

# Ombudsman Saskatchewan

Annual Report  
2023

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The Needs of Citizens	2
Focus on Municipalities	3
Files Received in 2023	4
Our Team	5
What we Hear From Citizens	6
How do we Assess Fairness?	7
Case Examples	9
Common Goal of Continuous Improvement	19
Our Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation	20
Outreach 2023	21
Statistics	22
Where Requests Came From	22
Corrections	23
Social Services	24
Crown Corporations	25
Other Ministries	26
Ministry of Justice	27
Health Organizations	27
Agencies, Boards, and Commissions	28
Budget	29

## PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE COMMISSIONER ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Commissioner's Message	32
Our Work in 2023	33



**Ombudsman  
Saskatchewan**  
*Promoting Fairness*

April 2024

The Honourable Randy Weekes  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Province of Saskatchewan  
Room 129, Legislative Building  
2405 Legislative Drive  
Regina SK S4S 0B3

Dear Mr. Speaker:

As required by subsection 38(1) of *The Ombudsman Act, 2012*, I am pleased to submit to you the annual report of the Saskatchewan Ombudsman for 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Syp'.

Sharon Pratchler, K.C.  
Ombudsman

# THE NEEDS OF CITIZENS

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The Legislature has entrusted our office with a very broad statutory mandate, which includes all ministries of the provincial government, health entities including the Saskatchewan Health Authority, Crown Corporations, and all municipalities in Saskatchewan.

As a result, we receive a high volume of requests for assistance. This year was no exception, with a total of 3,660 requests for assistance received.

Citizens value timely resolutions to their complaints, so we rely on collaboration, education and coaching to achieve early resolution of files through non-adversarial methods.

Although we have a high volume of inquiries, we continue to deliver a timely service. Of the total files closed in 2023, 96% were resolved within 90 days, while 99% were resolved within 180 days.

Only 1% of our files continued after the 180 day mark.

There is an educational component to all the work we do. We believe that education can reduce the number of requests for assistance we receive.

In 2023, we focused a considerable amount of our efforts on providing learning opportunities to public officials who provide services to citizens.

The theme of that education offered by our office was relational fairness, because almost all of our files have an element of “how was I treated?”.



Sharon Pratchler, K.C.  
Ombudsman

**“Of the total Ombudsman files closed in 2023, 96% were resolved within 90 days, while 99% were resolved within 180 days. Only 1% of our files continued after the 180 day mark.”**

# FOCUS ON MUNICIPALITIES

The Legislature provided our office with municipal jurisdiction in 2015. Since that time, we have had 3,900 requests for assistance involving municipal issues.

Municipal work consistently ranks as one of the top 3 areas where citizens contact our office.

## Total municipal requests to date

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
<b>Requests</b>	33	506	572	452	403	459	546	465	464	<b>3900</b>

Municipal entity breakdown:

	2023	2022	2021
Cities	129	138	136
Towns	108	87	113
Villages	57	55	92
Resort Villages	21	15	23
Rural Municipalities	123	150	161
Northern Municipalities	20	15	15
Other/Undisclosed	6	5	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>546</b>

Top municipal issues\* raised in 2023 were:

- 11% - services, such as garbage, snow removal, water, and landfill
- 12% - bylaws and bylaw enforcement
- 19% - code of ethics and conflict of interest of elected municipal officials

\* There can be more than one issue per file. In 2023, 613 issues were identified.

# FILES RECEIVED IN 2023

## Files in Jurisdiction: 2723

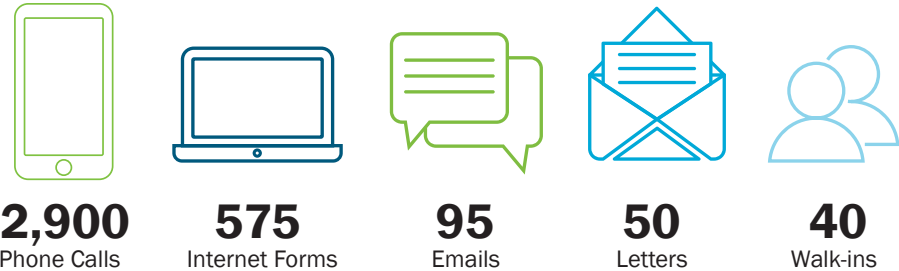


Social Services	650
Corrections	599
Municipalities	464
Health	257
SGI	218
SaskPower	107
Justice	62
WCB	54
ORT	53
Other	259

## Files out of Jurisdiction: 937

Courts/Legal	63	Other	67
Federal Government	140	Private Company	232
First Nations Government	14	Private Matter	71
Landlord-Tenant	190	Professional	45
Non-Jur. Education	37	RCMP	31
Non-Jur. Health	47		

## How files were received



# OUR TEAM

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Ziad Al-Husseini  
Assistant Ombudsman

