



Office of the Ombudsman
Annual Report
2024 – 2025

November 2025

The Honourable Danielle Barkhouse
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Speaker Barkhouse,

In accordance with subsection 24(1) of the Ombudsman Act, chapter 327 of the Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1989, and section 28, subsections (1) and (2) of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act, Chapter 42 of the Acts of 2010, I have the pleasure of presenting to you, and through you to the House of Assembly, the annual report on the exercise of my functions under those acts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CBrennan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christine Brennan
Ombudsman

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Message from the Ombudsman

This Office has one of the broadest mandates across the country for an Ombudsman Office, with three key oversight functions. First, pursuant to the Ombudsman Act, we help to resolve public complaints regarding the administration of provincial and municipal government. This includes all municipal units, provincial departments, agencies, boards, and commissions. Second, we work with several departments and agencies who provide services directly to children, youth, and seniors in the care of the province, to help better those services provided, and to function as a safeguard when complaints arise from those services. Thirdly, this Office receives and investigates Disclosures of Wrongdoing from public servants and the public. When a “whistleblower” comes forward with a disclosure of wrongdoing by public servants, we are positioned to respond or to investigate those concerns. This is achieved through the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act. Having these three functions also helps to ensure less bureaucratic hurdles for those seeking help with complex or overlapping issues.

I would encourage all Nova Scotians to take some time and review this report, whether as a member of the public or a public servant. This report is designed to provide you with insight into how the Office of the Ombudsman works for fairness and integrity within government. My hope is that readers find a greater understanding of how beneficial an independent oversight body can be.

Christine Brennan
Ombudsman

About the Office

Mission

Promote the principles of fairness, integrity, and good governance.

Role and Mandate

Ensure government decisions and processes are fair, consistent, and transparent. Our mandate extends to all individuals who receive services from, or are impacted by, provincial and municipal governments.

Provincial government employees and members of the public have an avenue to make allegations of government wrongdoing to the Ombudsman under the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act (PIDWA)*.

Administration

The **Office Manager** fulfills administrative and business functions and is a member of the Occupational Health and Safety Legislative Committee.

The **Complaint and Assessment Analyst** provides initial intake, assessment, and referrals, and creates records of all inquiries.

The **Records Analyst** manages the Office's program of records control and retention, adhering to provincial STAR/STOR standards.

Managers and the **Deputy Ombudsman** supervise staff, oversee investigations and business operations, and provide advice to the Ombudsman.

Investigation and Complaint Services (I&CS)

Ombudsman Representatives conduct investigations, including Own-Motion and systemic reviews.

The unit addresses departmental services, adult corrections, municipal services, and many other inquiries and complaints.

Staff also provide regular outreach visits to Persons in Custody and staff in provincial correctional facilities to advise of our services and discuss complaints in person.

Youth and Seniors Services (Y&SS)

Ombudsman Representatives review, investigate, and report on the concerns of children, youth, parents, guardians, and staff in relation to all provincial and municipal government child and youth serving programs and systems services; with an enhanced outreach to those living and working in provincial child and youth residential care and custodial facilities.

Ombudsman Representatives examine issues and complaints affecting senior citizens, particularly those who reside in provincially licensed long-term care (LTC) facilities.

Staff also provide regular outreach visits to Child and Youth Caring Programs (CYCPs), Wood Street Centre Campus, the Nova Scotia Youth Centre (Waterville), and the Cape Breton Youth Detention Facility (Glace Bay).

The Ombudsman is an executive member of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA).

Human Resources

The Office of the Ombudsman is committed to providing a workplace that is free of discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity for all people seeking employment with the Office.

The Office has 17 full-time positions, including that of Ombudsman, carrying out investigations, including those of a more significant and in-depth nature during the course of the year.

Office of the Ombudsman staff participate on the following committees:

- Pride Nova Scotia Government Employee Network
- Nova Scotia Disability Employee Network
- Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman
- Forum of Canadian Ombudsman – Communities of Practice (Municipal & Healthcare)
- French Language Services Coordinating Committee
- Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA)
- Advocacy Community of Practice
- Communications Community of Practice
- Child Rights Impact Assessment Community of Practice

Training and Professional Development

This year our staff participated in the following training and development opportunities:
Internal and Provincial Government Public Service Commission Training

