

Ombudsman Saskatchewan

Annual Report
2024

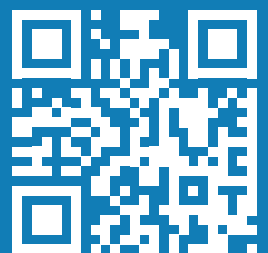


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**Ombudsman
Saskatchewan**
Promoting Fairness

April 2025

The Honourable Todd Goudy
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 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Sharon Pratchler, K.C.
Ombudsman

OMBUDSMAN'S MESSAGE

In 2024, our office experienced a significant increase in our workload. We received a total of 4,064 requests for assistance from the public, a growth of 11 percent or 407 additional files. Despite these high numbers, our team continued to resolve files on a timely basis, with 96 percent of our files closed within 90 days and 98 percent of our files closed within 180 days.

By the time people arrive at our office, they are often in distress and experiencing heightened emotions. Part of the role that our office plays in resolving conflict is to de-escalate the situation. Both our physical office and our approach to handling files emphasize a calm and trauma-informed environment and mindset.

The ability to maintain calm in the midst of conflict is a key skill that any public servant dealing with members of the public needs to develop and foster. We provide a two-day interactive training program for public servants called The Fundamentals of Fairness which provides assistance in developing those skills.

We have also developed a toolbox training tool which provides essential tools on how to resolve conflict while providing administratively fair decisions.

Now, more than ever, those skills in conflict resolution are necessary.



Sharon Pratchler, K.C.
Ombudsman

How files were received



OUR TEAM



Ziad Al-Husseini
Assistant Ombudsman

Femi Atilola
Assistant Ombudsman

Kirby Bezan
Executive 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

Harpreet Kaur
Administrative Assistant

Ryan Kennedy
Manager of Outreach

Zuhal Latif
Assistant Ombudsman

Lindsay Mitchell
Assistant Ombudsman

Charlene Mouly
Manager of Corporate Services

Promi Osman
Assistant Ombudsman

Sherry Pelletier
Assistant Ombudsman

Sharon Pratchler
Ombudsman

Jim Pratt
Knowledge Keeper/Elders' Helper

Hannah Quách
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman

Shelley Rissling
Administrative Assistant

Niki Smith
Assistant Ombudsman

Jason Stamm
Assistant Ombudsman

Kamryn Stewart
Assistant Ombudsman

Laurie Taylor
Executive Administrative
Assistant

Ashley Thompson
Assistant Ombudsman

Kathy Upton
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman

Harry Walker
Assistant Ombudsman

Kathy Willerth
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman

OUR COMMITMENT TO TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Knowledge Keeper/Elders' Helper

In 2024, our office created the position of Knowledge Keeper and Elders' Helper. This esteemed position upholds a place of honour within our office, firmly rooted in the guiding principles of Truth and Reconciliation. This position actively supports our unwavering commitment to the process of Indigenizing and decolonizing practices within the Ombudsman Saskatchewan office, striving to embody *kwayaskkowowin* - fairness and equity - in all our endeavours.

Some of the key responsibilities of this position are:

1. **Cultural Leadership and Advocacy:** guiding the office on integrating Indigenous practices into the daily operations of the office, as in policy development.
2. **Community Engagement and Development:** engaging with Indigenous communities to foster collaborative relationships and help identify systemic barriers to Indigenous persons while interacting with public service roles.
3. **Education and Moral Suasion:** educating staff and the public on Indigenous teachings, languages, cultures, and traditions.
4. **Support and guidance:** offering spiritual and emotional support to colleagues and community members.
5. **Program Development and Management:** develop and manage programs rooted in Indigenous knowledge to advance the office's goals of Truth and Reconciliation.
6. **Self-Care and Healing Journey Support:** engage in self-care practices and support the healing journey of both one's self and their colleagues.

We welcomed James (Jim) Pratt, CD as our first Knowledge Keeper and Elders' Helper. Jim is a retired Regina Police Service officer. He was the first to teach Truth and Reconciliation to the Culture Unit of RPS, in 1984.

FILES RECEIVED IN 2024

Files in Jurisdiction: 3229



Social Services	786
Corrections	766
Municipalities	589
Health	282
SGI	237
Justice	96
SaskPower	78
WCB	74
ORT	58
Other	263

5 YEAR COMPARISON; FILES WITHIN JURISDICTION

Organization	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	Total
Ministry of Social Services	786	650	691	645	554	3,326
Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety	766	599	597	580	619	3,161
Municipalities	589	464	465	546	459	2,523
Health	282	257	239	321	257	1,356
Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI)	237	218	171	154	139	919
Ministry of Justice	96	62	83	103	89	433
SaskPower	78	107	95	94	79	453
Workers' Compensation Board	74	54	78	73	59	338
Office of Residential Tenancies	58	53	49	83	65	307
Other	263	259	233	226	172	1,206
Total	3,229	2,723	2,701	2,825	2,492	14,023

Out of Jurisdiction Files Received in 2024: 835

Courts/Legal	44	Other	54
Education	26	Private Company	215
Federal Government	132	Private Matter	94
First Nations Government	15	Professional	47
Health	32	RCMP	39
Landlord-Tenant	137		

These files were out of our jurisdiction because they did not involve a public entity that falls within our statutory jurisdiction.