Femi Atilola  
Assistant Ombudsman

Kirby Bezan  
Administrative Assistant

Jesseca Beals  
Assistant Ombudsman

Christy Bell  
Assistant Ombudsman

Taylor Boychuk  
Assistant Ombudsman

Leila Dueck  
Director of Communications

Delainey Guigon  
Assistant Ombudsman

Jennifer Hall  
Assistant Ombudsman

Kyla Iron  
Assistant Ombudsman

Adrienne Jacques  
Assistant Ombudsman

Ryan Kennedy  
Manager of Outreach

Lindsay Mitchell  
Assistant Ombudsman

Charlene Mouly  
Manager of Corporate Services

Promi Osman  
Assistant Ombudsman

Sherry Pelletier  
Assistant Ombudsman

Sharon Pratchler  
Ombudsman

Hannah Quách  
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman

Shelley Rissling  
Administrative Assistant

Niki Smith  
Assistant Ombudsman

Jason Stamm  
Assistant Ombudsman

Kamryn Stewart  
Assistant Ombudsman

Emmanuel Tanko  
Administrative Assistant

Laurie Taylor  
Executive Administrative  
Assistant

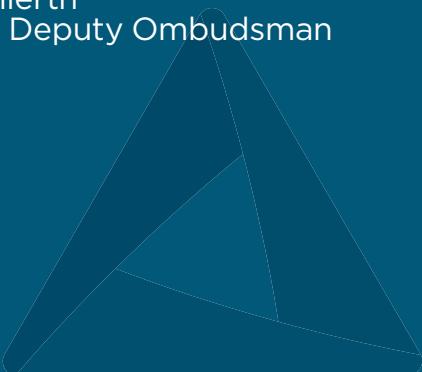
Kathy Upton  
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman

Harry Walker  
Assistant Ombudsman

Rob Walton  
Deputy Ombudsman

Kathy Willerth  
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman

**I see you.  
I hear you.  
What you say matters.**



# WHAT WE HEAR FROM CITIZENS

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In 2023 our Administrative Assistants answered 2,900 phone calls from citizens throughout the province. They have prepared the summary below to describe what they hear from citizens.

As the first point of contact in our office, admin has a great opportunity to set the tone for our organization. We receive calls from all corners of the province and everywhere in between and have had quite a geography lesson over the years!

Our callers come from diverse backgrounds, ages, and abilities.

Often, our callers are frustrated when they contact our office.

- They may have already made many other calls to other public entities.
- They may have reached only recorded messages and not had the opportunity to talk about their concerns.
- They may have “jumped through hoops” only to be denied or turned away for something they perhaps do not even understand.
- Perhaps they may be homeless or don’t have access to a phone and have run out of options.
- They may have been told they have to complete forms online and have no access to a computer or are not tech savvy.

We do not suggest that our office can fix all problems or complaints. However, what we will do is listen.

We strive to offer a friendly greeting, a kind word, listening to understand and not to judge. We see you, we hear you, what you say matters.

**Many know our office as a place to bring their complaint forward, but others call with questions, or are seeking resources, or want to express concerns or just “did not know where else to call”.**



# HOW DO WE ASSESS FAIRNESS?

There are 3 aspects to administrative fairness, which will also affect a citizen's level of satisfaction with a decision made by a public entity.

- Relationship – How was I treated?
- Process – How was it decided?
- Outcome – What was decided?



\* Ombudsman Saskatchewan developed the fairness triangle based on the concept of the satisfaction triangle in: Moore, Christopher (2009). The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict (3rd ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

\*\* Teachings from Myrna McCallum at 2023 workshop: Trauma Informed Engagement for SK Ombuds Office.

The questions which our office considers when reviewing each of these three components of fairness include:

#### Relationship - How was I treated?

- Did the interaction reflect the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation?
- Were trauma-informed practices used?
- Was the government or public entity willing to actively listen?
- Did I feel heard?
- Were there any barriers to me accessing the service?

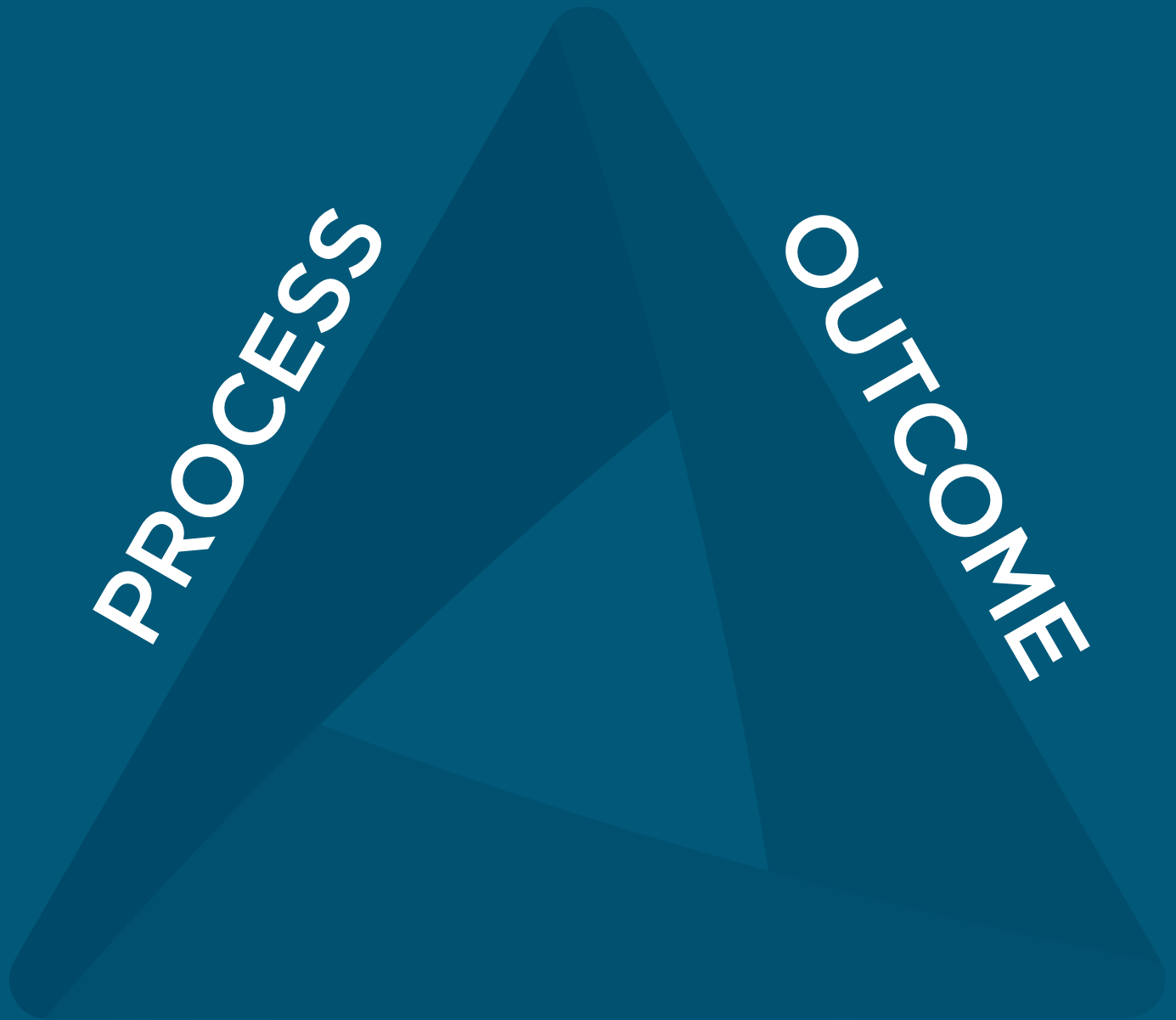
#### Process - How was the decision made?

