

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2025



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# Ombudsman Saskatchewan

April 2026

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

Dear Speaker Goudy:

**Re: Submission of the 2025 Ombudsman Annual Report**

As required by subsection 38(1) of *The Ombudsman Act, 2012*, I am pleased to submit to you the annual report of Ombudsman Saskatchewan for 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Pratchler', written in a cursive style.

**Sharon Pratchler, K.C.**  
Ombudsman

# Our Team

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Ope Adewoye  
Administrative Assistant

Ziad Al-Husseini  
Assistant Ombudsman

Colleen Ash  
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman

Femi Atilola  
Assistant Ombudsman

Jesseca Beals  
Assistant Ombudsman

Christy Bell  
Assistant Ombudsman

Kirby Bezan  
Executive Administrative  
Assistant

Taylor Boychuk  
Assistant Ombudsman

Leila Dueck  
Director of Communications  
Retired 2025

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 and  
Communications

Zuhal Latif  
Assistant Ombudsman

Lindsay Mitchell  
Assistant Ombudsman

Charlene Mouly  
Manager of Corporate Services

Promi Osman  
Assistant Ombudsman

Sherry Pelletier  
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman

Sharon Pratchler  
Ombudsman

Hannah Quách  
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman

Shelley Rissling  
Administrative Assistant

Niki Smith  
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman  
Proactive Engagement and  
Capacity Building

Jason Stamm  
Assistant Ombudsman

Kamryn Stewart  
Assistant Ombudsman

Laurie Taylor  
Executive Administrative  
Assistant

Ashley Thompson  
Assistant Ombudsman

Kathy Upton  
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman  
Retired 2025

Harry Walker  
Assistant Ombudsman

Kathy Willerth  
Assistant Deputy Ombudsman

Sherry Yasinski Smith  
Assistant Ombudsman

# Ombudsman's Message

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Our office's experience in 2025 was one of receiving record numbers of requests for assistance. There is an increasing demand for the tools which our office offers to manage conflict and de-escalate situations, as well as assess fairness in administrative decision-making.

Over the 52 years of our existence, we have never before received the volume of files within our statutory jurisdiction that we did this past year. The total of those files was 3,756. The closest that our office has come to those numbers in the past 52 years was 3,419 in 2016.

The goal of our office is to focus on continuous improvement in government and municipal services. Our legislation provides us with many tools to reach that outcome. In addition to taking specific complaints from individuals about particular situations, one of the important tools is our mandate to deliver education on fairness. Fairness has many aspects to it, including fairness in outcome, process and relationship.

Given that the municipal sector generates a high number of files for our office, we looked at how we could be proactive in our education and outreach in this area. As a result, we created a new position of Assistant Deputy Ombudsman; Proactive Engagement and Capacity Building. The services offered by our office through this new position, including customized training provided to municipalities, has proven extremely popular.

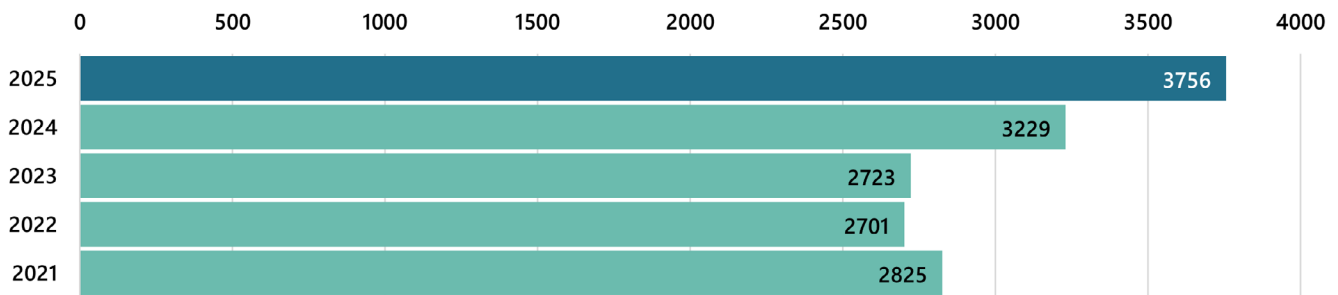
As a result, we provided a record number of presentations this year, with 81 in total. We also received a record number of files regarding municipal issues, at 708 files. The closest number we have had to that previously was in 2024, at 589 files.

We would not be able to offer the services we do, especially in the record numbers we experienced this year, without the commitment of a very dedicated team. Despite record numbers, our Team was able to maintain our standards for timeliness in delivery of services to the public, which have been set since 2007, of resolving 90 percent of our files within 90 days and 95 percent of our files within 180 days.

We want to thank everyone in the many public entities who attended or requested education from our office this year. This openness to learning and continuous improvement demonstrates the best qualities of public service.