PROVIDING TOOLS FOR DECISION-MAKERS

How to Resolve Conflict While Making Administratively Fair Decisions

The mandate of Ombudsman Saskatchewan goes beyond complaints handling. It is also important for the office to provide tools to the organizations in our jurisdiction to assist them in making administratively fair decisions.

These tools range from visuals like the fairness triangle, to handouts on how to handle or assess situations, to in-person or online training. The Fundamentals of Fairness is a two day interactive program we offer to decision-makers, which covers the elements of fairness in three key areas:

- service delivery or relationships with members of the public.
- processes used to reach decisions.
- the decisions reached and reasons and analysis used to reach that decision.

This program also examines the dynamics of conflict and how power, rights and interests must be understood in order to resolve any situation.

Our office also provides fairness lens reviews of proposed bylaws, program, policies or legislation to provide some assistance in identifying fairness issues in advance of implementation.

Our legislation empowers us to try to resolve any problem raised in a complaint through the use of negotiation, conciliation, mediation or other non-adversarial approaches.

On the next page is the “Maintaining Collaborative Communication During Escalated Situations” infographic our office developed for municipalities. This infographic details how to prepare for escalated conversations, how to deal with those situations in the moment, and then the importance of debriefing afterwards.

Strategies for municipalities



Maintaining Collaborative Communication During Escalated Situations

In offices that serve the public, it is vital to know what to do when high emotions are expressed. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, here are some strategies to help manage these scenarios.

1 PREPARE

Understanding Why Situations Like This Arise

Citizens have the right to complain about matters that affect them. Not everyone has the same capacity to manage their emotional response to frustrating experiences. Due to previous life experiences, some may be triggered by feelings of being judged, not heard, not understood, or not treated fairly.

Training

There is benefit in having training that provides practical skills in areas like de-escalation, conflict resolution and trauma informed practices for workplaces. These help empower staff to have the tools to effectively respond when escalated situations arise.

2

IN THE MOMENT...

- Stay calm and keep your voice calm.
- Let the person tell their story without rushing or interrupting them.
- Display compassion even if you don't agree with their points.
- Try to stay focused on their issue and dismiss any negative thoughts about the behaviour.
- When concerning behaviour arises, name it and, using a calm voice, ask them to stop.
- You may need to end a phone call that has become escalated. Warn the caller when and why this will occur.
- When you need to be firm, still be polite.
- Ensure your tone does not match that of the escalated person.
 - Avoid taking things personally.
 - Avoid labeling people.

3 DEBRIEF

Debriefing after an escalated situation gives a chance to review:

- What happened
- What went well
- What didn't go well
- How it might have gone better

Do

- Record facts
- Have a process to debrief, reflect and plan

Avoid

- Personal opinions
- Speculating about motives



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March 2025

CASE EXAMPLES

The Fairness Triangle: Three Aspects of Fairness

Our office uses the visual of the fairness triangle to examine three aspects of fairness in any situation:

- Relationship – How was the member of the public treated by the decision-maker?
- Process – How was the decision made?
- Outcome – What was decided?

These three aspects of decision-making are critical to how members of the public will view the fairness of the decision that was made.



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

Flexibility in Program Design Must be Reflected in Implementation

Most, if not all, programs contain flexibility in their design. The reason for this is that there are a wide range of personal circumstances that exist which cannot all be set out in legislation. When such flexibility exists in the legislative and policy design of the program, it is important that the individuals implementing the program do not impose restrictions that do not exist in the legislative or policy framework. Imposing conditions or restrictions that were not set out by the Legislature in the program design can have very harmful effects for individuals accessing the government program or service.

The spirit and intent of the program must always be kept in mind by those entrusted with its implementation.

The Social Housing Program exists to provide safe housing to families and seniors with low incomes and to people with disabilities, by subsidizing rent based on the degree of financial need. The program is administered by local housing authorities on behalf of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

Our office was contacted by twin sisters who wished to live together in a housing authority unit.