- Did I feel the decision-maker had already made up their mind or that they had a conflict of interest that affected the result?
- Was I notified that a decision was going to be made?
- Was I able to participate and clarify information?
- Was I given adequate reasons for the decision?
- Could the decision be appealed?

#### Outcome - What was decided?

- Did the government or public entity have the legal authority to make the decision?
- Did the decision-maker consider their discretion and clearly identify any reasons why it was not applied?
- Was the decision based on relevant information?
- Was the decision based in fact and in law?
- Was there a logical connection between the findings and decision?
- If a policy was applied, did it reflect the legislation?

# CASE EXAMPLES



# RELATIONSHIP

Requests to the Ombudsman Office are confidential.  
Throughout this report, names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

## What is the source of legal authority?

As a public servant, it is always important to be able to point to a specific legal authority in order to take action that affects a citizen. These are the types of questions that should be regularly asked by public servants – where is the authority for us to take this action? What is the scope of that authority and how must it be exercised, in particular, what criteria must be met before the authority is exercised?

One of the first questions our office will consider is whether there was legal authority for a public entity to take the action that it did. The following case example is one where a rural municipality (RM) had the ability to implement a fee but had not passed a bylaw to actually do so. As a result, the RM could not point to a specific bylaw to authorize the administration fee they were imposing.

Alexander owns land in an RM but has not planted a crop in several years. His neighbours complained about the weeds and seeds that invaded their crops from Alexander's land, but Alexander did nothing. The RM began spraying his land for weeds and charging Alexander for the costs of doing so. The RM decided to add a 15% administration fee to any work it did on Alexander's land and passed a resolution to do so. The RM also added the administration fee to his bills retroactively for one year. This added several thousands of dollars to Alexander's bill.

Alexander was fine with paying the RM for the costs to spray his land, because it would cost him the same amount to do so, but he didn't think the administration fee was fair and contacted our office. We reviewed his complaint but couldn't find a bylaw or section of *The Municipalities Act* that allowed the RM to charge a fee like this.

**One of the first questions our office will consider is whether there was legal authority for a public entity to take the action that it did.**

We contacted the RM to ask some questions. The RM told us it had consulted with an agronomist who said a crop needed to be planted on Alexander's land to compete with the weeds but since Alexander would not do so, spraying for weeds was the next best thing. The RM told us that it was tired of managing Alexander's land and was looking for ways to encourage him to manage the land himself. The RM had an agreement with another agency that charged the RM a 15% administration fee for custom work and thought it might work in this case. We asked the RM which bylaw or section of the legislation allowed it to levy this fee. The RM said it would get back to us.

A few weeks later, the RM told us that after consulting with the Ministry of Government Relations, it could not charge an administration fee without passing a bylaw allowing it to do so. As a result, the RM reversed the administration fees on Alexander’s bills for the previous year. The RM then passed a bylaw allowing it to add this fee to work it does on behalf of landowners, meaning it will be added to all custom work the RM does on behalf of ratepayers.

Our office took no position on Alexander’s actions; we simply wanted to make sure the RM had the legal authority to implement the administration fees in the first place. While it did have the legal authority to implement fees like this, it had to pass a bylaw to do so. Since the RM reversed its decision and then used the proper process to charge the fees, we considered this file resolved.

## Is the policy consistent with the legislation?

Another question our office encounters in our work is whether policies that have been created to guide the implementation of legislation and regulations are consistent with them. Policies must not change or limit the parameters set for a program in legislation and regulations – rather, the policies must respect and comply with the legislation and regulations.