# A Year In Review

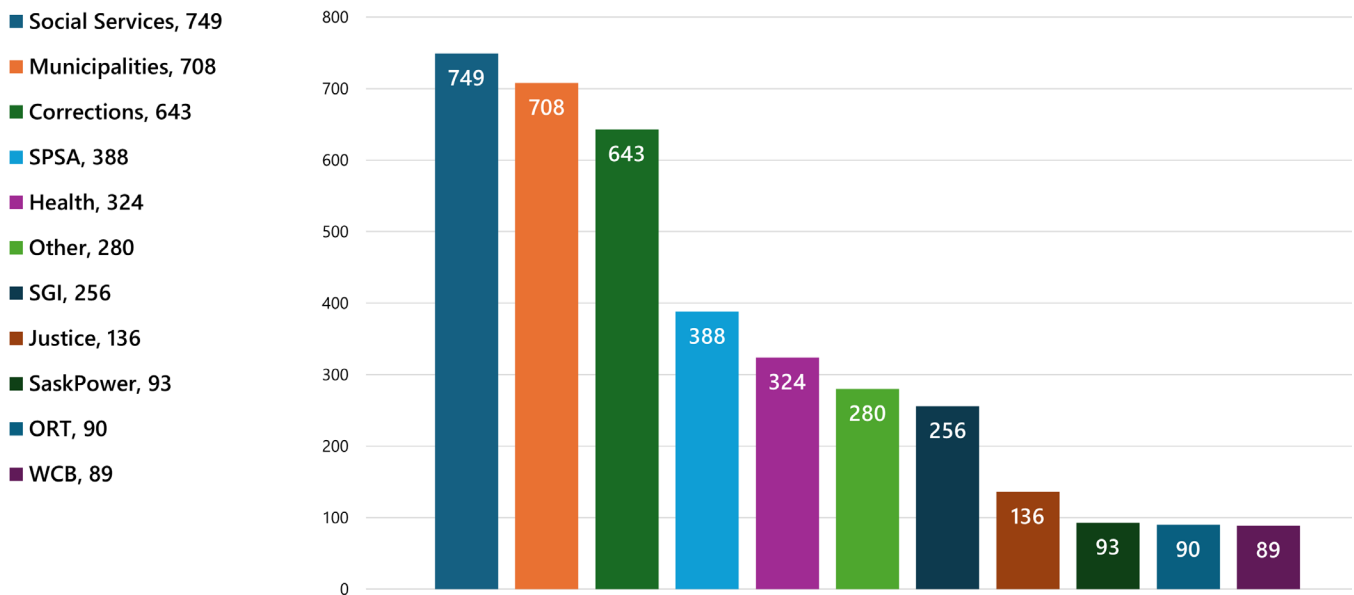
Total In Jurisdiction Requests for Assistance, 5 year comparison



In 2025 we received a record number of in jurisdiction requests for assistance; **3,756**. Our total requests for assistance outside our jurisdiction were 856, for a total of 4,612.

For requests that we receive that are outside our jurisdiction, we take on a pathfinder role, helping to direct the person to the appropriate organization. Some examples of the requests that we get that are outside of our jurisdiction are: courts, Government of Canada, First Nations Governments, private companies or individuals, and the RCMP.

## In Jurisdiction Requests for Assistance: 3,756



# Multiple Pathways to Access Services: Why it Matters

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Our office provides multiple pathways to individuals to access our services. As the statistics below indicate, people can connect with our office through a variety of methods – phone calls, internet forms, emails, letters or in-person meetings.

People can self-select the particular method they wish to use and we provide a range of options because we know that the needs of the individuals who reach out to us are varied. The people who contact our office range from highly sophisticated technology users to some of the most marginalized and vulnerable people in the province who have no phone, no computer or email and no home.

The key point is that we provide multiple pathways to our service because that ensures the broadest possible access to anyone who needs our services. This approach ensures both accessibility and inclusion.

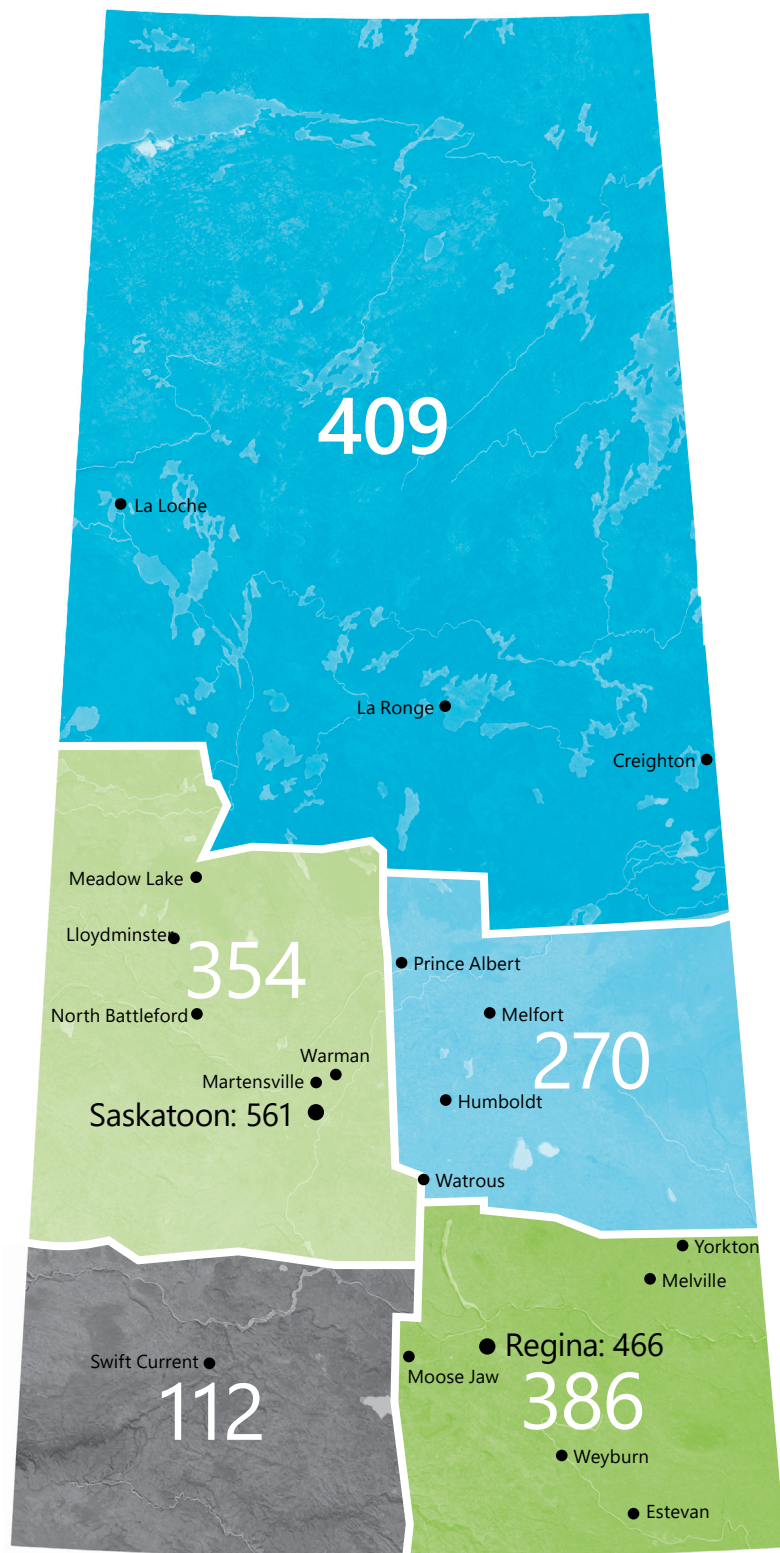
It is particularly significant to note that 77 percent of the people who reach out to our office do so by telephone. What that tells us is that personal connection is still very important to users of our service.