Cecilia and Caroline provided information that they were older adults with many health issues, with incomes of \$940 and \$678 per month. Out of this amount of money they had to buy groceries, and medications, and pay for medical transportation when they had to go for their doctor's appointments outside of their home community because they do not own a vehicle. In addition, they would each have to pay \$50 a month for power if they lived in separate units.

Their concern was that with the low amount of income they were receiving, they could not possibly afford two separate units. In addition, the sisters only had one bed so one would have to sleep on the floor of their unit.

We contacted the housing authority and were told that the Board had decided that the twin sisters could rent two units beside each other, in a duplex.

Our office reached out to a Manager of Housing Services in Housing Operations at the Ministry of Social Services and explained the situation. The Manager advised there was nothing in legislation or policy that states only one person can rent a one bedroom unit. Co-occupancy is allowed. The Manager did not see an issue with the sisters living together if they chose to but noted that their combined income would then be used to determine rent.

“Their concern was that with the low amount of income they were receiving, they could not possibly afford two separate housing units.”

The Manager then reached out to both Cecilia and the local Housing Authority. Cecilia and Caroline were able to move into the one bedroom apartment within ten days of calling our office. Cecilia was satisfied and relieved that this would help her and her sister save money with bills.

The Importance of Good Communication in Program Administration

Active listening and good communication are necessary to ensure that policies are implemented as intended. In programs which have a high volume of applicants, miscommunication can occur, leading to a denial of benefits which should have been approved. Our office can help in those situations, to ensure that individuals receive the full benefits they are eligible for, as was the case in the following example.

Barbara is a recipient of Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID). She called our office because she has a three year-old daughter who has a medical condition and was in hospital. Her doctor had prescribed supplements for her child to ensure she was receiving enough nutrients, which included her drinking two PediaSure drinks per day.

Barbara's concern was that Social Services had denied her claim to cover the actual costs of the supplements. She also indicated there were communication issues with her worker.

“...the supplements were helping her daughter, who was improving and able to attend school again.”

Initially, Social Services denied the claim as they concluded that they only allow payment of benefits for a child's special diet if the child has a feeding tube. Upon review of their policy, we concluded that the policy was not being correctly applied and should not be limited in this way. The actual costs of the supplement should have been paid in full.

Social Services reviewed their decision and concluded that a miscommunication between the worker and Barbara had led to the assessment error. Social Services indicated they would reimburse the actual costs of the supplements.

Barbara was advised of the decision. She was grateful and advised that the supplements were helping her daughter, who was improving and able to attend school again.

Taking Steps to Fix Mistakes in Program Delivery

Mistakes will happen in program delivery. When those mistakes come to the attention of the program area, it is important that the individuals delivering the program help the member of the public navigate the system to get the error corrected. The next case example is a good example of the steps that can be taken by a public servant to help fix errors which had impacted a member of the public.

Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) and their motor vehicle license issuers are responsible for the collection of Provincial Sales Tax (PST) at the time of registration of vehicles in situations where the PST was not collected at the time of sale. This includes situations where vehicles are purchased out of province. SGI collects the PST on behalf of the Ministry of Finance, which administers the PST program.

Chris purchased a truck in 2019 in Alberta, which he registered in Saskatchewan. At the time of registration of the vehicle, the motor vehicle license issuer calculated and charged PST of \$4,440.43. It was not until three years later, when he was registering another vehicle at the broker's office that Chris learned he should have only paid \$587.90 in PST instead of the \$4,440.43.

To their credit, it was an individual in the SGI Branch office that identified the error and drew it to Chris' attention. They also directed Chris to complete and submit a refund form to the Ministry of Finance.

The difficulty that Chris encountered was that the PST had been remitted to the Ministry of Finance, who advised that his claim was over four years old and they have a time limitation in their legislation that does not allow claims past the four year mark. The Ministry confirmed the overpayment but attributed the error to the individual at the SGI branch office who calculated the charges.

Also to their credit, the individual in the SGI branch office submitted a complaint form to our office, explaining that Chris felt if the Ministry of Finance was declining to provide a refund, then the SGI licensing office that made the error should refund the amount charged in error.

Chris felt it was unfair for him to be denied recovery of the overpayment, as he did not become aware of it until after the Ministry of Finance time frame had lapsed.

“...SGI acknowledged their mistake and issued a refund cheque in the amount of \$4,440.43”

After receiving the complaint, we approached SGI's Fair Practices Office, requesting that SGI refund the overpayment to Chris. After review by the Fair Practices Office, SGI acknowledged their mistake and issued a refund cheque to Chris in the amount of \$4,440.43.

Honouring the Spirit and Intent of a Program

SaskEnergy offers a Tune-Up Assistance Program (TAP) to assist homeowners to keep their natural gas furnace running safely and at peak efficiency through annual inspections. The program provides a free Network Home Heating Tune-up, a carbon monoxide alarm, two furnace filters and up to \$200 in repairs for households that have an annual combined income of no more than \$68,000.