In this case example, there were two particular issues with the use of a policy by the Ministry of Social Services (MSS) to assess special diet benefits – first, the policy imposed a limit or restriction that did not exist in the regulations and second, there was an inconsistent application of the policy among regions.

The Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disabilities (SAID) program ensures individuals on the program have access to sufficient and nutritious food to support overall health and independence. Proper nutrition plays a key role in managing various health conditions and can significantly impact a person’s overall well-being.

Abigail is a recipient of SAID. They have complex dietary needs that require multiple prescribed nutrition plans and felt that they had not received benefits for all their dietary needs.

For the last 5 years, the Ministry only issued benefits for Abigail’s highest cost diet, although vitamins and supplements had also been prescribed by medical professionals. In addition, when Abigail moved from one region to another, MSS denied Abigail’s special diet benefits unless receipts for reimbursement were supplied or the name of the supplier was provided for direct billing. This had not been required by MSS in the previous region where Abigail resided.

**Policies must not change or limit the parameters set for a program in legislation and regulations – rather, the policies must respect and comply with the legislation and regulations.**

Abigail felt that their treatment under the policy was unfair and sought to have their special diet benefits incorporated into their monthly benefits.

In June 2023, we gave MSS notice that we would be investigating Abigail's complaint. Our investigation found that the Ministry imposed additional restrictions to special diet benefits through policy that did not exist in the legislation or regulations. The SAID regulations state that actual costs can be provided, which would encompass all prescribed nutritional needs and not just the highest cost diet.

Additionally, we found that MSS did not have consistent processes across the province for how special diet benefits were issued. In the one region, they allowed an initial costing that was added to monthly benefits but in another region, MSS required submission of receipts or the name of a supplier for direct billing.

During the investigation, MSS informed us they were doing a proactive review of all of Abigail's special diet benefits from 2017 to present. MSS acknowledged that their legislation allowed them to pay for all prescribed diets. The completed review resulted in MSS issuing an adjustment of just over \$5,700 to Abigail on September 20, 2023.

## When discretion exists in legislation, has it been considered?

Legislation generally contains discretion to allow for a consideration of the particular circumstances of an individual when applying the provisions of the statute. Our office will consider the discretion that is given to the decision-maker and whether the decision-maker considered where discretion should be exercised. The impact on the individual of not exercising the discretion will also be considered.

*The Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* provides discretion to hearing officers and the director to adjourn hearings. The discretion provided by the Legislative Assembly in the Act is framed in very broad terms and allows a hearing officer or director to adjourn a hearing without placing any limitations on when they can exercise this power.

**Legislation generally contains discretion to allow for a consideration of the particular circumstances of an individual when applying the provisions of the statute.**

Albert contacted our office with concerns that the Office of Residential Tenancies (ORT) process for hearing his claim against his landlord was not fair, specifically in the handling of adjournment requests and appeal options.

Albert's hearing was scheduled for December 2022 but was adjourned at the request of the landlord due to a work travel conflict. A new date was selected for a month later.

A few days prior to the new hearing date, Albert requested an adjournment, noting that he had moved and his computer containing his evidence was not working. He requested additional time to get his documents to present during the hearing.

The ORT's response to Albert was that pre-hearing adjournment requests are generally only considered for matters of time conflict. Given no reference to a time conflict, his request would not be considered. Albert attempted to raise his request further but received no more response from the ORT in advance of the hearing.

The hearing officer dismissed the claim, given Albert could not be reached at the time of the hearing. Albert emailed the ORT afterward noting that he is homeless and had phone access issues. He was informed that the claim was dismissed and was provided directions to submit a re-hearing request.

After doing so, he received a response from the ORT to advise his request to have a re-hearing was denied. This time he was directed to resubmit his claim via a new application.

Albert resubmitted his application and ORT rejected the claim on the basis that his tenancy now exceeded the 1 year time limit to file a claim. No decision was made so Albert had no access to an appeal to the Court of King's Bench.

We contacted the Deputy Director of Adjudication to discuss the process for dismissed or "abandoned" claims, and specifically the facts around this file. After reviewing the timeline and communications that occurred between Albert and the ORT, the Deputy Director agreed to review the file in further detail.

The Deputy Director agreed to use discretion and accept Albert's refiled claim. This would give Albert a chance to have his claim heard via the hearing process and receive a decision from the hearing officer. At that point, if Albert disagreed with the outcome, he would have the same access to an appeal as any other claimant.

## How to apologize when mistakes are made

From a relational fairness perspective, governments have the obligation to treat citizens with respect and acknowledge their mistakes. Where there are issues with the process used to make a decision and mistakes were made, it is reasonable to expect an unequivocal acknowledgement of the mistakes and an apology for their impact.

Annabelle and Edward have a home in one RM and agricultural land in an adjacent RM which has allowed them to claim a property tax exemption on the property where their home is located.

They noticed that their property taxes had increased by over 300% and began making inquiries. They were advised their home was located in an unorganized hamlet and they no longer qualified for the exemption. An amendment to ***The Municipalities Act*** came into effect in 2021 which removed a specific tax exemption for property located in an unorganized hamlet.

Annabelle did some research and learned the subdivision where their home was located did not meet the definition of an unorganized hamlet in the Act.

**From a relational fairness perspective, governments have the obligation to treat citizens with respect and acknowledge their mistakes.**

The Administrator for the RM consulted the Ministry of Government Relations - Municipal Advisory Services who confirmed Annabelle's home was not located in an unorganized hamlet and the exemption should have been applied. The RM Administrator advised the Reeve and Annabelle's division Councillor that they had made an error in not applying the exemption to Annabelle's home property.

