



**Ombudsman  
Saskatchewan**



**Public Interest  
Disclosure  
Commissioner**

# What is fairness?

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# What is fairness?



# Agenda

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- What is fairness?
- Solving Problems / Applying Rules Fairly
- How an Ombudsman Can Help
- Case Study



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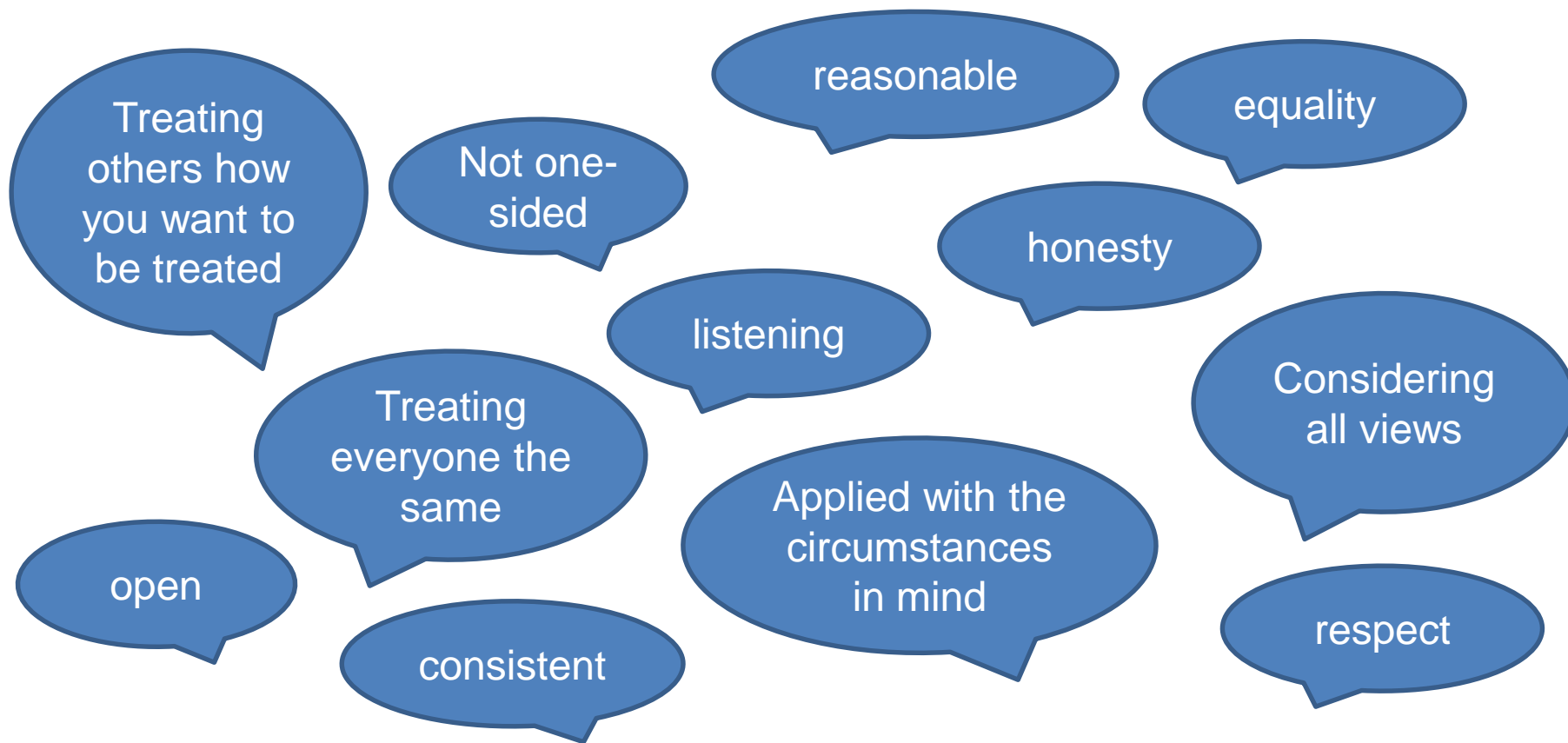
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# What is fairness?