In this case, Charles applied for the program and was approved but did not receive his letter of approval in the mail. There was also an error in the email address he provided, so he also did not receive the letter of approval by email.

While waiting for the letter of approval, Charles experienced difficulties with his furnace and needed to get his furnace working as soon as possible due to weather conditions. Charles contacted the SaskEnergy Network member in his area to do the work but they were unable to assist him in the time frame he needed. Charles then contacted another company that was not on the list to do the work needed.

Once Charles learned he had been approved for the program, it was past the time frame for submitting his invoice from the company. In addition, SaskEnergy advised that because he had used a company that was not a member of the SaskEnergy Network Member program, they would not be approving payment.

Charles reached out to our office to see if we could assist. The initial response we received from SaskEnergy was that they could not do anything for Charles as they had mailed out his approval letter and although it was unfortunate that he had not received it, the deadline had passed for that year's program. SaskEnergy also firmly noted in their correspondence to our office that there were no exceptions to the term of the program requiring the work to be done by a SaskEnergy Network staff person.

After receiving that response from SaskEnergy, we reviewed the list of SaskEnergy Network members that participate in the TAP program and are listed on SaskEnergy's website. We discovered that the name of the company Charles had used to do the work was on the list on SaskEnergy's website. We advised SaskEnergy that the name of the company does appear on their member list and asked them to review the situation further.

SaskEnergy did look into it further and found that although the company was not participating in the TAP program at the time that Charles applied and was accepted into the program, the company had since been added to the list. SaskEnergy advised that in keeping with the spirit of the TAP program, they had decided to reimburse Charles \$183.15 to cover the costs of his repair. SaskEnergy also offered to send him a carbon monoxide alarm.

Ensuring Procedurally Fair Processes in Municipal Code of Ethics Investigations

All municipalities are required to have a Code of Ethics (COE) bylaw in place. The purpose of the Code of Ethics bylaw is to outline standards and values for members of Council to follow in their dealings with each other, employees of the municipality and the public, which include the following areas: Honesty, Objectivity, Respect, Transparency and Accountability, Confidentiality, Leadership and the Public Interest, and Responsibility.

In 2024, the Ombudsman's office received 78 inquiries regarding Code of Ethics issues within municipalities, representing 13.2 percent of the total complaints about municipalities. This is a challenging area for municipalities as they have to investigate fellow members of Council and attempt to find a resolution which will ensure good governance in the municipality. These investigations can be particularly tricky when the complaint arises from an employee of the municipality or other members of Council.

Example of a Complaint About Procedural Fairness in a Code of Ethics Investigation

A Mayor filed a complaint against a Councillor, alleging violation of two areas of the town's Code of Ethics bylaw, specifically Respect and Leadership, and Public Interest. A consultant was retained to conduct an investigation into the allegations.

During a council meeting, the Mayor brought forward a Code of Ethics complaint, and in keeping with conflict of interest provisions, passed the chair to the Deputy Mayor and exited the meeting. The Deputy Mayor continued by reading the allegations aloud to the remaining members, including the member whose behaviour was in question. Later, the respondent requested a written copy of the allegations; on the advice of the consultant, Administration denied the request. The rationale provided was that because the COE bylaw did not specifically require the complaint be provided to the respondent in writing, it would not be given.

The Councillor complained to our office that he was not given adequate information in order to respond to the allegations and that the report of the consultant was not specific about the allegations which he allegedly violated within the Code.

Why Notice of the Allegations is Important

As a matter of procedural fairness to people facing allegations, they must receive notice of the allegations so they can provide a meaningful response to them. The individual needs to know the case they must meet so they can provide any information which they believe is relevant to those facts.

In this case, it was a question of degree – the manner in which notice was provided, as opposed to no notice at all. Similarly, in relation to the reasons given for the decision that there had been a violation of the Code of Ethics, the concern raised by the Councillor related to the degree of detail provided in the reasons rather than that there were no reasons provided at all.

Outcomes of the Investigation

After investigating the situation, our office concluded that it was a reasonable request to have the allegations provided in writing to the Councillor. We determined that the Council had acted in good faith in proceeding with the Code of Ethics complaint, including hiring a third party to complete the investigation in order to mitigate any real or perceived bias. However, the process undertaken by the Consultant lacked some elements of procedural fairness.

This file highlighted the need for further understanding and rigor in the use of consultants or external parties in completing COE investigations. While council may rely on external expertise or experience, it should not be forgotten that council is ultimately responsible for ensuring fair process and decision making, and that appropriate bylaws are not only in place, but that they are clear, thorough and followed.