Management and Leadership Development Programs

- Respectful Workplace
- Diversity, Inclusion & Employment Equity
- Privacy & Access Awareness Training
- First Aid/CPR & OHS Training
- Mental Health First Aid
- Managing Unreasonable Conduct by a Complainant Training
- Cybersecurity Awareness Training (PSC)
- Understanding Fraud in the Public Sector
- Leadership Development Program (PSC)

External Training & Webinars

- Forum of Canadian Ombudsman 2024 Conference
- International Ombudsman Institute 2024 World Conference
- Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates 2024 Biennial Conference (Hosted by this Office)
- Participation in webinars & presentations by the:
 - Office of Workplace Mental Health
 - Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman
 - Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates
 - Forum of Canadian Ombudsman
 - Nova Scotia College of Social Workers
 - All Provincial & Territorial Ombudsman Offices

Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates

In September 2024, the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman hosted the biennial conference of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) in Halifax. The CCCYA is an association of independent, appointed children's Advocates, Representatives, and Ombudsman in the provinces and territories holding mandates to protect the rights of children and youth.

The event saw representatives from across Canada convene to discuss and collaborate on areas of mutual concern. The two-day agenda included plenary sessions and mediated discussions with a Nova Scotia context such as the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children Restorative Inquiry, the implementation of the Mockingbird Foster Care Model by

the Department of Opportunities and Social Development, and the SeaStar Child and Youth Advocacy Centre at the IWK Health Centre.

Finances

Office of the Ombudsman Estimated Expenditures 2024-2025		
Core Business	Estimate	Actuals
Overall Expenses	\$2,200,000	\$2,123,400
Net Program Expenses (Travel, Prof. Services, Supplies, Other)	\$257,000	\$250,000
Salaries and Benefits	\$2,015,00	\$2,069,400
Less Chargeables	\$72,000	\$196,000
Staff (FTE's)	17.00	17.56

Case Study #1

Respondent: Opportunities & Social Development (formerly Community Services)

A youth in care (Complainant) contacted the Office of the Ombudsman alleging they had not been provided an assigned Caseworker for much of that year. An Ombudsman Representative contacted the Program Manager of the youth's residential placement, who confirmed that program staff have not been able to successfully contact the assigned Caseworker for the youth.

Upon contacting the Director of Service Delivery, the name of the youth's assigned Caseworker was confirmed. However, in a subsequent meeting with the youth during a scheduled site visit, the youth informed the Ombudsman Representative that they still had not met with their assigned Caseworker. The youth then expressed concerns regarding access to the following:

- their birth certificate and other identification documents,
- clothing allowance and subsistence funds,
- visits with their family,
- social worker attendance at court dates,
- dental care, and
- status of belongings left at previous placement, along with other concerns they attribute to a lack of access to their assigned Caseworker.

The Ombudsman Representative requested and obtained specific file information from the Department of Opportunities & Social Development, Child and Family Wellbeing. After reviewing the file information, areas of concern were identified and brought to the attention of senior officials of the Department. Following several discussions with officials of the Department, it was determined that the outstanding issues raised by the youth had been the consequence of an oversight caused by an extended absence of the youth's assigned Caseworker. The identified areas of concern were addressed by the Department, discussed with the youth, and resolved to the satisfaction of the youth and our Office.

Case Study #2

In 2017, the Office of the Ombudsman was contacted by the Department of Justice, Correctional Services, to discuss the use and review of close confinement in adult correctional and youth detention facilities. Following those discussions, the Office developed and undertook an enhanced review process regarding the use of disciplinary and administrative close confinement.

To initiate the process, Correctional Services provided a list of all confinements, encompassing all facilities, to have occurred within a designated time-period (quarter). Ombudsman Representatives then requested the case files of select and randomized individual confinements from Correctional Services. Those files were reviewed by Ombudsman Representatives in conjunction with existing Correctional Services policy and procedures to ensure compliance.

As a result of ongoing discussions regarding the enhanced review initiative, the process evolved and quarterly reports were provided to Correctional Services detailing the findings made by our Office and suggested actions to address any identified areas of concern.

In February 2024, Ombudsman Representatives met with Correctional Services to advise that the review sampling size per facility would be increased to encompass five percent of all confinements for the given quarter to enable a more statistically significant review. It was also discussed that in addition to the quarterly reviews provided to the Executive Director of Correctional Services, the Office of the Ombudsman would begin providing an annual Close Confinement Report to the Deputy Minister following the end of the fiscal year. The purpose of the annual report is to provide a brief synopsis of statistics, recommendations, and noted improvements, and identify any ongoing concerns or issues in adherence with Correctional Services policies and procedures.