We always encourage public entities to keep in mind the need for multiple pathways when they are designing or updating new programs or services. If there is only one pathway, this creates a barrier that users of the service cannot overcome.

## How Requests were Received:



# Where Requests Came From



## We do our work throughout the Province

We do our work throughout the Province. This is demonstrated by the numbers of kilometres members of our office traveled this year. The total kilometres traveled throughout the Province in 2025 was 70,715.

This year, we saw a significant increase in the number of files that originated in the North. The five year average of files from the North prior to 2025 was 110 files. In 2025, the number of requests for assistance grew to 409.

## Regions, Regina, and Saskatoon

North	409
West Central	354
East Central	270
Southwest	112
South East	386
Regina	466
Saskatoon	561

## Other Locations

Correctional Centres	531
Out of Province	54
Unknown	613

**Total Requests** 3,756

# Tribute to James (Jim) Pratt CD

(Canadian Forces' Decoration)

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Our work was enriched this year by the wisdom and warmth of our Knowledge Keeper. He accompanied staff on outreach activities, consulted on files and policies, and assisted our Team in understanding an Indigenous perspective in our approach to relationships and our analysis of files. He journeyed to his Creator this year. In keeping with the family's request that traditional practices be observed, we will not say or post his name for a year. The family requested that we use his name once in our annual report's tribute to him.

His presence is greatly missed in our office.



# Examples of Our Work This Year

## **Social Services; SAID Program: Transportation Benefits for End-of-Life Medical Care**

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We received a call from an individual who was receiving SAID benefits. His medical condition required him to make 9 trips each month to obtain necessary medical treatment. His particular concern was that when he called his worker for approval for the transportation costs, he was not receiving a response. When he contacted our office, he had not received any communication from his worker for 20 days, despite having reached out to the worker through both calls and emails.

The complainant felt that this was adding an additional burden to his life at a time when he was navigating his end-of-life medical care. His desire was for a streamlined approval process to ensure that he could access necessary transportation to attend medical visits.

We received a timely response from a supervisor when we contacted Social Services. The supervisor approved his transportation requests for the next 3 months. While the complainant would have preferred an indefinite approval for transportation, the supervisor explained that there did need to be periodic reviews of the expenditure of public money.

In this instance, the supervisor balanced the need for accountability and oversight of the expenditure of public money with a responsive approach to the needs of the individual.

# Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency: Wildfires 2025

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The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (SPSA) offers wildfire evacuees financial and other supports through the Emergency Community Support Program. Over the spring and summer of 2025, our office opened 387 files regarding the wildfire response, many of which involved this program.

In a Fact Sheet on their website, SPSA describes the purpose of the Emergency Community Support as “a program which is intended to meet the urgent, basic needs of Saskatchewan residents who have been displaced from their homes due to a disaster such as flooding or a forest fire”.

SPSA further describes the Emergency Community Support program as “a labour-intensive support that meets people’s basic needs including:

- Registration and Enquiry (R&E);
- Lodging, food and clothing;
- Psycho-social services;
- Local Transportation (in host community); and
- Some recreational activities.”

In our initial public response to the volume and urgent nature of the complaints we were receiving from wildfire evacuees, we indicated we would be undertaking an investigation. Since that time, there has been an announcement of a review by MNP and a performance audit by the Provincial Auditor.

We concluded that the areas of concern brought to our attention would be examined in those reviews. As a result, we subsequently determined that a third investigation by our office was unnecessary. Rather, in the summary below, we focus on representative complaints made to our office that illustrate where improvements in the experience for wildfire evacuees are needed. We used the lens of best practices to focus on the needs of wildfire evacuees when displaced from their home communities.

**Best practices to meet the needs of evacuees involve timeliness of response, clarity of information, flexibility to meet the diverse needs involved when whole communities are evacuated and flexibility in payment options to recognize geographical issues.**

## 1. Timeliness Equates to Safety for Evacuees

In a crisis, timeliness of response equates to safety for those who are displaced from their homes and community. Delays and bottlenecks in process can amplify or intensify the impact of a traumatic event. Streamlined, preferably one step processes to apply for financial and other supports are critical.

While the Emergency Community Support program identifies the goal of responding to urgent needs, what we heard from evacuees and community leaders in the complaints to our office were difficulties in operationalizing that goal during the evacuation.

Lack of timeliness was the central theme in many of the complaints which our office received about the Emergency Community Support program delivery.

On Sunday, June 15, a parent reached out to our office for help for their evacuated family after 18 days of not being able to obtain financial support from SPSA despite calling them every day. We learned that one child was autistic, had food sensitivities and that the family was running out of groceries. Given the child's needs, the family was not able to use an evacuation centre. The family had exhausted their savings and were staying with elderly relatives in Saskatchewan who could not provide financial support.