As a result of our investigation, we recommended that Council update the Code of Ethics Bylaw to clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of each party involved. Further, it should include direction on the process and expectations of hiring a third party to conduct investigations, set out the process for when and how allegations are provided to the member in question, and a commitment to ensuring meaningful reasons for the outcomes of the investigation or complaint process are provided to the parties involved.

Council accepted our findings and took steps to update and pass its new COE Bylaw. The updated bylaw further clarified the expected values for its members and expanded on the requirements under Leadership, Public Interest, and Responsibility. The update added timelines for accepting and addressing complaints, the provision of written notice, and a dispute resolution clause. Further, the bylaw added separate sections to address procedural conditions for pursuing an investigation when council will act as the investigator and those for when a third party will be hired.

Assessing Whether Patient-Centred and Trauma-Informed Approaches were used

When critical incidents occur in medical facilities in Saskatchewan, legislation requires that a report of the event be made to the Minister of Health and the event is reviewed by the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), with the goal of improving service and avoiding similar issues in the future.

Our office was contacted by the family of a patient who had undergone surgery to assist in the treatment of his lung cancer. During the surgery, a piece of equipment, approximately one centimeter in size, broke off in his lung. This led to a further surgery where a significant portion of the patient's lung was removed.

A critical incident review was conducted but the patient was not asked for his perspective during the review. He also wasn't provided any information on the outcome of the review despite his request for that information. A few months later, he received a letter about the review but unfortunately the letter he received was a draft and contained very little information. A subsequent letter included more information but by the time it was sent it had been more than a year since the event occurred and the family had lost trust in the SHA.

The patient's family reported to our office that he was never the same after these procedures, struggling to manage both his health and household. Before the complaint was submitted to our office, the patient had passed away.

The patient's family made a complaint to our office about the situation, which led us to consider whether the SHA conducts its critical incident reviews in accordance with the guidelines established for these reviews and whether these reviews were being performed consistently across the province. We also considered if the SHA applied the principles of patient-centred and trauma-informed care in the review. Finally, we considered whether the treatment of this patient and his family were consistent with the principles of administrative justice.

Guidelines and Rules for Critical Incidents and Inconsistency Across Province

Our investigation revealed that the SHA did not report the incident to the Ministry of Health within the 60 days required by legislation or complete the review within the legislated timeframe. The review was ultimately submitted just under a month after it was required to be submitted.

Our investigation also found variances in practice across the province because in some locations, patients and their families were asked to provide their perspective on the event and were provided with information on the outcome of the review.

Principles of Patient-Centred and Trauma-Informed Care in Critical Incident Review

The policy in place when this event occurred stated that information on the quality improvement strategies that have been or will be implemented as a result of the review are to be shared with the patient/family. Our office concluded the delayed and limited communication with this patient and his family was not in keeping with the policy in place at the time or the principles of patient and family centred care.

To its credit, the SHA has recognized the importance of trauma informed engagement and is implementing this perspective throughout the entire Authority. To this end, all SHA staff are required to complete education on the importance and implementation of trauma-informed engagement.

The information gathered in our investigation did not convince us that a trauma informed approach was used with this patient or family. The lack of communication regarding the review, including not providing the family with the ability to provide their perspective on the event, was not in keeping with the core principles of trauma-informed practices.

Principles of Administrative Fairness

In this case we found the patient and family did not seem to be aware that a review was underway, they were not given the opportunity to provide information in the review, they were not provided with adequate information on the outcome of the review or understandable reasons why information was not provided. As a result, we concluded the treatment of this patient and his family was not in accordance with the principles of administrative fairness.

The SHA has recently developed a new critical incident reporting guideline, management policy, reporting template and disclosure policy, as well as work standards for completing critical incident reviews.

We have been advised that going forward, the SHA intends to ask patients and families for their perspective on critical incident reviews, if they wish to provide it, and this is embedded in the new policy. The new directives also indicate that the SHA intends to provide patients and families with as much information as it can on what the SHA has done, or intends to do, as a result of a critical incident review. As a result of our investigation, we made the following recommendations to the SHA, all of which were accepted:

1. That the SHA provide a written apology to the family for the lack of timely and transparent communication about the critical incident review of this patient safety event, including the actions taken or intended to be taken, as a result of the review.

2. That the SHA embed the principles of patient and family centred care and trauma informed engagement into the new work standards for critical incident reviews and the disclosure policy.
3. That the SHA develop a mechanism for ensuring the legislative timelines for reporting and completing reviews to the Ministry of Health are met.

Engaging the Office of Residential Tenancies

At Ombudsman Saskatchewan we engage with organizations to build collaborative relationships and ensure the best practices and outcomes for those receiving services in Saskatchewan.

