



Suite 150 - 2401 Saskatchewan Drive
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 4H8

Tel: 306.787.6211
Toll free: 1.800.667.7180
Fax: 306.787.9090
Email: ombreg@ombudsman.sk.ca

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OMBUDSMAN TAKES A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO FAIRNESS

Saskatchewan's Ombudsman, Kevin Fenwick, is taking a pro-active approach to fairness and he wants government to do the same. In his *Annual Report 2011*, tabled today in the Saskatchewan Legislature, Fenwick says that when complaints come into his office, the person may have to deal with the government ministry or agency again, so pro-active measures are worthwhile: "It is important that we don't just help them fix the problem, but that we leave them with a better problem-solving process."

This is the kind of thinking that led his office to develop "The Fine Art of Fairness," a workshop for government employees. Demand for the workshop is growing and openings for 2012 are fully booked. Another proactive option is the fairness lens review – an opportunity for a government ministry or agency to invite the ombudsman to review a new or existing process and make suggestions for improving fairness.

The Ombudsman also remains concerned about overcrowding in correctional centres, particularly in the wake of federal Bill C-10. He wants to ensure that programming – one of the centres' most proactive functions – remains a high priority. "Every time a classroom is converted into a dormitory, every time resources must be reallocated away from education and training for prisoners, and every time correctional centres are reduced to just guarding inmates, our jails take a step backward.... In order for inmates leaving these facilities to be contributing members of society who are less likely to go back to jail, we have to give them skills."

In his own office, Fenwick and his staff have completed several initiatives in 2011 that will help make their own services more effective. These include:

- enhancement of the office's health services program, including a health team of three Assistant Ombudsmen.
- continued work on systemic reviews, which often benefit many people (for example, *A Matter of Time: An Investigation into the Management of Wait Lists for Breast Cancer Treatment in Saskatchewan*).
- implementation of a Lean analysis of the office's own process from intake through to recommendations and file closure.
- analysis of public awareness of the office and development of advertising concepts that will help people understand more about the services of the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman Saskatchewan *Annual Report 2011* is available online at www.ombudsman.sk.ca.

promoting fairness

The Ombudsman is an Officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan who promotes and protects fairness in the design and delivery of government services. He has the authority to take complaints from members of the public who believe the government administration has not dealt fairly with them. The office provides a range of services, including investigation, negotiation and mediation. Government administration includes any ministry, branch, board, agency or commission, responsible to the Crown, and any public servant in Saskatchewan. The Ombudsman operates under *The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act*.

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Media contact:

Leila Dueck

Director of Communications

Ombudsman Saskatchewan

Phone: 306-787-7369

E-mail: ldueck@ombudsman.sk.ca