Our office contacted SPSA the same day this parent reached out to us, to flag the urgency of this family's situation. The SPSA responded to the family on the same day on the status of the family's request for support as follows – "Financial form completed 4 days ago – support is in process". No time frame was provided for when financial relief would be available to the family.

We connected the family with community supports to meet their immediate needs until the financial support from SPSA arrived.

While there always has to be an assessment process to determine eligibility for a program when public money is involved, when urgent support is needed, the process to apply has to be streamlined and as close to one step and one day as possible.

Requiring evacuees to complete multiple steps to apply for a program is a barrier to providing urgent support in a crisis. We heard from evacuees that the process included signing up for the Evacuation app, calling the toll-free SPSA number to complete their application and then waiting for a response, without a clear indication of when help would arrive.

**... when urgent support is needed, the process to apply has to be streamlined and as close to one step and one day as possible**

## 2. Clarity in Information about Processes and Time Frames

What we heard repeatedly as a theme from those affected by the disruption of the evacuations was a deep need for any certainty that could be provided. The kind of certainty the evacuees were seeking involved clarity in information provided, from who they should apply to for relief (Red Cross or SPSA), where or how they could apply, what they could apply for, what would be provided and when the support would be provided.

The examples below illustrate this need for clarity and certainty:

On June 11, an evacuee from Creighton reached out to our office for assistance in obtaining food support. They indicated their experience had included reaching out to the Red Cross for support but being told they were not eligible to obtain support from Red Cross. When they registered with the SPSA, they found the registration process difficult, with the website not being user-friendly and requiring multiple attempts by them to complete.

They had evacuated on May 28. When they requested food assistance from SPSA on June 4, they were told they would receive a call. After hearing nothing, they followed up on June 8 and were told to be patient. On June 9, they called a third time and were informed that the representative on the SPSA toll-free line wasn't even sure Creighton was eligible. After a long wait on hold, the representative told them they were eligible, but still had to be patient. They received a call on June 10 and were told that they would receive an email or text message with further instructions.

They contacted our office on June 11 as they had still not received anything. This individual identified the "lack of clear communication, consistency and timely support" as having added to the anxiety of an already challenging situation.

Another issue identified by an evacuee who was very technologically literate was that the information originally provided about the registration process used by SPSA through the evacuation app did not indicate that in addition to registering on the Evac app, evacuees had to call SPSA to complete their registration. What this meant was that until the evacuees became aware that a second step had to be taken to complete registration, their request for support was not processed.

This evacuee was a data analyst who provided a detailed timeline of events, including screen shots of the information supplied on the Facebook page of her home community from SPSA, which did not initially indicate that the evacuees had to call SPSA's toll-free number to complete their registration. The SPSA subsequently updated the information to include the second step in the process.

### 3. Flexibility to Address Individual Circumstances when Registering

When whole communities are being evacuated, there needs to be flexibility built into the processes used in providing financial and other supports to reflect variations in circumstances and diversity of the population being served. There have to be multiple pathways or methods to register for services to reflect those variations in individual circumstances.

In July 2025, we heard from an 85 year old evacuee who fled from La Ronge and stayed in a camper on a friend's acreage near Prince Albert. He had tried reaching out to the SPSA but was told he would need to send them his email and they would communicate that way with him. He shared with us that he is not very tech savvy and does not know how to use email and how to look up or respond back. He told us he had explained this to SPSA staff, but they told him he has no other options.

After we reached out to the SPSA about the obstacle this created for this older adult from La Ronge receiving supports, he did receive a call from SPSA and received his funds. He advised that he was very appreciative to our office for helping him secure his funds.

**The model used to register evacuees cannot assume that all people have a cell phone or unlimited minutes. The model used for the program must also not be based on an assumption that everyone is able to use technology, including evacuation apps and email.**

### 4. Flexibility in Payment Options to Recognize Geographical Issues

We heard from evacuees during the 2025 wildfires who had no choice but to evacuate to Manitoba. When that happens, there have to be payment options flexible enough to provide payment in that other province, without requiring an evacuee to undertake further travel to obtain support.

If services are only available in Saskatchewan, that creates barriers for people. We heard from evacuees who fled to Manitoba who were not able to obtain services from Red Cross because they were from Saskatchewan.

In addition, the primary payment method used by SPSA to get money to evacuees was by cheques so there was a time delay in delivery of that method of payment for evacuees to Manitoba.

We received a call on Wednesday, June 11, from an evacuee from Denare Beach who had evacuated to Manitoba on May 28 to stay with family. At the time they contacted our office, they had been evacuated for 14 days. They indicated that they had called SPSA daily but had not yet received any financial support. They indicated that they were in financial distress and needed some help as soon as possible.

We provided this information to SPSA who responded to us the same day that they had made contact with the evacuee and arrangements had been made to courier a cheque to them the following day. SPSA advised that it was anticipated that the cheque should be delivered either Friday or Monday, either 2 or 5 days later.

Having more flexibility in payment methods, such as electronic transfers to the bank accounts of evacuees as opposed to paper cheques, would assist in delivering financial support to evacuees quicker.

Food vouchers were also used by SPSA for evacuees and were restricted to specific grocery stores. Replacing food vouchers with more modern options of payment such as prepaid credit cards that could be used at any grocery store closest to the location an evacuee had fled to would increase flexibility.

# Saskatchewan Government Insurance: Denial and Valuation of Claim for Vehicles Destroyed by Wildfires

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During the 2025 wildfire season, our office received a call from a man who experienced total losses as a result of the fires. He contacted us after SGI issued a public statement indicating that for vehicles left behind during evacuations with expired registration and insurance, SGI would allow retroactive registration and insurance to ensure there was no lapse in coverage during the evacuation period. Although the caller did this for the vehicles he lost in the fires, SGI denied one claim and did not offer what the caller considered fair compensation on two others.