This year we had the opportunity to connect with multiple organizations, including the team at the Office of Residential Tenancies (ORT) and their senior leadership. The ORT is an agency of government that provides information to the public about residential landlord and tenant rights and adjudicative services between residential landlords and tenants in Saskatchewan.

Connecting with the ORT team provided the platform to share with them the work we do, including public education, training opportunities, requests for service, early resolution on complaints, investigations, and a focus on relationship-building with tips and tricks when speaking with someone who is experiencing a stressful situation. We also gained a better understanding of how we could help them in their work.

Since meeting with the ORT, our contact information has been added to their web page as a resource for the public, ORT staff have received further training to help them in their work, and they have begun referring the public to our office.

OUTREACH

Public Sector Employees

- Inductee Training Program for Provincial Correctional Centres
 - North Battleford Hospital
 - Pine Grove Correctional Centre
 - Prince Albert Correctional Centre
 - Regina Correctional Centre
 - Saskatoon Correctional Centre
- Fundamentals of Fairness
 - Inclusion Saskatchewan
 - Ministry of Social Services
 - Piwapan Wellness Centre
- Probations
- Victim's Services

Municipal

- SUMA Annual Convention and Tradeshow
- SARM Annual Convention and Tradeshow

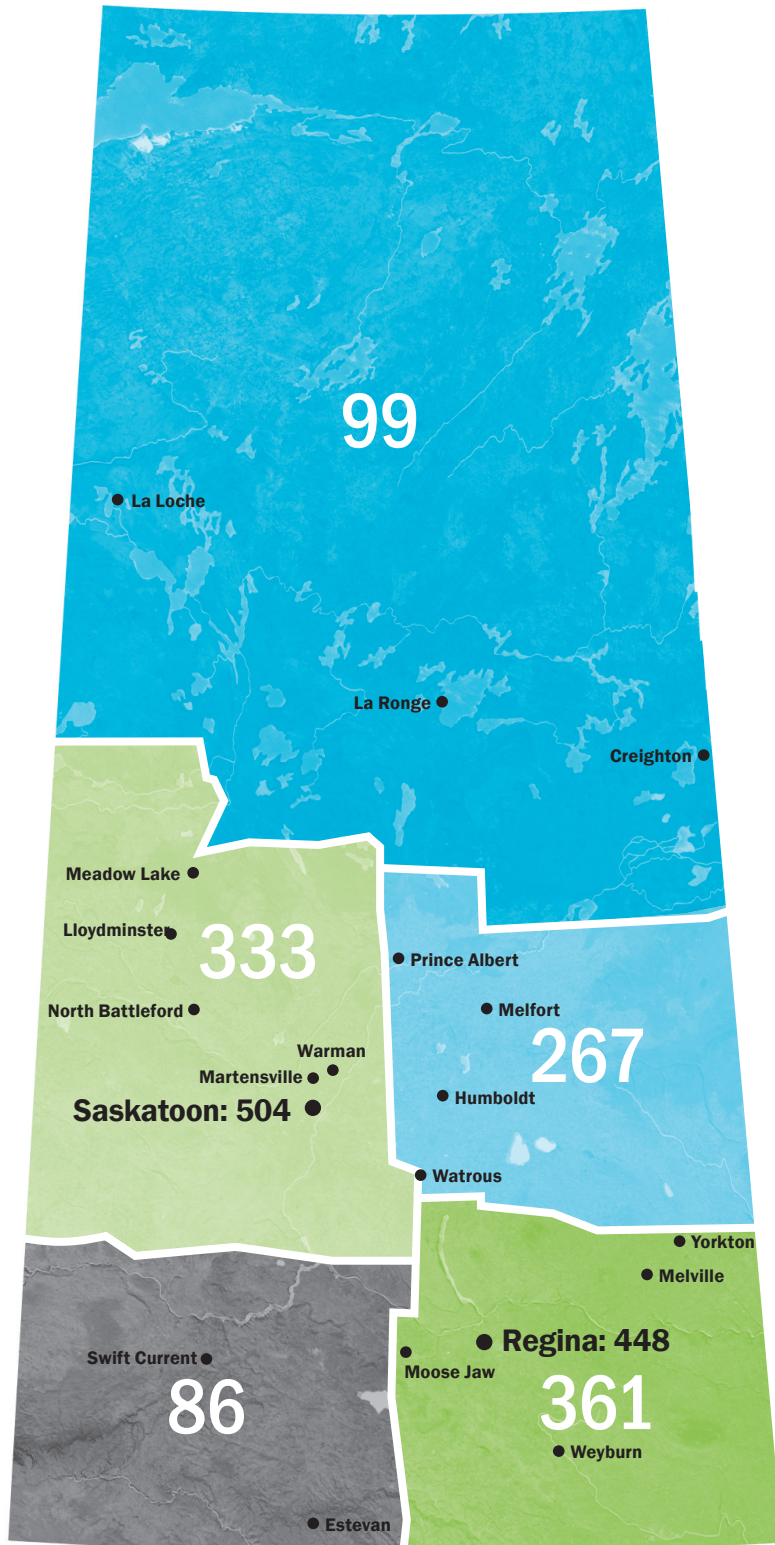
Community

- University of Regina Career Fair
- Senior's Centre Without Walls
- Saskatoon Open Door Society - THREADS Cultural Conversations
- Saskatchewan Senior's Mechanism
- Regina Open Door Society Community Fair
- Evan Hardy Collegiate
- Regina Access to Justice Week

Northern Communities

- La Ronge
- Missinipe
- Buffalo Narrows
- Île-à-la-Crosse
- La Loche
- Stanley Mission

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	99
West Central	333
East Central	267
Southwest	86
Southeast	361
Regina	448
Saskatoon	504

Other Locations

Correctional Centres	609
Out of Province	40
Unknown	482

Total Requests	3229
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SOCIAL SERVICES

Requests Received

	2024	2023	2022
Child & Family Programs	126	111	124
Housing Programs	89	87	81
CLSD - Community Living Service Delivery	10	4	0
IAP* - Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID)	290	213	233
IAP - Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP)**	0	4	6
IAP - Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS)	242	185	218
IAP - Income Assistance Programs - Other	7	12	6