After some digging, the Reeve concluded - wrongly - that Annabelle had a home in the adjacent RM that had already received the exemption and according to the legislation they could not receive it in both RMs.

The RM Administrator drafted a letter to Annabelle acknowledging the error in defining the subdivision as an unorganized hamlet but advising the opportunity to appeal had passed and Annabelle had received an exemption in the adjacent RM so the decision would stand. The Administrator vetted the draft through the Reeve and the ratepayer's division Councillor. The Reeve amended the letter to remove any acknowledgement of error.

Annabelle made a request to Council as a whole for the exemption to be applied. Council resolved their position would stand. In another meeting where the matter was discussed, Council members made disparaging comments about Annabelle in a meeting open to the public.



While some RMs in the province chose to notify ratepayers of the change prior to sending assessment notices, this RM chose not to. Annabelle submitted the same paperwork to the RM they had in previous years, requesting the exemption. It was submitted prior to the deadline and Annabelle requested confirmation that the information had been received. They received confirmation but were not advised the RM did not intend to apply the exemption in the 2021 tax year as a result of the legislative change.

After receiving our investigation report, council decided to provide an abatement of taxes of approximately \$5,000 and an apology letter on behalf of Council for the error.

Apologies are often requested by citizens who make complaints to our office. The apology provided by Council in this case is a very good example of how apologies should be made.

## **Letter of Apology**

**“On behalf of the RM Council and the previous Chief Administrative Officer, I would like to extend our sincerest apology for the actions of the RM office and Council and the mistakes made regarding your 293 exemption. Although there was no malintent, the behaviour and persistence of Council and Administration was uncalled for.**

**It is the aim of the RM and Council to ensure this situation does not happen again, with any ratepayer. In the future the RM will provide notice of the 293 Exemption on our various communication platforms such as our website, Facebook page, newsletters, and regular emailed updates. The 293 Exemption form is now available on our website for anyone to access. We also have Service Tracker on our website to facilitate better communications between ratepayers and the RM regarding concerns and complaints. You may submit a request that will then be tracked by our office, and you will receive updates regarding the progress of that request. Council and Administration believe that the above measures will work to ensure ratepayers are aware of the exemption and the deadline and to have access to the appropriate form.**

**Administration and Council are truly sorry for the time, money, inconvenience and stress this situation has caused you. Moving forward, matters such as these will be handled in a more professional manner and without accusation. It is never the goal of this municipality or Council to deny eligible exemptions and the RM will work hard to never repeat this mistake again.”**

## Ensuring there is a process to review complaints

Amelia is a former student of a registered independent school (RIS). She complained about the oversight, action, and enforcement of regulations by the Ministry of Education concerning RISs in Saskatchewan. Specifically, her complaint raised concerns about the Ministry's lack of response when students made allegations of abuse.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for regulating RISs in Saskatchewan. Given its regulatory role, the Ministry should anticipate receiving complaints, and it is crucial for the Ministry to have a well established process in place to handle these complaints fairly, comprehensively, impartially, and in a timely manner.

Upon receiving our investigation notice, the Ministry recognized that it lacked reporting and investigation guidelines for addressing complaints related to RISs and proactively reached out to us. Our office recommended that the Ministry of Education create and implement a complaint handling policy and procedure based on Ombudsman Saskatchewan's Best Practices For Fair Complaint Handling. Please see our website for this document.

The Ministry has applied these best practices and provided us with a draft of their complaint-handling policy and procedures. We will monitor the implementation of their complaint-handling policy and procedures through any further complaints our office receives.

**“...the Ministry recognized that it lacked reporting and investigation guidelines for addressing complaints related to registered independent schools...”**

## Finding a solution when there has been a deficiency in process

Our office received a call from Amber regarding a columbarium niche she and her husband had picked out and purchased together from their municipality.

A columbarium can be defined as a structure, typically a wall, room, or building. Within the structure is an arrangement of niches, to hold the urns and any personal mementos of the individual.

Amber contacted the Town to use the niche when her husband passed away. The Town explained they did not have a record of her transaction; the niche had been sold and had since been used.

A different niche was offered to Amber by the Town, which in her view was not equivalent to and less appealing than the one she had originally selected with her husband. In addition, the original purchase price of \$1,800 included engraving. However, Amber would be required to pay an additional \$575 for engraving costs, for a total of \$2,395. At the time the niche was originally purchased, the Town offered a \$250 engraving contribution.

Though Amber was upset that she would not be able to use the columbarium niche she and her husband chose together, she also wanted to be respectful of those who had been using it and avoid disrupting them. Despite this, she contended that it was unfair that her original price and conditions were not being honored, as she had the receipt to verify it.

After several conversations with the Town, our office was able to facilitate a mutually acceptable resolution between the two parties. It was agreed that the niche would be relocated to one of Amber's choosing while the Town agreed to cover the basic engraving costs, allowing Amber to pay what she had when it was originally chosen.

## Ensuring fairness in processes

The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation is responsible for the provision of low-income housing through local Housing Authorities. Last year, we received complaints about the processes that were used by a number of Housing Authorities.

### Tenant threatened with eviction when maintenance incorrectly charged to her account

We received a complaint from Anne, who is on SAID. Anne did not feel she was being treated fairly by the Housing Authority because she was charged \$348 for electrical maintenance work that was done on her unit. The Housing Authority was threatening eviction if the amount was not paid. Anne had paid \$50 but was on a budget with SAID so was unable to pay the full amount.