Since expanding the sampling size of case files reviewed, our Office has been pleased with the commitment by Correctional Services to make meaningful changes in response to suggested actions and has noted an improvement in numerous areas of concern that were previously identified. Our Office believes this work provides value to both Persons in Custody and Correctional Services staff.

Investigation & Recommendations: Noise By-law

Respondent: Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)

The Office of the Ombudsman was contacted by an individual with concerns regarding the level of noise emanating from a nearby curling club. The Complainant alleged that portions of the club were reconstructed in 2016, resulting in an increase in noise from the ice making equipment. According to the Complainant, the ventilation and ice making equipment was negatively impacting the tranquility of the neighbourhood.

An Ombudsman Representative contacted the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and reviewed two investigations conducted by HRM By-law Enforcement as a result of complaints lodged in 2016 and 2022. Following the 2016 investigation, By-law Enforcement personnel identified by-law violations however, HRM Legal Services ultimately decided not to pursue the matter as they believed the evidence acquired would not be admissible in court. The 2022 complaint did not identify any violations and the ice making equipment and ventilation system were deemed to be operating properly. In addition, the HRM advised that the curling club is legally permitted to operate as a business as it is ‘prior non-conforming,’ meaning the business has operated in that location before the properties zoning designation.

The HRM Noise By-law (N-200) states that “no person shall engage in any activity that unreasonably disturbs or tends to disturb the peace and tranquillity of a neighbourhood,” including the use of snow or ice making equipment, when the operation of this equipment at designated times is audible to the degree that it would unreasonably disturb the peace and tranquillity of a neighbourhood. The Ombudsman Representative confirmed, after reviewing the Noise By-law and consulting with HRM officials, that there was no quantitative measure of noise.

The Ombudsman Representative also reviewed the HRM Land-Use By-law, the former Halifax Peninsula Land-Use By-law, and the HRM Charter. It was determined that the curling club met the requirements of both the Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-law and the non-conforming sections of the HRM Charter. The Land-Use By-law also confirmed that the area is primarily zoned as residential. That said, Section 7(1) of the Regional Centre Land Use By-law states, “This By-law does not exempt any person from any other enactment of the Municipality, the Province of Nova Scotia, or the Government of Canada.” Thus, conforming with the Regional Centre Land Use By-law does not provide an exemption to the HRM Noise By-law. The Ombudsman Representative believed it is reasonable to expect that noise restrictions concerning the operation of ice-making equipment at prohibited times, ought to apply to the curling club and be considered for potential enforcement action.

The following recommendations were issued to the HRM:

1. Review the existing Noise By-law to determine whether the provisions therein are relevant and enforceable, specifically in relation to ice-making and snow-making equipment.
2. Review the existing Noise By-law for the purpose of exploring options to incorporate objective mechanisms to measure noise into the noise complaint investigation process.
3. Review the 2016 and 2022 noise complaints referenced in this report to ensure that the [curling club] is in compliance with the requirements of the Noise By-law.
 - a. Should it be determined that the [curling club] is not in compliance with the By-law, that the Municipality assess the situation and initiate appropriate enforcement action and/or steps to ensure its compliance.

Response from the HRM:

1. The HRM clarified that the reference to ice and snow making equipment was not intended to mean ice making equipment from rinks or curling clubs in residential neighbourhoods, and the reference is instead regarding convenience stores using outside ice making equipment for cubed ice in residential areas. The HRM advised that staff will review the Noise By-law this fiscal year and recommend amendments to Council with respect to clarifying the intent of the By-law regarding ice-making and/or snow making machinery.
2. The HRM confirmed they are in the process of exploring options to incorporate objective procedures to measure noise, the results of which will be presented to Council when complete.
3. The HRM confirmed that the reports have been reviewed by staff and Legal Services, who determined no further enforcement action is warranted at this time. The HRM stated that the curling club is legally permitted to operate as a business, is prior non-conforming, and cannot operate without consistent operation of the machinery to maintain the ice surface.

Investigation & Recommendations: Program Eligibility

Respondent: Efficiency Nova Scotia

The HomeWarming Program is a provincially sponsored program which is administered in partnership with Efficiency Nova Scotia (ENS) and assists homeowners to make energy saving investments in their home, such as draft proofing, insulation upgrades, and the installation of heat pump systems. ENS is a franchise owned by the province of Nova Scotia and licensed to Efficiency One (E1). Quantitative performance targets have been established under a fee-for-service agreement between E1 and the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables (NRR).

