicia's complaint included allegations involving 12 individuals and spanned the course of her five years of employment at the organization. The people named in her complaint included three employees in supervisory roles.

Guided by its RWP, the PSC's intake team reviewed Felicia's complaint and determined that it was best handled through a process they called "fact-finding." Fact-finding is handled by the PSC's Employee Relations department and is not subject to the same protocols as full investigations.

In the complaint to our office, Felicia told us she felt her rights as an employee were violated. Felicia felt that not only was the PSC decision about her complaint unfair, but their procedure for handling complaints was also unfair.

The Ombudsman investigator conducted a historical review of PSC complaints addressed by our office, noted the Ombudsman's previous recommendations to the PSC, and suggested a full investigation into the complaint and the RWP.

The Ombudsman concluded that the absence of a formal process for fact-finding contributed to the administrative unfairness and provided recommendations to assist in developing a fair process.

We recommended that PSC's process clearly communicate to the appropriate parties: the scope of the review; the reasons for decisions, including how relevant evidence is weighed; and whether allegations violate the RWP. Because RWP investigations can have serious repercussions, we also recommended that the process outline options for escalation and appeal.

As of the writing of this annual report, the PSC has accepted the Ombudsman's recommendations and begun to implement them. We will monitor the adoption of our recommendations and provide an update on our website and in a future annual report.



Fairness for the Win

Xavier J. placed some sports bets with Play Alberta, the only regulated gambling website overseen by the Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC) Commission. One of the bets was on a hockey game—even though Xavier picked the winning team, Play Alberta called it a loss when the game went into overtime. Another bet was on a baseball game. Again, Xavier's team won, but he lost the bet when the game was rained out. Frustrated with the missing payouts and having trouble resolving the issue himself, Xavier complained to the Ombudsman.

This was one of our first complaints about Play Alberta. To learn more, we reached out to AGLC with preliminary questions about the processes Play Alberta used for determining outcomes for bets on sporting events. The AGLC was very forthcoming, quick to respond, and transparent with sharing information, which facilitated our early resolution process.

After asking questions and reviewing the rules, it was evident that there was some confusion about how different outcomes affected different types of bets. For example, some bets could be won or lost based not on whether a given team came out on top, but whether the game ended in regulation time, or whether it was cancelled or rescheduled.

The AGLC quickly acknowledged the confusing information and worked with Play Alberta to make changes, both to its internal policy and to the public-facing information. The different types of tickets and possible outcomes are now more clearly defined. The AGLC also decided to compensate Xavier for the tickets that appeared to be wins.

Clarity can be a critical ingredient for a fair process. Our questions can uncover and resolve areas of ambiguity, which improves fairness not just for an individual complainant but for everyone else.

Helping Albertans Navigate Complaint Avenues

Many people come to our office because they believe they have experienced unfairness and do not know where to go. Even if the complaint falls outside of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, we strive to help Albertans find the appropriate office.

Unsure Where to Go

In a situation no parent ever wants to be in, Gail P. was waiting for the autopsy report for her daughter. She was told it could take up to a year for the report, but after 14 months, she was still waiting. Shouldering a great deal of stress and not sure where to turn, Gail wrote to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's office reached out to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) to inquire about a contact for the complainant. The OCME let us know who Gail could contact for an update and explained they were expediting the report.

We relayed that information to Gail and a few days later, the OCME let us know that they spoke with Gail and mailed her the report.

A Complainant Cheques In

Melissa L. was approved for a damage deposit loan and was waiting for the cheque in the mail. Unfortunately, this was happening during a Canada Post mail strike. Instead of being delivered to her residence in Medicine Hat, Melissa learned that the cheque was instead sent to an Alberta Works office in Lethbridge. Further complicating the situation, Melissa was told that the cheque was made out to her landlord, which meant that she was not authorized to pick it up. And even if she was permitted to pick up the cheque, her mobility issues would have made it difficult. Looking for help, Melissa contacted the Ombudsman's office.

The Ombudsman investigator who took the intake call suggested that Melissa elevate her complaint at Alberta Works and provided Melissa with the supervisor's contact information. Melissa reached out to the supervisor who resolved the issue and made sure that Melissa got the cheque.

Many complainants contact our office because they feel like they have run out of options and are not sure how to proceed. Our free referral service can help Albertans navigate complex systems at difficult or challenging times in their lives. Whether it is connecting individuals to the right authority or guiding them through steps to resolve their issues, we provide support with empathy and expertise.