We contacted SGI to inquire about the caller's situation. SGI advised that for the two claims where settlement amounts were disputed, the caller had been asked to provide additional documentation to support the values he was seeking. SGI noted that one of the vehicles had modifications that made valuation more complex, but they were prepared to review the valuation upon receipt of further information.

With respect to the denied claim, SGI referred us to updated information it had released regarding wildfire losses. This updated information indicated that individuals were permitted to drive unregistered vehicles out of the danger zone. In this case, the caller was unable to retrieve the vehicle before it was destroyed by fire.

Following this clarification, we contacted SGI to ask why the original announcement had been changed, how the public was notified of the change, whether individuals who relied on the original information were informed, and how SGI ensured that the public was not misled given the emergency circumstances.

SGI advised that it would be reviewing and considering coverage for claims affected by its public announcement. SGI further confirmed that it had accepted the caller's denied claim and that the assigned adjuster would contact him within the next few business days to move the claim forward.

We contacted the caller to inform him that SGI would be accepting the previously denied claim. We also reminded him that SGI was awaiting additional information to substantiate the values he was requesting for the other two accepted claims. The caller expressed sincere appreciation for the assistance provided.

# Saskatchewan Government Insurance; Valuation of Loss of Home in a Fire

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We received a call from an individual whose cousin's house had been lost in a fire. This loss was unrelated to the 2025 wildfires, which are reported on in an earlier section.

The cousin had ongoing health issues, and during the claim process he passed away. Throughout his declining health, the caller kept in contact with the adjuster, noting the cousin's health status. When her cousin passed, the caller, now as the executor of his estate, continued to work with SGI regarding the insurance settlement.

Our office handled an issue of whether the amount of an SGI insurance payout for the loss of a home should be \$199K or \$424K.

The claim was approved while her cousin was still alive, with the requirements that the new home be built on the same lot and that the home would be his primary residence. The amount approved to rebuild the home was \$424,000. Alternatively, the cousin could accept a payout of \$199,000. When her cousin passed, those requirements were passed onto the caller, that the caller make this home her primary residence or accept the payout. She is a resident of another province and that would require her to leave a career to move to Saskatchewan. The caller being unable to move would trigger the payout of \$199,000, representing a significant savings for SGI.

Throughout the claim process the caller and her cousin dealt with a couple of insurance adjusters. When the caller reached out to the current adjuster to clarify the terms of the settlement, she received a letter from the adjuster's supervisor. Dissatisfied with the response, she engaged our office. We referred her to the SGI Fair Practices Office (FPO), noting if she was dissatisfied with their response, we would reengage.

After the caller received an unsatisfactory response from the FPO, she reengaged with our office. Upon reviewing the insurance contract and the communication provided, we contacted the FPO and inquired about their legal authority to transfer the insurance settlement requirements to the executor. After referring the matter to their legal department, SGI came back and agreed they did not have a policy to do so, and they would move forward rebuilding the house, without it being the caller's primary residence.

The caller was satisfied with the decision. She wrote our office the following thank you message: "There aren't enough ways to say thank you to you and the work that you did in helping me achieve the goal that was agreed upon prior to my cousin's unexpected death. I appreciate all the time you and your office took to review my request and reach out to the necessary individuals. Thank you again for listening to my concerns regarding the file. It was much appreciated."

# **Social Services; SAID Program: Transportation Benefits for Life-Sustaining Medical Care**

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We received a call from a woman who was experiencing issues getting in touch with the Ministry of Social Services to secure funds for medical travel.

The caller had to travel to Saskatoon 3 times a week for dialysis, and each trip was a 4 hour drive each way. It was difficult for her to secure transport from friends or family, and taking a taxi was cost prohibitive. She required a taxi once for the trip and it cost \$700.

The caller indicated she had been trying to reach Social Services but had been unsuccessful. She noted that although her medical travel funding had been approved, she had not yet received any. She had missed appointments due to not having the funds to travel.

We spoke with a manager at Social Services who then reached out to the caller, clarified some details and was able to have the travel funds deposited into the caller's account that day. The manager also discussed some support options with the caller to ensure that she does not miss her dialysis appointments. The manager also indicated that the caller was assigned a worker in a nearby community, so she does not have to try and contact Social Services via the call centre.

Upon following up with the caller, she noted she was able to get to her next appointment successfully. She also indicated she was on a wait list to receive treatment in a closer community.

# Ministry of Social Services: Trustee and Money Management Services

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As a result of receiving multiple complaints about the Ministry of Social Service's Trustee and Money Management Services (trustee program), our office commenced an Ombudsman Initiated Investigation. We conduct this type of systemic investigation when we receive multiple complaints about a particular program.

Some of the complaints about the program we heard were:

1. Recipients were being put on trustee without their input or consent and there is no option to appeal.
2. Trustees were not fulfilling their roles appropriately leading to missed payments and evictions.
3. Trustees made payments late resulting in late fees for those under trustee services.

In reviewing these complaints, we reviewed the following issues:

1. What are the criteria for being placed on trustee, and what are the factors considered? Are these criteria consistent across Saskatchewan?
2. How are trustees chosen?
3. What training is available for trustees?
4. Are the principles of fairness being followed in this process?
5. Why are there no appeal options?
6. What is the trustee's role regarding their clients and the Ministry?
7. What are the steps when there are issues between the client and the Ministry?

At the onset of our investigation we were told by the Ministry that there were no set criteria for when a client was considered for trusteeship. There are several options available to the Ministry before putting a client on trusteeship, such as direct payments, or using monthly benefits to pay down arrears. During the course of our investigation, Social Services implemented a tool under the trustee program to help assess if a client needs to be put under trustee. There are also two tiers for those on trusteeship, the first being for clients with multiple challenges, who cannot manage their finances, and the second, when clients have some money managing skills, but still require support.