Our office contacted a manager who looked into the matter and clarified that expenses for routine maintenance should not have been charged to the tenant. The only instances when maintenance work would be charged to the tenant was if there was damage or neglect by the tenant.

The Housing Authority agreed to remove the charge from the complainant's account and to return the \$50 she had already paid.

## Tenant threatened with eviction for smoking in unit not given adequate notice

Angela called our office because she had been served with an eviction notice by a Housing Authority and was facing a residential tenancies hearing. The eviction notice provided the reason as alleged smoking in her unit with numerous warnings provided. Angela disputed the reason provided in the eviction notice and indicated she had not received multiple warnings.

The impact of an eviction for Angela would have been particularly significant, given that she was dealing with a serious medical condition as well as providing daily care for her elderly mother. Angela told us she could not find a place to move into, only a garage with no heat.

Our office contacted the Housing Authority to raise Angela's concerns. When the Housing Authority reviewed her file, they found that insufficient notice had been provided and the eviction was cancelled.

## Tenant living with mould, no heat and no hot water while dealing with serious medical condition

Audrey and her family were living in a rental suite managed by a Housing Authority which had a mould problem, no heat and no hot water. The Housing Authority was fixing up another unit for the family but would not allow them to move in as there were some minor repairs that still needed to be done. One member of the family was dealing with a serious medical condition.

Our office contacted the Housing Authority and asked if there was any possibility the family could move into the new unit and have the needed repairs finished while they were in place. We emphasized that the family was in a home with no heat or hot water and that one family member had a serious health issue.

Audrey and her family were given keys to the new unit the next day and were able to move in. They were very thankful to our office for reaching out to the Housing Authority and coming up with a solution to get them into their new home sooner.

# COMMON GOAL OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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Although the case examples provided in our Annual Report highlight areas where improvement was needed in practices, we also want to recognize the commitment to fairness displayed by public servants and public entities.

Our office shares a common goal with the public entities and public servants we engage with to respond to concerns or questions raised by citizens. That common goal is continuous improvement of the delivery of programs and services. We find that when we reach out to the public entities within our jurisdiction, they are very responsive and open to working with our office to address the issue.

We also find that there is a great interest among public servants to adopt best practices in the delivery of programs and services. They have been very quick to sign up for any education sessions we offer.

Our office provided four two-day sessions of The Fundamentals of Fairness to the Ministry of Social Services, reaching approximately 60 staff. Social Services were very supportive of the delivery of this training to their staff and we believe that the training helped in some part to achieve the decrease in complaints our office received about Social Services this year.

We had a number of municipalities reach out to our office to request that we do a fairness lens review of bylaws that they were updating. The municipalities proactively reached out to ask us to provide comments and suggestions on their draft bylaws, including a review of the hallmarks of fairness prior to implementation of the bylaw. There was other outreach to our office on bylaw enforcement and for advice on responding to citizens who raised concerns.

We have also had a good response from public entities when we share the impact of a particular action on the citizen. This has included a municipality extending the time for payment of a utility bill in arrears because someone has recently lost their job. It has also included a public entity actively reviewing their policy when advised of the impact on a particular individual.

# OUR COMMITMENT TO TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

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The Truth and Reconciliation Final Report emphasizes that Reconciliation is a process of healing and repairing damaged relationships, and that “integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential”.

In 2023, our office participated in two days of training on trauma informed practices with Myrna McCallum. Learnings from this course included how to create connection in a phone call, in person or on-line meeting, including the importance of empathy. We discussed how to create a safe and welcoming space in our office. Best practices for receiving complaints and investigating files with a trauma informed lens were also discussed.

Cultural safety, competence and sensitivity were reviewed, with an emphasis on cultural humility.

We also invited Maureen Johns from Pasqua First Nation to share her teachings on self-care and the Medicine Wheel.

Andrea Menard, Métis Auntie and Anti-Colonial Scholar, provided a session on the land and around the campfire for our office to gain understanding on what it means to decolonize conflict resolution processes. As Andrea Menard eloquently summarized after the session:

**Being on the land amplified the gravity of our discussions on leadership and societal responsibilities towards truth and reconciliation. These are not just words; they are imperatives. We are at a critical juncture, and the choices we make today will echo in the lives of generations to come.**

These experiences contributed to an update of our fairness triangle, the tool we use to analyze files. We also updated our two day interactive training program for public servants titled The Fundamentals of Fairness, including material on trauma informed approaches.

We developed a new training opportunity for public servants, the Ombudsman’s Toolbox Series, which focused on relational fairness. The focus of these four one hour sessions is on providing tools to deal with relationship issues our office sees in the complaints made to us. Topics include non-defensive communication and active listening.

We offered a one day session with Myrna McCallum to public servants across the province, to share her teachings in trauma informed practices.