INVESTIGATIONS

CONNECTING

CONNECTING WITH ALBERTANS AND AUTHORITIES

Promoting fairness plays a crucial role in fulfilling the Ombudsman's mandate. Through educational outreach, we regularly connect with organizations that serve Albertans and with public authorities delivering essential government services. These conversations deepen our understanding of the barriers many Albertans face in accessing fair treatment and help raise awareness of our office among those who may need our services most.

New Complaint Checker Leads the Way

In 2024–2025, we developed the Complaint Checker, a resource that brings our expansive referral service online. The Complaint Checker helps users determine if their complaint is about an organization we can investigate and provides useful tips for making effective complaints. If the complaint is for an organization outside of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, the Complaint Checker offers contact information for organizations ranging from other provincial ombuds offices and federal government agencies to health authorities, elected officials, and many more. Go to www.ombudsman.ab.ca./complaint-checker to learn more about this new 24/7 online service.

Sharing Our Expertise

Whether we were speaking to a room of 40 or sitting around a table of four, each interaction focused on sharing knowledge, building relationships, and strengthening fairness. We are grateful for every partnership and for the opportunity to meet with leaders, organizations, and fellow colleagues.

Throughout 2024–2025, our teams brought their experience and insight into conversations about public accountability. Our investigators shared best practices with the Ombuds community during two presentations at the United States Ombudsman Association Conference. We also led sessions at the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman Conference, contributing to national conversations about fairness in public services. In addition to these major conferences, we met with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to exchange knowledge and explore approaches to addressing challenges facing vulnerable youth in Alberta.



Investigators at the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman Conference

Connecting Through Community Events



Deputy Ombudsman and team representing the office at the Alberta Municipalities Trade Show

Trade shows and community events offered another meaningful way to connect with Albertans directly. This past year included many face-to-face conversations that helped us explain our role and highlight the importance of fairness in the public sector.

This included connecting with municipal leaders at the Alberta Municipalities and Rural Municipalities of Alberta trade shows, where we discussed fairness in local governance. We were also invited back to the University of Alberta's Fairness Day, where we engaged with future professionals.

Alongside these events, we met with community-based organizations that serve newcomers, Indigenous communities and vulnerable families.

Opening Doors with Institutions

We continued to prioritize relationship-building with public authorities and engaged in a series of meetings with key partners and decision makers. These included meetings with leaders from various ministries including Education, Advanced Education, Environment and Protected Areas, Transportation and Economic Corridors, and Municipal Affairs. We also connected with the Health Advocate, the College of Dental Surgeons of Alberta, the Sanare Centre, and many others.



Ombudsman Kevin Brezinski and team meeting with Kindred Connections Society staff

MEET AND GREETES

- Sanare Centre, Medicine Hat
- Deputy Minister, Education
- Deputy Minister, Municipal Affairs
- Deputy Minister, Advanced Education
- Deputy Minister, Environment and Protected Areas
- Deputy Minister, Transportation and Economic Corridors
- Director, College of Dental Surgeons of Alberta
- Health Advocate
- Deputy Minister, Justice

TRADE SHOWS AND INFORMATION FAIRS

- Alberta Municipalities
- University of Alberta Fairness Day
- Rural Municipalities of Alberta

RECURRING FAIRNESS MEETINGS

- Custody Operations Branch, Correctional Services Division
- City of Calgary
- Alberta Health Advocate
- Assisted Living and Social Services

2024-2025 Education and Awareness Highlights

SHARING EXPERTISE

- Lunch and Learn, Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
- Speakers, United States Ombudsman Association's Annual Conference
- Speakers, Forum of Canadian Ombudsman Conference
- Instructor, Osgoode Essentials for Ombuds Program, York University
- Education Session, Blackfoot Confederacy – Children and Family Services Working Group
- Education Session, Alberta Teaching Profession Commission
- Education Session, Workers' Compensation Board Legislative Relations and Fair Process Review Centre
- Education Session, Alliance of Pigeon Lake Municipalities
- Webinar, Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman
- Education Session, Society of Local Government Managers Conference

PRESENTATIONS

- Ermineskin Cree Nation and Louis Bull Tribal Administration
- Samson Cree Nation and Montana First Nation
- Network Meeting, Family Services of Central Alberta
- Network Meeting, Care for Newcomers, Red Deer
- RCMP Central Alberta District Detachment Commanders
- Kindred Connections Society, Calgary
- Between Friends, Calgary
- Portage College
- School at the Legislature
- Lethbridge Family Services
- Lethbridge Family Centre
- Alberta Municipalities