When the Ministry decides to put a client on trusteeship, they will meet with clients and explain what will happen, and clients sign a form indicating they understand. The Ministry made the assertion that most clients were accepting of being on trusteeship, but we received contrary information from the community-based organizations that assist clients with disputes.

From one Saskatoon based organization we heard that many clients disagree with being on trusteeship. Clients are told they are being put on trusteeship, often with little advance notice, explanation, or input. We also heard that when a trustee pays rent or utilities late, those late charges are the responsibility of the client. An organization in Regina noted that their clients often are put on trusteeship without them knowing it, and are only told after they are put on trustee.

If there are issues with a trustee, a manager will engage both the client and trustee to ascertain what the issues are, and the possible remedy. Remedies can be maintaining the same trustee after rebuilding the relationship or going through the budget and timelines with both parties.

Trustees are required to provide accounting to the Ministry at set intervals. Trustees have different reporting requirements based on the type of trustee, public or private. Their requirements also vary on the program their client is on. These rules are set out in policy.

As a result of this investigation, we arrived at four recommendations for the Ministry of Social Services regarding their trustee program:

1. The Ministry provide clients with advance notice that the trustee program is being considered for the client and a chance for the client to provide their side of the story before the trustee program is established.

**The Ministry agreed that workers will ensure conversations with clients about the possibility of trusteeship, as well as the clients' perspective, are documented on the file to demonstrate that advance notice and the opportunity to present their case has been provided to the client.**

2. That the Ministry provides clients on trustee with written information about what they need to do to get off the trustee program.

**The Ministry agreed to implement this recommendation.**

3. If rent or other bills are paid late by the trustee, the Ministry should be responsible for any resulting late payment charges, not the client.

**The Ministry noted that assigning responsibilities is complex and that where it is solely the fault of the trustee, their organization is responsible for the charges.**

4. Allow clients to appeal the decision to place them on the trustee program.

**The Ministry agreed to implement an appeal system for the trustee program.**

# Saskatchewan Regional Park: Procedural Fairness in Dealing with Alleged Violations of Park Policies

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We received a complaint from a family who was denied a seasonal camp site at a regional park which they had occupied for a number of years. They were unhappy with both the decision to deny them a seasonal site and the board's refusal to allow them to state their case prior to the decision being made. They were regular campers and had used the daily camping sites for 15 years until they were able to secure a seasonal site. They had been on a wait list for years for a seasonal site in that regional campground.

The dispute that led to the denial of the seasonal site was an eviction notice the previous season for a noise complaint. At the time of the noise complaint the park manager advised the Regional Park Authority (the board) of two key pieces of information. First, that a noise complaint had been received about this family's campsite. Secondly, the manager told the board that previous violations had occurred over the years and that policy dictated that the family be evicted immediately.

The board did not investigate the noise complaint or review the policy before agreeing with the park manager and directing her to issue an eviction notice to the family.

The family tried to explain to the park manager and the board that the noise had not taken place at their campsite but rather at the shower house just three sites away. Youth in the park had destroyed property, creating a lot of noise and disturbing the peace at two a.m.

This explanation was not accepted. Several board members attended the site to notify the family that the eviction would stand and if they did not vacate the site, the RCMP may be called.

The policy in place at the time referred to a three-strike rule, meaning that a seasonal camper had to be formally notified of three separate violations in writing before the board could evict them from their site. As a result, even if the noise had come from the family's site, they had not received three written notifications.

The family felt the policy was not followed and that there had been a lack of fairness toward them. They hired a lawyer and the board rescinded the eviction.

The board then created a new policy that all seasonal campers would need to apply yearly for a site. Prior to the policy change, seasonal sites were kept by the same camper each year until given up.

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The family applied for a seasonal site early in the year after the dispute but were denied. By that point, they had been at the same site for three years. As earlier noted, it had taken the family some time to make it to that status.

The family was also advised they were required to remove their personal property from the seasonal site by April 15. The family requested an extension to this date due to poor weather and were denied. The park manager arranged for the family's trailer (located elsewhere in the park) and their deck (located on the seasonal site) to be towed and the family was billed for this expense. The park manager then gave the family until April 30 to remove a shed and other personal items from the site.

During our investigation we spoke with the manager of the park, all board members, and the family. One member of the board indicated that the policy changed because people were treating sites as their own and not following the bylaws in place. He noted spots were never guaranteed. He also noted the family had many complaints against them, though only one had been brought to their attention in all their years at the park.

We noted it was unfair to rely on information that was not made known to the family and for not allowing them to state their case. During that conversation we offered to provide a presentation on procedural fairness to the board. They declined.

We noted that the policy originally in place was not followed appropriately by the manager and the board. We noted that the staff did not have a robust process for dealing with complaints and that policies in place did not afford administrative fairness to those with complaints made against them. As a result of our investigation, we provided five recommendations for the board.

Recommendations:

1. That the board offer the family a seasonal site in the upcoming camping season as the denial of the application should not have occurred had the original policy been followed appropriately.

**The board declined this recommendation.**

2. That the members of the board and staff read and understand all policies and bylaws they are responsible for administering and create a process for documenting all complaint, warning, inspections, and violations on the files of seasonal site holders.

**The board indicated they had implemented this recommendation.**

3. That the board amend their seasonal site policy to reflect that applications with no history of complaints, warnings or violations will be decided by park staff; that applications with prior documented complaints, warnings or violations will be forwarded to the board for decision; written reasons be provided by the board for any refusals; and that any appeals will be considered by an independent panel made up of separate council members from municipalities that established the regional park.

**The board agreed to use the Saskatchewan Regional Park Association's Dispute Resolution Tribunal, which will be in place by November 1, 2026.**

4. That the board implement a process for reviewing violations of the bylaws and policies which takes into consideration the principles of procedural fairness – notice to a camper that a violation has been reported, the opportunity for a camper to review and challenge the allegation against them, the opportunity for a camper to present their case to the board and the right to receive reasons for the decision.

