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### **OMBUDSMAN CREDITS STAFF FOR SERVICE TO CITIZENS IN 50<sup>TH</sup> YEAR**

Annual reports for 2022 for Saskatchewan's Ombudsman and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner were tabled in the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly today – a historic year, since the office is approaching its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Sharon Pratchler, who became the office's 7<sup>th</sup> Ombudsman on November 1, credits the staff of the office for serving citizens over the past 50 years.

She said, "While processes and practices have evolved over time, what has remained constant over the last fifty years is the dedication of the Ombudsman staff. Every day, the team makes a difference in the lives of Saskatchewan citizens by helping achieve fair and timely resolutions to issues in the delivery of public services."

When the first Ombudsman, Ernest Boychuk, opened the office on May 3, 1973, he received 70 requests for assistance in the first month – so the need for staff was clear, right from the beginning. Since then, the office has received over 160,000 requests for assistance. There have been seven Ombudsmen, and about 160 staff and practicum students. Pratchler said, "As we near the office's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I want to thank all the staff, past and present, for their services to the province."

Reflecting on the work her own staff did in 2022, she noted that it ran the gamut, from municipalities to health services to Crown corporations to provincial government ministries and agencies. In each case, the office reviewed the concerns that came in and decided how to handle them. As much as possible, staff helped people resolve problems informally. They also conducted investigations when appropriate. The report provides examples of both.

Pratchler also noted that individual files can point to broader trends. For example, some Social Services files highlighted issues with timeliness and accuracy. In one case, a citizen waited a year for a decision and receipt of benefits to heat his home for the winter (p10). More examples are on pages 8 and 16.

She also provided examples of investigations into the regulation of facilities for older adults. For example, an older adult was improperly denied admission to a long-term care facility in her hometown. The Saskatchewan Health Authority could have taken a more active role in the process, but there was some confusion over jurisdiction since the facility was an affiliate (p. 20). Another example is on page 21.

The office also continued to receive requests for assistance from public sector employees under *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*. Reports are available at [www.ombudsman.sk.ca/resources/annual-reports/](http://www.ombudsman.sk.ca/resources/annual-reports/). The Ombudsman and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner is a Legislative Officer operating under *The Ombudsman Act, 2012* and *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*.

– 30 –

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