- How do you look at fairness?



# What is fairness?

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- You as the decision-maker
- Other decision-makers



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# Solving Problems / Applying Rules Fairly

- Leona's story
  - What can Leona do?



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# Solving Problems / Applying Rules Fairly

- If I think an unfair decision has been made about me, I can:
  - Find out who made the decision.
  - Try to find out what the decision was based on.
    - What rules would apply?
    - What facts did the decision-maker have?
  - Ask the decision-maker to reconsider
    - Can I present my facts
    - Is there a manager or appeal process?



# Solving Problems / Applying Rules Fairly

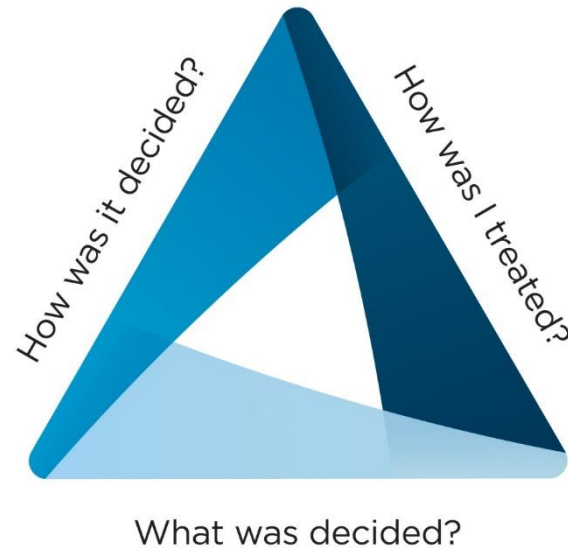
- What do decision-makers need to think about when applying rules?
  - Recognize unique situations.
  - Look at all the relevant facts.
  - Give reasons for the decision.
  - Make sure people can understand the reasons.
  - Recognize that you might make an unfair decision, so:
    - Have a good appeal process.
    - Be willing to change unfair decisions.





# Solving Problems /Applying Rules Fairly

- Two tools
  - The Fairness Triangle\*



- Interest-based decision-making / resolution

\*Developed from the concept of the satisfaction triangle in: Moore, Christopher (2003). *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers



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# How an Ombudsman Can Help

- An ombudsman can help resolve issues that people have been unable to resolve themselves.
- Ombudsman (Swedish) = “citizen’s representative”
  - helped to ensure the government was treating people fairly



# Important Qualities in an Ombudsman

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- independent
- impartial
- confidential
- have an effective and credible review process



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# About Ombudsman Saskatchewan

## Ombudsman Saskatchewan:

- promotes and protects fairness in government services, including:
- can take complaints about the decisions and actions of:
  - Over 200 provincial organizations
  - Saskatchewan's 780 cities, towns, villages, rural municipalities, etc.



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# What kinds of complaints do we take?

## We take complaints about

- provincial ministries, agencies, boards, tribunals
- Crown corporations
- regional health authorities and publicly-funded health organizations
- municipal entities (and their council members)

## Some examples:

- Ministry of Social Services
- Ministry of Parks, Culture & Sport
- SGI
- SaskPower
- Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region
- Pioneer Village
- City of Regina



# What kinds of complaints don't we take?

We cannot take complaints about:

- the federal government
- courts
- decisions of Cabinet
- school boards
- private companies
- individuals

Some examples:

- Canada Revenue Agency
- a decision made by a judge
- a government decision to twin a highway
- Luther College High School
- coffee shop
- neighbours



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# Who can contact the Ombudsman?

- Anyone. By:
  - phone
  - coming into the office
  - writing us a letter
  - on-line complaint form
- There is no charge for making a complaint to our Office.