**The board agreed to put this in place immediately following the Ombudsman's report.**

5. That the board reimburse the family for the towing and storage of their trailer in the amount of \$2,201.85 which was incurred due to the removal of their trailer from the park.

**The board declined to follow this recommendation.**

# Municipal Engagement and Capacity Building

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2025 marked the 10th anniversary of our expanded jurisdiction to oversee municipalities. Over that decade, requests for assistance have grown steadily, reaching a record 708 municipal files.

Given the sustained volume of municipal concerns, we recognized the importance of enhancing our proactive efforts in this space. With education on fairness in public sector decision making being a core part of our statutory mandate, we explored opportunities to bolster these efforts for municipalities in a meaningful way. This work also aligned with feedback from municipalities who were seeking tools to address emerging issues before they escalate into complaints.

In May 2025 we introduced a new role to our office, Assistant Deputy Ombudsman of Proactive Engagement and Capacity Building, to provide municipalities with tailored training, coaching, and early intervention support. Since then, we have delivered 43 outreach activities across the province, including presentations, workshops, and participation in sector events such as SUMA's Summer School for Mayors, SARM's Mid Term Convention, and the RMAA Annual Convention.

A notable highlight from our proactive engagement was a two day Civility Session at Government House, where municipal leaders explored practical strategies for reducing conflict and supporting healthier governance. Demand for these new services continues to grow, particularly from individual councils seeking training on conflict management and de-escalation.

Our goal is to help municipalities build capacity, reduce conflict, and strengthen fairness in decision making. We remain committed to expanding proactive supports and helping municipalities address emerging issues before they escalate.

Popular training areas include:

- Fair decision making and communication
- Complaint handling
- Conflict de-escalation and high conflict dynamics
- Active listening and non-defensive communication
- Stress management and self care
- Municipal governance topics, including conflict of interest, codes of ethics, and bylaw reviews

**All of our outreach services are provided free of charge.**

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# Outreach 2025

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## 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:
  - Ministry of Social Services
  - eHealth
  - Ministry of Health
- Essential Toolbox Series - Practical Implementation of Procedural Fairness
- Ministry of Government Relations, Community Planning
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Early Family Resolution Office - Ministry of Justice

## Community

- Johnson Shoyama - Ethical Leadership and Democracy
- University of Regina - Restorative Justice Conference
- Prince Albert Police Women's Commission
- FSIN Health Ombudsperson
- Prince Albert Grand Council
- Probus Club - Regina
- SaskAbilities - Inclusive Communities Conference
- Spotlight on Seniors
- Law Fair - Saskatoon and Regina Public Libraries
- Saskatchewan Emergency Planners Association (SEPA), Moose Jaw and Waskesiu
- Lac La Ronge Indian Band - Wellness Conference
- Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation Truth and Reconciliation Gathering 2025 at Sturgeon Landing

# Ensuring Procedural Fairness in Decision-Making: Giving Reasons

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There is an obligation on local and provincial governments to ensure procedural fairness in their administrative decision-making. With the authority to make decisions comes the responsibility to ensure they are made fairly, particularly when these decisions affect the rights or interests of individuals.

As we see every day in our work, people are more likely to accept even an unfavourable decision if they understand how that decision was reached. People also want to be satisfied that only relevant factors were taken into account by the decision-maker. They want to feel heard by the decision-maker and have an opportunity to respond to information which the decision-maker may have available from other sources.

The practical reasons for requiring reasons from decision-makers has been explained as follows by Justice Stratas:

“Adequate explanations lead often to more thinking, better thinking, and, thus, better decision-making. This is because administrative decision-makers, while they write up adequate explanations for their decisions, often discover gaps or flaws in their reasoning or the need for more submissions.

Adequate explanations tell affected persons that the administrative decision-maker took on board their key arguments and rejected them for certain reasons: this vindicates the interests served by procedural fairness.

Adequate explanations further the transparency, legitimacy and accountability of administrative decision-makers to the parties before them, other regulatees, reviewing courts, and the wider public...”<sup>1</sup>

Best Practices for Decision-Makers to be able to Give Reasons for their Decisions:

## 1. Ensure a good understanding of the relevant legislation that applies

The question our office will always ask is “what legal authority did you rely on to make that decision?”. This may come from a statute, regulations, a Minister’s Order or in the context of municipal work, a bylaw or motion. The key point is that a decision maker has to be able to point to the source of that legal authority.

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<sup>1</sup> See generally *Canadian National Railway Company v. Canada (Transportation Agency)*, 2025 FCA 184 at para 46 and cases cited therein and *Vivatas, Inc. v. Attorney General of Canada*, 2025 FCA 225 at para 5

## **2. Never use the explanation that “we have always done it that way”**

There always has to be the ability on the part of the decision-maker to point out why it was done that way, based on the statutory framework involved.

We encourage decision-makers to have a copy of their legislation always at hand and to regularly reread the provisions, to avoid any drift away from the wording in the legislation and to consider the words in the context of the particular, individualized circumstances before them.

## **3. Consider any discretion that exists and whether or not it should apply**

Legislation cannot set out all of the practical situations that may arise so the legislative framework generally will set out criteria to apply and discretion to deal with situations that may arise. When discretion exists for the decision-maker, it is important that they are able to explain what consideration they gave to exercising that discretion and why they did or did not exercise it.

Our office often deals with situations that require an individualized response, given particular factors or personal needs. The existence of discretion and how it was or was not exercised will be factors we examine closely.

## **4. Ensure that information provided by the person affected by the decision is considered**

Decision makers have to assess any relevant information that they have available to make their decision. If they reject particular pieces of that information which have been provided to them by the person affected, it is important that there are clear reasons given as to why that information was rejected.