FINANCIALS

Office of the
Ombudsman

Financial Statements
Year Ended March 31, 2025

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
March 31, 2025

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To the Members of the Legislative Assembly

Report on the Financial Statements

Opinion

I have audited the financial statements of the Office of the Ombudsman, which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2025, and the statements of operations, change in net debt, and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Office of the Ombudsman as at March 31, 2025, and the results of its operations, its changes in net debt, and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of my report. I am independent of the Office of the Ombudsman in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in Canada, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Other information

Management is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the *Annual Report*, but does not include the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. The *Annual Report* is expected to be made available to me after the date of this auditor's report.

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read the other information identified above and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work I will perform on this other information, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to communicate the matter to those charged with governance.

Responsibilities of management and those charged with governance for the financial statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Office of the Ombudsman's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless an intention exists to liquidate or to cease operations, or there is no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Office of the Ombudsman's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Office of the Ombudsman's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Office of the Ombudsman's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Office of the Ombudsman to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

[Original signed by W. Doug Wylie FCPA, FCMA, ICD.D]
Auditor General

July 22, 2025
Edmonton, Alberta

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS
YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2025

	2025		2024
	Budget		
	(Note 7)	Actual	Actual
Revenues (Note 2)			
Other Revenue	\$ -	\$ 33,077	\$ 50,403
Total Revenues	-	33,077	50,403
Expenses - Directly Incurred			
(Notes 2(b), 4 and Schedule 2)			
Salaries, Wages and Employee Benefits	4,099,280	3,910,217	3,776,327
Supplies and Services	474,800	401,190	401,601
Amortization of Tangible Capital Assets	11,000	13,896	8,956
	4,585,080	4,325,303	4,186,884
Less: Recovery from Support Services Arrangements	(425,000)	(440,455)	(450,606)
Program - Operations	4,160,080	3,884,848	3,736,278
Net Cost of Operations	\$ (4,160,080)	\$ (3,851,771)	\$ (3,685,875)

The accompanying notes and schedules are part of these financial statements.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT MARCH 31, 2025

	2025	2024
Financial Assets		
Accounts Receivable	\$ 3,849	\$ 5,755
	<u>3,849</u>	<u>5,755</u>
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable and Other Accrued Liabilities	2,890	17,815
Accrued Vacation Pay	362,281	364,706
	<u>365,171</u>	<u>382,521</u>
Net Debt	<u>(361,322)</u>	<u>(376,766)</u>
Non-Financial Assets		
Tangible Capital Assets (Note 5)	86,739	39,840
Prepaid Expenses	15,415	4,973
	<u>102,154</u>	<u>44,813</u>
Net Liabilities	<u>\$ (259,168)</u>	<u>\$ (331,953)</u>
Net Liabilities at Beginning of Year	\$ (331,953)	\$ (422,706)
Net Cost of Operations	(3,851,771)	(3,685,875)
Net Financing Provided from General Revenues	3,924,556	3,776,628
Net Liabilities at End of Year	<u>\$ (259,168)</u>	<u>\$ (331,953)</u>
Contractual Obligations (Note 8)		

The accompanying notes and schedules are part of these financial statements.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
STATEMENT OF CHANGE IN NET DEBT
YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2025

	2025		2024
	Budget		
	(Note 7)	Actual	Actual
Net Cost of Operations	\$ (4,160,080)	\$ (3,851,771)	\$ (3,685,875)
Acquisition of Tangible Capital Assets (Note 5)	-	(60,795)	(20,815)
Amortization of Tangible Capital Assets (Note 5)	11,000	13,896	8,956
Loss on Disposal of Tangible Capital Assets	-	-	377
(Increase)/Decrease in Prepaid Expenses		(10,442)	5,707
Net Financing Provided from General Revenues		3,924,556	3,776,628
Decrease in Net Debt		\$ 15,444	\$ 84,978
Net Debt at Beginning of Year		(376,766)	(461,744)
Net Debt at End of Year		\$ (361,322)	\$ (376,766)

The accompanying notes and schedules are part of these financial statements.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2025