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# OUTREACH 2023

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## Public Sector Employees

- Inductee Training Program (Corrections)
  - Saskatoon Correctional Centre
  - Regina Correctional Centre
  - Prince Albert Correctional Centre
  - Pine Grove Correctional Centre
  - Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford
  - White Spruce Provincial Training Centre
- Probations
- Cognitive Disability Strategy Consultants

## Municipal

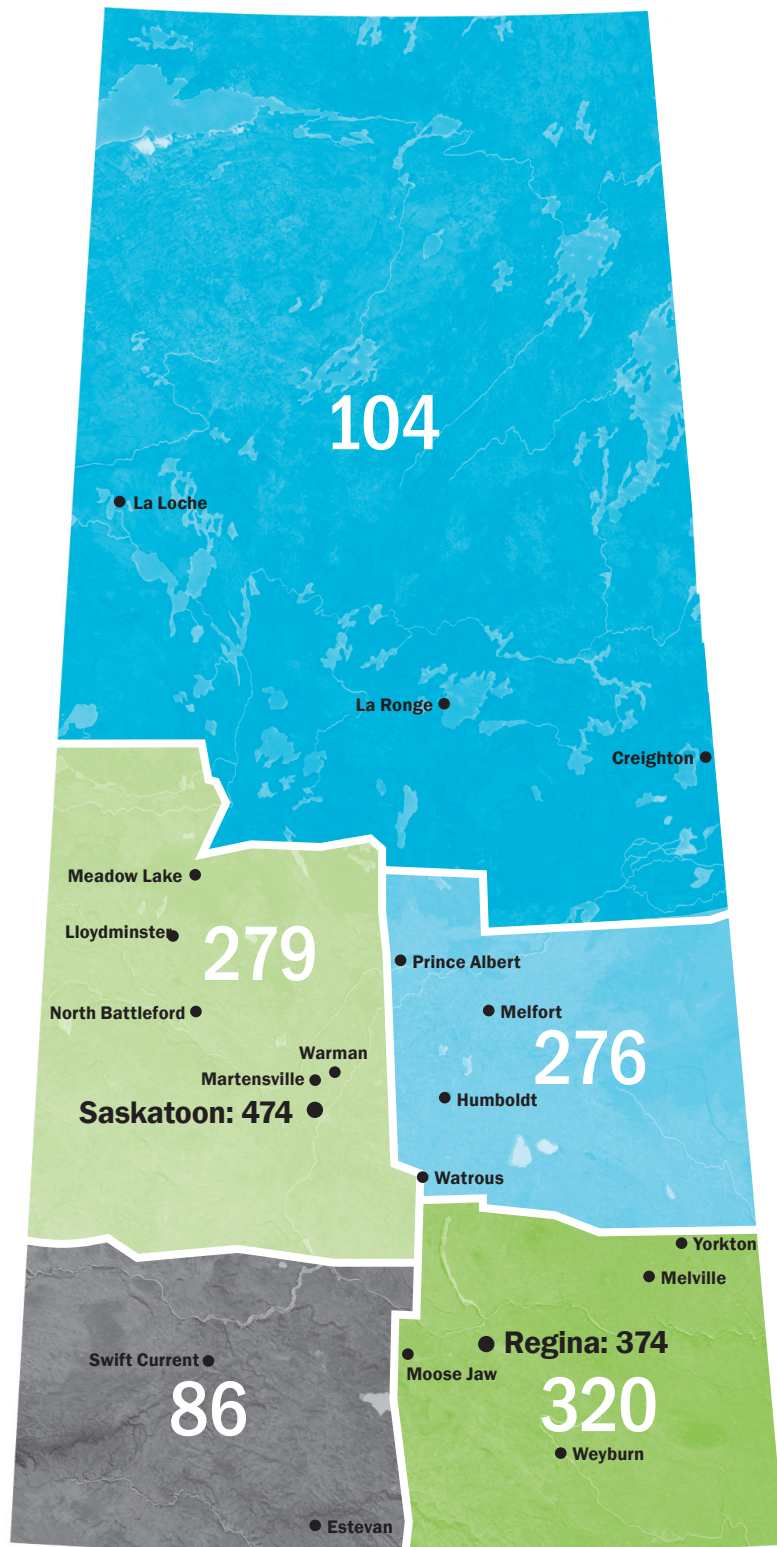
- Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities
  - Tradeshow and Convention
  - Mid-Winter Convention
- Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Tradeshow and Convention
- Northern Saskatchewan Administrators Association
- Rural Municipality of Nipawin
- Urban Municipality Administrators Association of Saskatchewan

## Community

- First Nations University of Canada Spring Powwow
- Public Sector Innovation Conference
- Spotlight on Seniors
- Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism Conference
- Legal Resources Fair, Saskatoon and Regina
- Inclusion Saskatchewan
- Ranch Ehrlo Society



# STATISTICS



## Where requests came from

This map provides an overview of the files we received within our jurisdiction separated into five regions, plus Regina and Saskatoon. Complaints received from individuals in correctional centres have been counted separately since they do not necessarily represent their home communities.

### Regions and Large Cities

North	104
West Central	279
East Central	276
Southwest	86
Southeast	320
Regina	374
Saskatoon	474

### Other Locations

Correctional Centres	518
Out of Province	39
Unknown	253
<b>Total Requests</b>	<b>2723</b>



# CORRECTIONS

## Files Received

	2023	2022	2021
Besnard Lake Correctional Camp	0	1	0
Pine Grove Correctional Centre	86	90	104
Prince Albert Correctional Centre	77	58	61
Regina Correctional Centre	212	226	211
Saskatoon Correctional Centre	183	191	155
Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford (Corrections)	16	6	15
White Birch Female Remand Unit	1	1	2
Whitespruce Provincial Training Centre	8	7	13
Adult Corrections - Other	10	9	10
Corrections, Policing and Public Safety - Other	6	8	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>580</b>