Regional Appeal Committees	0	0	2
Adjudicator, SK Employment Supplement Program	0	0	1
Other	22	34	20
Total	786	650	691

* Income Assistance Programs

** SAP and TEA Programs were discontinued in 2021

CORRECTIONS

Requests Received

	2024	2023	2022
Besnard Lake Correctional Camp	0	0	1
Pine Grove Correctional Centre	197	86	90
Prince Albert Correctional Centre	78	77	58
Regina Correctional Centre	238	212	226
Saskatoon Correctional Centre	195	183	191
Saskatchewan Hospital, North Battleford	15	16	6
White Birch Female Remand Unit	9	1	1
Whitespruce Provincial Training Centre	3	8	7
Adult Corrections - Other	16	10	9
Corrections, Policing and Public Safety - Other	15	6	8
Total	766	599	597

MUNICIPAL

Requests Received

	2024	2023	2022
Cities	158	129	138
Towns	125	108	87
Villages	101	57	55
Resort Villages	21	21	15
Rural Municipalities	149	123	150
Northern Municipalities	17	20	15
Other/Undisclosed	18	6	5
Total	589	464	465

HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

Requests Received

	2024	2023	2022
Ministry of Health	30	24	30
3S Health	3	3	3
eHealth Saskatchewan	9	21	14
Saskatchewan Cancer Agency	3	1	3
Saskatchewan Health Authority	217	191	167
Other Health Entities	20	17	22
Total	282	257	239

CROWN CORPORATIONS

Requests Received

	2024	2023	2022
Financial & Consumer Affairs Authority	3	3	6
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation	6	9	0
Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation	0	1	0
Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI)			
Auto Fund	59	42	24
Claims Division - Auto Claims	104	88	65
Claims Division - No Fault Insurance	33	43	37
Claims Division - Other/SGI Canada	35	41	27
Other	6	4	18
Total SGI	237	218	171
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority	0	2	1
Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency	3	0	1
Saskatchewan Research Council	1	0	0
SaskEnergy	30	33	43
SaskPower	78	107	95
SaskTel	31	23	22
SaskWater	0	1	0
Water Security Agency	3	5	2
Total	392	402	341

OTHER MINISTRIES

Requests Received

	2024	2023	2022
Advanced Education	3	5	4
Agriculture	4	2	0
Education	6	4	4
Energy and Resources	3	1	0
Environment	7	7	4
Executive Council	1	0	4
Finance	11	22	10
Government Relations	1	4	6
Highways	6	3	4
Immigration and Career Training	7	1	6
Justice - See next page for breakdown	96	62	83
Labour Relations and Workplace Safety	14	11	7
Parks, Culture, and Sport	4	5	5
SaskBuilds and Procurement	0	5	5
Total	163	132	142

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Requests Received

	2024	2023	2022
Court Services	5	8	13
Maintenance Enforcement Branch	53	29	29
Public Guardian and Trustee	15	15	19
Office of the Public Registry Administration	3	3	3
Other	20	7	19
Total	96	62	83