	2025	2024
Operating Transactions		
Net Cost of Operations	\$ (3,851,771)	\$ (3,685,875)
Non-Cash Items Included in Net Cost of Operations:		
Amortization of Tangible Capital Assets (Note 5)	13,896	8,956
Loss on Disposal of Tangible Capital Assets	-	377
Valuation Adjustments	(2,425)	(68,245)
	<u>11,471</u>	<u>(58,912)</u>
Decrease/(Increase) in Accounts Receivable	1,906	(1,683)
(Increase)/Decrease in Prepaid Expenses	(10,442)	5,707
Decrease in Accounts Payable and		
Other Accrued Liabilities	(14,925)	(15,050)
Cash Applied to Operating Transactions	<u>(3,863,761)</u>	<u>(3,755,813)</u>
Capital Transactions		
Acquisition of Tangible Capital Assets (Note 5)	(60,795)	(20,815)
Cash Applied to Capital Transactions	<u>(60,795)</u>	<u>(20,815)</u>
Financing Transactions		
Net Financing Provided from General Revenues	<u>3,924,556</u>	<u>3,776,628</u>
Change in Cash	-	-
Cash at Beginning of Year	-	-
Cash at End of Year	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>

The accompanying notes and schedules are part of these financial statements.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
MARCH 31, 2025

NOTE 1 AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

The Office of the Ombudsman (the Office) operates under the authority of the *Ombudsman Act*. General Revenues of the Province of Alberta fund both the cost of operations of the Office and the purchase of tangible capital assets. The all-party Standing Committee on Legislative Offices reviews and approves the Office's annual operating and capital budgets.

The Office promotes fairness in public administration within the Government of Alberta, designated professional organizations, the patient concerns resolution process of Alberta Health Services, and Alberta municipalities.

NOTE 2 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND REPORTING PRACTICES

These financial statements are prepared in accordance with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards, which use accrual accounting.

(a) Reporting Entity

The reporting entity is the Office of the Ombudsman, which is a legislative office for which the Ombudsman is responsible.

As the Office does not have any transactions involving financial instruments that are classified in the fair value category, there is no statement of re-measurement of gains and losses.

The net cost of the operations of the Office is borne by the General Revenue Fund (the Fund) of the Province of Alberta, which is administered by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

All cash receipts of the Office are deposited into the Fund and all cash disbursements made by the Office are paid from the Fund. Net financing provided from General Revenues is the difference between all cash receipts and all cash disbursements made.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
MARCH 31, 2025

NOTE 2 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND REPORTING PRACTICES (Continued)

(b) Basis of Financial Reporting

Revenues

All revenues are reported on the accrual basis of accounting.

Expenses

Expenses are reported on an accrual basis. The cost of all goods consumed, and services received during the year are expensed.

Directly Incurred

Directly incurred expenses are those costs the Office has primary responsibility and accountability for, as reflected in the Offices of the Legislative Assembly budget documents.

In addition to program operating expenses such as salaries, supplies, etc., directly incurred expenses also include:

- a. amortization of tangible capital assets;
- b. pension costs, which comprise the cost of employer contributions for current service of employees during the year; and
- c. a valuation adjustment which represents the change in management's estimate of future payments arising from obligations relating to vacation pay.

Incurred by Others

Services contributed by other entities in support of the Office's operations are not recognized but disclosed in Schedule 2.

Financial Assets

Financial assets are assets that could be used to discharge existing liabilities or finance future operations and are not for consumption in the normal course of operations.

Financial assets are the Office's financial claims, such as advances to and receivables from other organizations, employees, and other individuals.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
MARCH 31, 2025

NOTE 2 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND REPORTING PRACTICES (Continued)

(b) Basis of Financial Reporting (Continued)

Financial Assets (Continued)

Accounts Receivable

Accounts receivable are recognized at the lower of cost or net recoverable value. A valuation allowance is recognized when recovery is uncertain.

Liabilities

Liabilities are present obligations of the Office to external organizations and individuals arising from past transactions or events occurring before the year end, the settlement of which is expected to result in the future sacrifice of economic benefits.

They are recognized when there is an appropriate basis of measurement and management can reasonably estimate the amounts.

Non-Financial Assets

Non-Financial assets are acquired, constructed, or developed assets that do not normally provide resources to discharge existing liabilities, but instead:

- a. are normally employed to deliver the Office's services;
- b. may be consumed in the normal course of operations; and
- c. are not for sale in the normal course of operations.