# SOCIAL SERVICES

## Requests Received

	2023	2022	2021
Child & Family Service Delivery	111	124	118
Housing Programs	87	81	58
CLSD - Community Living Service Delivery	4	0	7
IASD* - Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID)	213	233	206
IASD - Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP)	4	6	54
IASD - Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS)	185	218	168
IASD - Saskatchewan Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA)	0	0	9
IASD - Income Supplement Programs - Other	12	6	7
Regional Appeal Committees	0	2	0
Adjudicator, SK Employment Supplement Program	0	1	0
Other	34	20	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>691</b>	<b>645</b>

\* Income Assistance Service Delivery

# CROWN CORPORATIONS

## Requests Received

	2023	2022	2021
Crown Investment Corporations	0	0	1
Financial & Consumer Affairs Authority	3	6	1
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation	9	0	4
Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation*	1	0	-
Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI)			
Auto Fund	42	24	45
Claims Division - Auto Claims	88	65	51
Claims Division - No Fault Insurance	43	37	27
Claims Division - Other/SGI Canada	41	27	23
Other	4	18	8
<b>Total SGI</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>154</b>
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority	2	1	1
Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency	0	1	0
SaskEnergy	33	43	41
SaskPower	107	95	94
SaskTel	23	22	38
SaskWater	1	0	0
Water Security Agency	5	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>337</b>

\*Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation was created in 2021.

# OTHER MINISTRIES

## Requests Received

	2023	2022	2021
Advanced Education	5	4	6
Agriculture	2	0	1
Education	4	4	5
Energy and Resources	1	-	-
Environment	7	4	10
Executive Council	0	4	1
Finance	22	10	4
Government Relations	4	6	6
Highways	3	4	4
Immigration and Career Training	1	6	3
Justice - See next page for breakdown	62	83	103
Labour Relations and Workplace Safety	11	7	11
Parks, Culture, and Sport	5	5	2
SaskBuilds and Procurement	5	5	2
Trade and Export Development	0	0	0
Ministry not Disclosed	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>160</b>

# MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

## Requests Received

	2023	2022	2021
Court Services	8	13	19
Maintenance Enforcement Branch	29	29	25
Public Guardian and Trustee	15	19	39
Office of the Public Registry Administration	3	3	3
Justice - Other	7	19	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>103</b>

# HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

## Requests Received

	2023	2022	2021
Ministry of Health	24	30	86
3S Health	3	3	0
eHealth Saskatchewan	21	14	19
Saskatchewan Cancer Agency	1	3	1
Saskatchewan Health Authority	191	167	188
Other Health Entities	17	22	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>321</b>

# AGENCIES, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS

## Requests Received

	2023	2022	2021
Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan	6	4	3
Apprenticeship and Trades Certification Commission	1	4	0
Automobile Injury Commission	0	2	2
Creative Saskatchewan	1	0	0
Highway Traffic Board	7	0	5
Office of Residential Tenancies	53	49	83
Provincial Mediation Board	0	1	0
Public Service Commission	2	1	3
Regional Colleges	1	1	2
Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency	4	2	2
Saskatchewan Employment Act Adjudicators	0	0	1
Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission	19	16	12
Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board	0	1	2
Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission	28	35	27
Saskatchewan Municipal Board	3	2	1
Saskatchewan Polytechnic	5	5	5
Saskatchewan Public Complaints Commission	34	18	11
Saskatchewan Social Services Appeal Board	0	4	4
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board	54	78	73
Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan	1	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>236</b>

# BUDGET

	2021-22 Audited Financial Statements*	2022-23 Audited Financial Statements*	2023-24 Budget**
<b>Revenue</b>			
General Revenue Fund Appropriation	\$3,279,649	\$3,352,700	\$4,534,000
Micellaneous	-	\$230	-
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$3,279,649</b>	<b>\$3,352,930</b>	<b>\$4,534,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Salaries & Benefits	\$2,432,728	\$2,240,056	\$3,435,000
Office Space and Equipment Rental	\$564,816	\$576,763	\$596,500
Communications	\$34,710	\$35,035	\$35,500
Miscellaneous Services	\$94,469	\$105,412	\$139,400
Office Supplies & Expenses	\$13,647	\$24,892	\$23,500
Advertising, Promotional & Events	\$41,731	\$37,584	\$61,000
Travel***	\$16,918	\$34,705	\$62,400
Amortization	\$109,705	\$116,729	-
Dues & Fees	\$29,596	\$41,623	\$56,600
Repairs & Maintenance	\$45,732	\$81,813	\$124,100
Loss of Disposal of Capital Assets	-	\$1,049	-
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,384,052</b>	<b>\$3,295,661</b>	<b>\$4,534,000</b>
<b>Annual Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>(\$104,403)</b>	<b>\$57,269</b>	<b>-</b>

\* These columns are based on our audited statements, which follow our April - March fiscal year. Our annual report follows the calendar year. The audited financial statements are available on our website at [www.ombudsman.sk.ca](http://www.ombudsman.sk.ca).

\*\* Due to the timing of this report, the 2023-24 numbers reflect the budgeted amount, rather than the audited amount.

\*\*\* The bulk of travel expenditures were in-province travel, as we resumed in-person outreach. There was limited travel to other provinces for learning opportunities. Our office does not travel internationally.

# OMBUDSMAN SASKATCHEWAN

## PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE COMMISSIONER

### Regina Office

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### Saskatoon Office

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