AGENCIES, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS

Requests Received

	2024	2023	2022
Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan	7	6	4
Apprenticeship and Trades Certification Commission	0	1	4
Automobile Injury Appeal Commission	2	0	2
Creative Saskatchewan	0	1	0
Highway Traffic Board	3	7	0
Office of Residential Tenancies	58	53	49
Provincial Mediation Board	3	0	1
Public Service Commission	1	2	1
Regional Colleges	2	1	1
Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency	2	4	2
Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission	17	19	16
Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board	0	0	1
Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission	46	28	35
Saskatchewan Municipal Board	1	3	2
Saskatchewan Polytechnic	7	5	5
Saskatchewan Public Complaints Commission	22	34	18
Saskatchewan Social Services Appeal Board	4	0	4
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board	74	54	78
Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan	1	1	3
Total	250	219	226

BUDGET

	2022-23 Audited Financial Statements*	2023-24 Audited Financial Statements*
Revenue		
General Revenue Fund Appropriation	\$3,352,700	\$3,946,996
Miscellaneous	\$230	\$-
Total Revenue	\$3,352,930	\$3,946,996
Expenses		
Salaries & Benefits	\$2,240,056	\$2,804,110
Office Space and Equipment Rental	\$576,763	\$592,777
Communications	\$35,035	\$36,589
Miscellaneous Services	\$105,412	\$188,060
Office Supplies & Expenses	\$24,892	\$19,519
Advertising, Promotional & Events	\$37,584	\$48,420
Travel	\$34,705	\$76,979
Amortization	\$116,729	\$110,339
Dues & Fees	\$41,623	\$71,583
Repairs & Maintenance	\$81,813	\$55,220
Loss of Disposal of Capital Assets	\$1,049	\$-
Total Expenses	\$3,295,661	\$4,003,596
Annual Surplus (Deficit)	\$57,269	(\$56,600)

* 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.

Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner

Annual Report
2024





**Public Interest
Disclosure
Commissioner**

Speak out. Safely.

April 2025

The Honourable Todd Goudy
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 23(1) of *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*, I am pleased to submit to you the annual report of the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner for 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Pratchler, K.C.
Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner

Commissioner's Message

The purpose of *The Public Interest Disclosure Act* is to provide a confidential process for public servants to make disclosures about suspected wrongdoings in government and to protect the public servant from reprisal if they make a disclosure. The first step in that process often involves a public servant contacting our office to obtain information in order to decide if they want to make a disclosure.

In order to proceed under the legislation, we have to identify two key elements. First, the person making the disclosure must be a public servant as defined in the Act. Second, the subject matter of the disclosure must fall within the definition of wrongdoing set out in the Act, which includes:

- A contravention of a provincial or federal Act or regulation;
- An act or omission that creates a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment;
- Gross mismanagement of public funds or a public asset;
- Counselling to commit a wrongdoing.

All provincial government ministries, the Saskatchewan Health Authority, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, and many agencies, boards, commissions, and Crown Corporations are covered by the Act.

At times, we receive anonymous disclosures but are not able to proceed with them as we have to first determine that the individual making the disclosure meets the definition of public servant set out in the Act.

We understand the emotional toll that witnessing a wrongdoing in the workplace can take on an individual and have over the past year received training in trauma-informed practices. Confidentiality is a key aspect of our processes.

Provincial public sector employees who want to seek advice about making a disclosure can contact our office to discuss the process. If you are unsure about whether the legislation applies to you, you can reach out to us and we will review your circumstances to make that determination.

OUR WORK IN 2024

Training Designated Officers

The Public Interest Disclosure Act provides two avenues for public servants to make a disclosure: they can make their complaints to the Commissioner or to the designated officer within their Ministry or public entity.

In 2024, the Public Service Commission of Saskatchewan hosted an online training session for all designated officers under *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*. We participated in the session and provided training on how the legislation operates and how to apply its provisions.

Providing Advice

The Public Interest Disclosure Act provides an opportunity for a public servant who is considering making a disclosure to ask for advice from the Commissioner or the designated officer for their workplace. We received six inquiries in 2024 where the individuals contacting us wanted to discuss a potential disclosure. The legislation also requires that any disclosure must be in writing, using the prescribed form. No disclosure form was submitted by these individuals after they sought advice.

More Appropriate Forum to Deal with Issue

We received two disclosure forms this year which contained concerns that were more appropriately dealt with under a different piece of legislation, specifically Occupational Health and Safety. We referred the individuals to that process.

Files in Assessment Stage

We ended the year with four files in the assessment stage, which involves determining if the information provided constitutes a disclosure under our Act.

OMBUDSMAN SASKATCHEWAN

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE COMMISSIONER

Mailing Address

Ombudsman Saskatchewan
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