Non-financial assets are limited to tangible capital assets and prepaid expenses.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
MARCH 31, 2025

NOTE 2 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND REPORTING PRACTICES (Continued)

(b) Basis of Financial Reporting (Continued)

Tangible Capital Assets

Tangible capital assets of the Office are recorded at cost less accumulated amortization and amortized on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives of the assets. The threshold for capitalizing new systems development is \$250,000 and the threshold for major systems enhancements is \$100,000. The threshold for all other tangible capital assets is \$5,000.

Amortization is only charged if the tangible capital asset is put into service.

The cost, less residual value, of the tangible capital assets is amortized on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Furniture and office equipment	3 - 10 Years
Computer hardware and software	3 - 5 Years
Leasehold improvements	0 - 5 Years

Prepaid Expenses

Prepaid expenses are recognized at cost and amortized based on the terms of agreement.

(c) Net Debt

Net debt indicates additional cash required from General Revenues to finance the Office's cost of operations to March 31, 2025.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
MARCH 31, 2025

NOTE 3 FUTURE CHANGES IN ACCOUNTING STANDARDS

On April 1, 2026, the Office will adopt the following new conceptual framework and accounting standard approved by the Public Sector Accounting Board:

- **The Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting in the Public Sector**

The Conceptual Framework is the foundation for public sector financial reporting standard setting. It replaces the conceptual aspects of Section PS 1000 Financial Statement Concepts and Section PS 1100 Financial Statement Objectives. The conceptual framework highlights considerations fundamental for the consistent application of accounting issues in the absence of specific standards.

- **PS 1202 Financial Statement Presentation**

Section PS 1202 sets out general and specific requirements for the presentation of information in general purpose financial statements. The financial statement presentation principles are based on the concepts within the Conceptual Framework.

Management is currently assessing the impact of the conceptual framework and the standard on the financial statements.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
MARCH 31, 2025

NOTE 4 SUPPORT SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS

The *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act* appoints the Ombudsman to also be the Public Interest Commissioner. The Office of the Public Interest Commissioner is a separate Legislative Office physically located with the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Offices of the Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner have a formal support services agreement (the “agreement”) for provision of shared services. The Office of the Ombudsman’s employees provide general counsel, communications, and corporate (finance, human resources, information technology, administration) services to the Office of the Public Interest Commissioner.

The salaries and benefits costs of these Ombudsman employees are allocated to the Office of the Public Interest Commissioner based on the percentage of time spent providing the shared services.

The agreement authorizes the allocation of other office services (i.e., photocopier fees, etc.) paid by the Office of the Ombudsman to be allocated, on a usage basis, to the Office of the Public Interest Commissioner.

The shared services allocation is included in the voted operating estimates and statement of operations as a cost recovery for the Office of the Ombudsman and as a supplies and services expense for the Office of the Public Interest Commissioner.

For 2024-25, the Office’s cost recovery from the Office of the Public Interest Commissioner was \$440,455 (2023-24: \$450,606).

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
MARCH 31, 2025

NOTE 5 TANGIBLE CAPITAL ASSETS

	Furniture and Office Equipment	Computer Hardware and Software	Leasehold Improvements	2025 Total	2024 Total
Estimated Useful Life	3 - 10 years	3 - 5 years	0 - 5 years		
Historical Cost					
Beginning of Year	\$ 73,137	\$ -	\$ 54,035	\$ 127,172	\$ 112,012
Additions	60,795	-	-	60,795	20,815
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(5,655)
	133,932	-	54,035	187,967	127,172
Accumulated Amortization					
Beginning of Year	\$ 53,071	\$ -	\$ 34,261	\$ 87,332	\$ 83,654
Amortization Expense	9,733	-	4,163	13,896	8,956
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(5,278)
	62,804	-	38,424	101,228	87,332
Net Book Value at March 31, 2025	\$ 71,128	\$ -	\$ 15,611	\$ 86,739	
Net Book Value at March 31, 2024	\$ 20,066	\$ -	\$ 19,774	\$	39,840

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
MARCH 31, 2025

NOTE 6 BENEFIT PLANS (IN THOUSANDS)

The Office participates in the multi-employer Management Employees Pension Plan (MEPP), Public Service Pension Plan (PSPP) and Supplementary Retirement Plan (SRP). The expense for these pension plans is equivalent to the annual contributions of \$380 for the year ended March 31, 2025 (2024: \$359).

At December 31, 2024, the MEPP had a surplus of \$1,865,997 (2023: surplus \$1,316,313), the PSPP had a surplus of \$6,473,956 (2023: surplus \$4,542,500) and the SRP for Public Service Managers had a deficit of \$25,325 (2023: deficit \$21,343).