Promoting  
& Protecting  
Fairness in  
**Government  
Services.**

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*Promoting Fairness*

# What other ombudsman are there?

- Some examples in Canada:
  - Other provincial ombudsman
  - Banking Ombudsman
  - Correctional Investigator
  - Taxpayers Ombudsman
  - Ombudsman offices in universities and colleges

Many other countries also have ombudsman.



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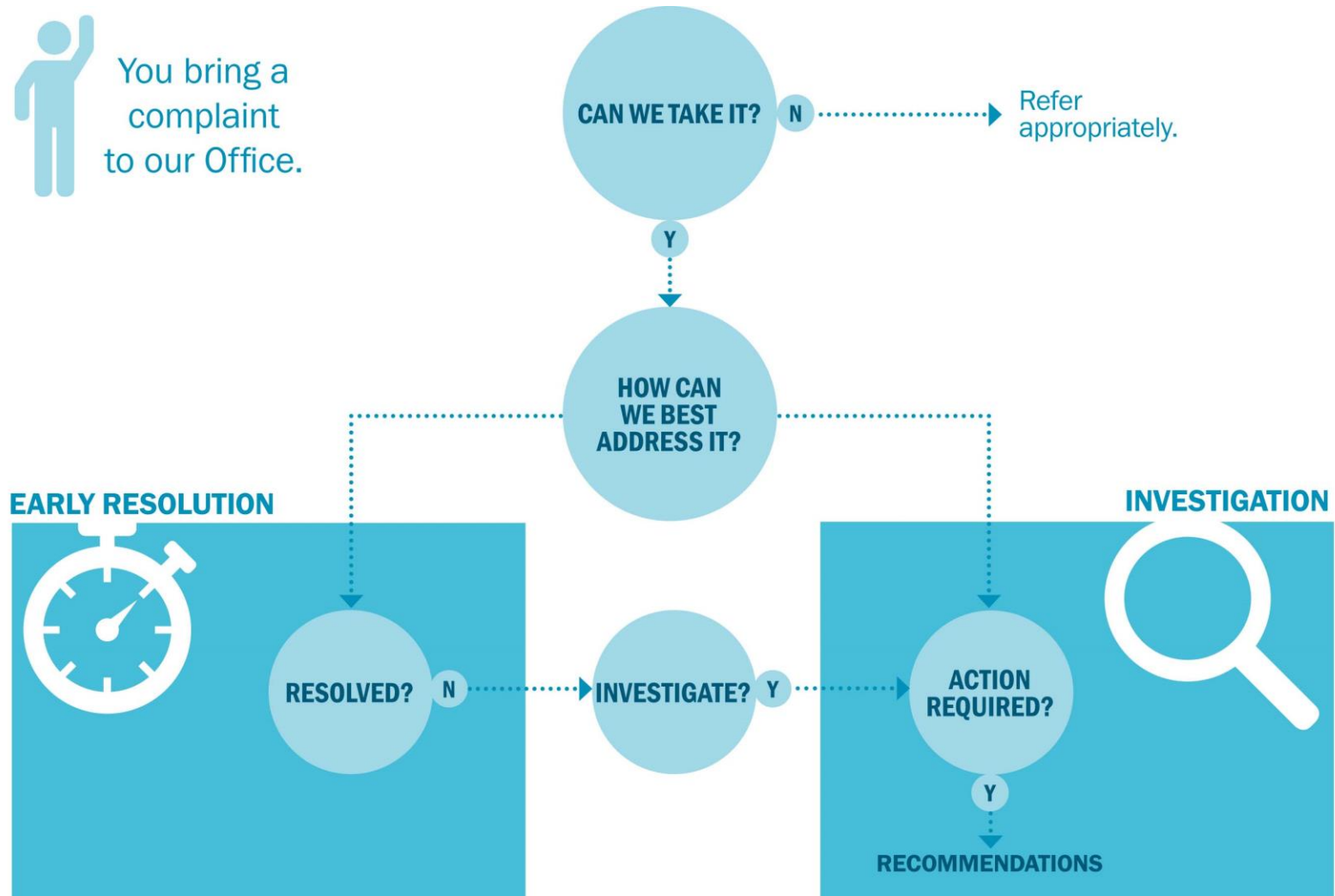
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# Complaint Process



You bring a complaint to our Office.



