

Making a complaint to the Ontario Ombudsman

The Ontario Ombudsman's office is usually called "the Ombudsman". The Ombudsman takes complaints from people who feel they were not treated fairly by a provincial or city service. For example:

- an Ontario Works (OW) case worker is not answering them about an urgent issue
- an urgent Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) hearing keeps getting delayed
- a family member is not getting medical care in jail

Ombudsman staff try to help resolve the complaint.

There is no cost to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. The complaints are confidential. Your name and personal information will not be shared unless you agree.

Who can I make a complaint about?

You can make a complaint about any of the government organizations that are listed on the Ombudsman's website.

There are over 1,000 of these organizations. Some of the most common are:

- municipalities, which run Ontario Works (OW)

- the Ministry of Children Community and Social Services, which runs the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and the Family Responsibility Office (FRO)
- Tribunals Ontario, which oversees the Landlord Tenant Board (LTB) and Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT)
- Children’s Aid Society (CAS)
- School boards

You can see the full list at ombudsman.on.ca/have-a-complaint/who-we-oversee.

You can also call **1-800-263-1830** or email info@ombudsman.on.ca to ask the ombudsman:

- which organization runs the service you want to complain about
- if the Ombudsman oversees the organization you want to complain about

If the Ombudsman cannot take your complaint, they will try to find another organization that can help you.

French language services

If you had a problem getting French services from an Ontario government or designated agency, you can make a complaint to the Ombudsman’s **French Language Services Unit**.

Designated agencies have agreed to provide services in French. There are over 250 in Ontario, including some hospitals, long-term care centers, and daycares. Learn more at ombudsman.on.ca/what-we-do/topics/french-language-services.

When can I make a complaint?

Before you go to the Ombudsman, you must try to solve your problem directly with the government organization. Use their complaint process. For example, if your OW gets cut off you must ask the OW office for a review. For other services, you may be able to speak to a supervisor or the complaints department.

If you cannot find information on the service's complaint process, you can ask the organization. You can also call the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman staff can help you understand what you need to do before you can make a complaint with them.

How do I make a complaint to the Ombudsman?

You can make a complaint using:

- the online form on the Ombudsman's website:
ombudsman.on.ca/have-a-complaint/make-a-complaint
- email: info@ombudsman.on.ca
- phone: **1-800-263-1830**
- TTY: **1-866-411-4211**
- mail:

Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario
483 Bay Street
10th floor, South Tower
Toronto, ON M5G 2C9

If you want to talk to someone in person, you must first call or email the Ombudsman to make an appointment.

In your complaint you must:

- name the organization you're having issues with
- explain what happened
- describe the steps you've taken to solve the issue with the organization
- give your contact information

You do not have to send in any documents with your complaint. But you may be asked to send some in later.

The Ombudsman will contact you first by phone or by email to talk about your complaint. Then they decide if they need documents or more information from you. For example:

- emails between you and the organization to show what you did to try and fix the problem, or
- appeal or review decisions that show you followed the organization's complaint process.

You can email or mail these documents to the Ombudsman. Their contact information is on page 3.

What happens after I make a complaint?

Ombudsman staff start with an informal review of your complaint. They might ask you for more information or for your permission to talk to the organization about your complaint.

They may review the service's policies to see if they're fair. Or if you give them permission, they may talk to officials from the organization about your situation.

The Ombudsman can usually get faster responses and speak to more senior officials. These conversations can lead to an early resolution.

An early resolution means that the organization tries to fix the problem without going through a formal investigation. For example, the organization could:

- explain its decision
- reinstate your benefits
- give you retroactive benefits
- change an unfair policy
- apologize to you

Most complaints are resolved this way within 2 weeks.

Formal investigations

If an early resolution is not possible, the Ombudsman may decide to do a formal investigation. A formal investigation is rare.

In a formal investigation, the Ombudsman gathers evidence through interviews and documents. The organization gets a chance to respond to your complaint.

The Ombudsman cannot force the organization to do anything. But the Ombudsman may make recommendations to try and prevent other complaints about the service. They also check to make sure the organization is following the recommendations.

If enough people make the same complaint, the Ombudsman may release a report to the public about it. You can find the reports at ombudsman.on.ca/resources/reports-and-case-summaries.

Complaining about the Ombudsman

If you're unhappy with how the Ombudsman staff handled your complaint, you can email the office at info@ombudsman.on.ca. You can also send a complaint by mail to the address on [page 3](#) or fax it to **416-586-3485**.

Visit stepstojustice.ca for more about income assistance and legal help. This is general information for people in Ontario, Canada. It's not legal advice.

Cette publication est également disponible en français

Vous pourriez avoir droit à des services en français du gouvernement et des fournisseurs désignés. Visitez justicepasapas.ca/droits-linguistiques-francophones.