The Office also participates in the multi-employer Long Term Disability Income Continuance Plan. At March 31, 2025, the Management, Opted Out and Excluded Plan reported a deficit of \$775 (2024: deficit \$6,855). The expense for this plan is limited to the employer's annual contributions for the year.

NOTE 7 BUDGET

The budget shown on the statement of operations is based on the budgeted expenses that the all-party Standing Committee on Legislative Offices approved on December 15, 2023. The following table compares the office's actual expenditures, excluding non-voted amounts such as amortization, to the approved budgets:

	Voted budget	Actual	Unexpended / (Over Expended)
Operating Expenditures	\$ 4,574,080	\$ 4,313,833	\$ 260,247
Capital Investments	-	60,795	(60,795)
	\$ 4,574,080	\$ 4,374,628	\$ 199,452

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
MARCH 31, 2025

NOTE 8 CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS

Contractual obligations are obligations of the Office to others that will become liabilities in the future when the terms of those contracts or agreements are met.

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
Obligations under operating leases, contracts and programs	\$293,140	\$250,341

Estimated payment requirements for each of the next three years are as follows:

Obligations under operating leases, contracts and programs

2025-26	\$ 106,370
2026-27	98,553
2027-28	88,217
	<u>\$ 293,140</u>

NOTE 9 APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

These financial statements were approved by the Senior Financial Officer and the Ombudsman.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
SALARY AND BENEFITS DISCLOSURE
YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2025

	2025			2024	
	Other				
	Base Salary	Other Cash	Non-Cash	Total	Total
	(1)	Benefits (2)	Benefits (3)		
Senior Official ^{(4) (5)}					
Ombudsman /					
Public Interest Commissioner	\$ 270,554	\$ -	\$ 75,998	\$ 346,552	\$ 319,166
Executive ^{(5) (6)}					
Deputy Ombudsman / Deputy					
Public Interest Commissioner	206,577	114	50,007	256,698	202,280
	\$ 477,131	\$ 114	\$ 126,005	\$ 603,250	\$ 521,446

(1) Base salary is comprised of regular salary.

(2) Other cash benefits include vacation payouts, employee service milestone cash awards and lump sum payments.

(3) Other non-cash benefits include the employer's share of all employee benefits and contributions or payments made on behalf of employees including pension, supplementary retirement plans, health care, dental coverage, group life insurance, short and long term disability plans, professional memberships, tuition fees, and parking.

(4) Other non-cash benefits for the Ombudsman/Public Interest Commissioner paid by the Office also include \$10,073 (2024: \$10,300) for lease, fuel, insurance, and maintenance expenses for an automobile provided. The Ombudsman/Public Interest Commissioner receives an automobile taxable benefit based on personal usage.

(5) The Senior Official is both the Ombudsman and the Public Interest Commissioner, and the Executive is both the Deputy Ombudsman and the Deputy Public Interest Commissioner. These positions do not receive additional remuneration for their Public Interest Commissioner roles. This schedule represents 100% of total salary and benefits for the Senior Official and the Executive for fiscal years 2024-25 and 2023-24.

(6) The position was occupied by two individuals during the year as the incumbent commenced on April 15, 2024 and the first individual retired on July 9, 2024.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
ALLOCATED COSTS
YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2025

Program	2025				2024
	Expenses - Incurred by Others				Total Expenses
	Expenses ⁽¹⁾	Accommodation Costs ⁽²⁾	Business Services ⁽³⁾	Total Expenses	
Operations	\$ 3,884,848	\$ 327,493	\$ 48,000	\$ 4,260,341	\$ 4,098,615

⁽¹⁾ Expenses – Directly Incurred per the Statement of Operations.

⁽²⁾ Accommodation - expenses allocated by the total square meters occupied by the Office.

⁽³⁾ Business Services - costs include charges allocated by Service Alberta for finance services (accounts payable, pay and benefits), 1GX – the financial and human resources system, and GOA Learning Center training fees.



Edmonton Office

9925 – 109 Street NW, Suite 700
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J8

Phone: 780.427.2756

Fax: 780.427.2759

Calgary Office

801 – 6 Avenue SW, Suite 2560
Calgary, Alberta T2P 3W2

Phone: 403.297.6185

Fax: 403.297.5121

Throughout North America call
toll free 1.888.455.2756

Email: info@ombudsman.ab.ca

Online complaint form
available at www.ombudsman.ab.ca