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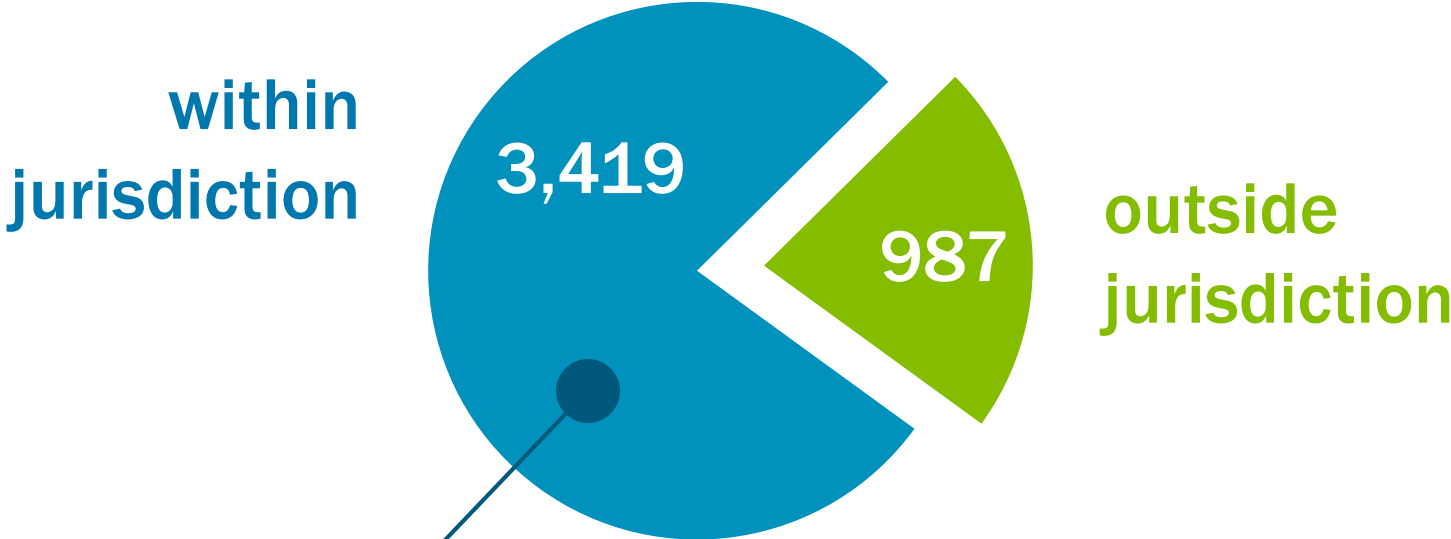
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# 2016 Statistics

## 4,406 Complaints Received



25 recommendations made to 9 institutions / programs



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# Julia's Story – Part One

- Julia was taking a program at Saskatchewan Polytechnic.
- She passed the academic portion, but on her last day, she learned that she had failed the practical portion of one of her required classes.
- As a result, she would be discontinued from the program.
- She also learned that she was being accused of cheating on the final exam.
  - If you were Julia, what would you do next to try to solve this problem?
  - Who would you talk to?
  - What would you ask for?



# Julia's Story – Part Two

- Julia asked to see how her grade was reached, but was not provided any additional information.
- She filed a student appeal, but was told that she should apply for a grade appeal instead. She did so, but the appeal was denied.
- Julia believed that she was being treated unfairly and contacted our Office.
  - If you worked at the Ombudsman's Office, how would you try to solve this problem?
  - What questions would you ask?





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**Thank you !  
Questions?**

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