## **5. Give the person affected by the decision an opportunity to respond to information received from other sources**

If the decision maker has before them any relevant information from other sources that they are considering in their decision, then the person affected by the decision must be made aware of that information and have an opportunity to provide their perspective on it.

## **6. Use accessible language – simple words that connect the dots**

The truly challenging part of providing good reasons is in connecting the information provided and relied on to the statutory criteria through an analysis that is simply stated. Ask yourself the question – “Would anyone with no knowledge of this situation be able to understand how the decision was made simply by hearing or reading the reasons?”

# Requests for Assistance 2025

<b>Ministry of Social Services</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Child & Family Programs	136	126	111
First Nations Child and Family Services	5	3	3
Housing Programs	97	89	87
Inclusion Saskatchewan/Community Living Service Delivery	4	10	4
Income Assistance Programs - SAID	272	290	213
Income Assistance Programs - SIS	203	242	185
Income Assistance Programs - SAP*	-	-	4
Income Assistance Programs - Other Programs	4	7	12
Adjudicator, Saskatchewan Employment Supplement Program	2	-	-
Social Services	26	-	-
Social Services - Other	-	19	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>650</b>

\* The Income Assistance Program - SAP ended in 2022, but cases carried into 2023

<b>Municipalities</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Cities	162	158	129
Towns	159	125	108
Villages	122	101	57
Resort Villages	27	21	21
Rural Municipalities	184	149	123
Northern Municipalities	19	17	20
Other/Undisclosed	35	18	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>464</b>

<b>Ministry of Corrections, Policing, and Public Safety (Community Safety)</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Pine Grove Correctional Centre	113	197	86
Prince Albert Correctional Centre	72	78	77
Regina Correctional Centre	199	238	212
Saskatoon Correctional Centre	196	195	183
Saskatchewan Hospital, North Battleford	26	15	16
White Birch Female Remand Unit	6	9	1
Whitespruce Provincial Training Centre	2	3	8
Adult Corrections - Other	6	16	10
Corrections, Policing, and Public Safety - Other	18	15	6
Saskatchewan Firearms Office	3	-	-
Saskatchewan Marshals Service	2	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>766</b>	<b>599</b>

<b>Health Organizations</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Ministry of Health	18	30	24
3S Health	3	3	3
eHealth Saskatchewan	16	9	21
Saskatchewan Cancer Agency	-	3	1
Saskatchewan Health Authority	287	217	191
Other Health Entities	-	20	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>257</b>

<b>Agencies, Boards, and Commissions</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Animal Protection Services	2	7	6
Apprenticeship and Trades Certification Commission	-	-	1
Automobile Injury Commission	3	2	-
Creative Saskatchewan	-	-	1
Highway Traffic Board	5	3	7
Office of Residential Tenancies	90	58	53
Provincial Capital Commission	1	-	-
Provincial Mediation Board	-	3	-
Public Services Commission	13	1	2
Regional Colleges	-	2	1
Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency	4	2	4
Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission	17	17	19
Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board	3	-	-
Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission	38	46	28
Saskatchewan Municipal Board	2	1	3
Saskatchewan Polytechnic	4	7	5
Saskatchewan Public Complaints Commission	26	22	34
Saskatchewan Social Services Appeal Board	1	4	-
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board	89	74	54
Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>219</b>

<b>Crown Corporations and Agencies</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority	5	3	3
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation	5	6	9
Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation	-	-	1
Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI)			
Auto Fund	27	59	42
Claims Division - Auto Claims	120	104	88
Claims Division - No Fault Insurance	50	33	43
Claims Division - Other/SGI Canada	41	35	41
Other	18	6	4
<b>Total SGI</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>218</b>
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority	3	-	2
Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency	388	3	-
Saskatchewan Research Council	-	1	-
SaskEnergy	26	30	33
SaskGaming	1	-	-
SaskPower	93	78	107
SaskTel	25	31	23
SaskWater	-	-	1
Water Security Agency	2	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>341</b>

<b>Other Ministries</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Advanced Education	4	3	5
Agriculture	3	4	2
Education	16	6	4
Energy and Resources	1	3	1
Environment	10	7	7
Executive Council	3	1	-
Finance	15	11	22
Government Relations	2	1	4
Highways	4	6	3
Immigration and Career Training	8	7	1
Justice			
Court Services	4	5	8
Maintenance Enforcement Office	71	53	29
Public Guardian and Trustee	30	15	15
Office of Public Registry Administration	3	3	3
Other	28	20	7
<b>Total Justice</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>62</b>
Labour Relations and Workplace Safety	17	14	11
Parks, Culture, and Sport	7	4	5
SaskBuilds and Procurement	3	-	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>132</b>

# Budget

	<b>2024-25 Audited Financial Statement</b>	<b>2023-24 Audited Financial Statement</b>
<b>Revenue</b>		
General Fund Appropriation	\$4,572,834	\$3,946,996
Miscellaneous	\$-	\$-
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$4,572,834</b>	<b>\$3,946,996</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Salaries and Benefits	\$3,013,180	\$2,804,110
Office Space and Equipment Rental	\$618,898	\$592,777
Communications	\$32,482	\$36,589
Miscellaneous Services	\$231,400	\$188,060
Office Supplies and Expenses	\$43,893	\$19,519
Advertising, Promotional, and Events	\$114,383	\$48,420
Travel	\$140,859	\$76,979
Amortization	\$36,757	\$110,339
Dues and Fees	\$283,181	\$71,583
Repairs and Maintenance	\$77,342	\$55,220
Loss on Disposal of Capital Assets	\$6,847	\$-
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$4,599,222</b>	<b>\$4,003,596</b>
Annual Surplus (Deficit)	(\$26,388)	(\$56,600)

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