The Complainant applied for the HomeWarming Program and was reportedly told they would meet the program eligibility requirements and as such, believed they would receive insulation upgrades in their basement and attic. ENS contracted a company to conduct a home energy assessment of the home. The Complainant alleged the home energy assessment included an insulation upgrade recommendation, but HomeWarming Program staff informed the Complainant via telephone that they will not be upgrading the insulation in the basement and attic.

The Complainant expressed concerns they were deemed ineligible to receive insulation upgrades. The Complainant stated the decision by ENS was not provided in writing and there was no appeal process regarding the decision by ENS.

When contacted by an Ombudsman Representative, HomeWarming Program staff stated that the recommendations from the home energy assessment report were not supported, and the decision not to approve the insulation upgrades was consistent with program guidelines. Those guidelines stated that ENS will not approve upgrades for a home if the cost is greater than the sum of \$1900 for every 5000 megajoules (MJ) to enable the effective management of program resources.

Under the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section of the HomeWarming Program website it states that not every home will be provided with the same upgrades because the program looks for the best combination of energy-saving upgrades based on a home energy audit conducted on the home. This section also stressed that the program does not have an unlimited budget. However, the program guidelines were not available publicly or on the HomeWarming Program website, and the Complainant was not aware of these limitations. Further, the work approval or denial letters provided by the contractor on behalf of ENS do not provide an appeal or review process for the HomeWarming Program. Although Applicants can contact the contractor directly who is listed in the letter they receive if they have any questions or the ENS Contact Centre which has a customer escalation policy, the contact information for the ENS Contact Centre was not provided in the correspondence by the contractor.

While the insulation upgrades were subsequently approved, the following recommendations were issued to the Department of Natural Resources & Renewables (NRR) regarding the administration of the HomeWarming Program:

1. Ensure information regarding program eligibility requirements is available and accessible to the public, such as on the HomeWarming Program website and application materials.
2. Develop and implement policy regarding the communication of program eligibility decisions under the HomeWarming Program to applicants in writing. Written communication ought to include the decision made and, in those instances where an applicant is deemed to be ineligible, include the rationale for the decision and available avenues of redress should the applicant not agree with the decision.
3. Develop and implement a review process and/or an appeal mechanism for applicants who have concerns regarding the program eligibility process and related decisions.

Response from NRR:

1. Program eligibility criteria, such as income qualifications and homeownership, are published on the HomeWarming Program website. A redesign of the E1 website is currently underway and will be completed by the end of 2024. As part of the website update process, E1 will be reviewing all publicly facing eligibility criteria to determine where updates may be required. The FAQ section of the website does note that 'some homes may not be suitable for upgrades' however, E1 will look for opportunities to make this information more visible.
2. NRR advised that by the end of June 2024 E1 will conduct a review of the work approval or denial letter format sent from the Delivery Agents (the contractors) to ensure contact information, including an email and phone number, is clearly presented to so customers know how to contact E1 if they do not agree with a decision.
3. As part of the website redesign to be completed by the end of 2024, E1 will explore adding information on the customer review process to the website.

Investigation & Recommendations: Land Use By-law

Respondent: Growth and Development (formerly Economic Development)

In the summer of 2023, four separate complaints came to the Office of the Ombudsman related to community management and governance at the Peggy's Cove Commission (the Commission). The complaints had different details but common themes. All the complaints cited concerns regarding the creation of a new land-use by-law and how it might affect property values.

The common themes were as follows:

- a lack of transparency by the Commission including meetings in private,
- inadequate communication by the Commission about their activities and in their responses to inquiries,
- conflict-of-interest and bias by at least three Commission members regarding zoning and other decisions, and
- inconsistencies in Commission decision-making.

The Peggy's Cove municipal governance structure is unique in Nova Scotia. It operates under 1962 legislation, An Act to Create Peggy's Cove Preservation Area and to Establish a Peggy's Cove Commission, more commonly known as the Peggy's Cove Commission Act. The Act establishes the province as the overarching authority. It also creates the Peggy's Cove Commission with restricted local membership and limited powers.

At the time of our investigation, Peggy's Cove had between thirty and thirty-four permanent residents. Geographically, the Village is within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). Residents pay property taxes to HRM and an HRM councillor represents the community.

At the centre of all four cases was the issue of zoning. There were concerns that zoning changes could negatively affect property status and values. The concerns were coupled with allegations of conflicts of interests by individual members of the Peggy's Commission working with consultants and provincial officials to develop the new structure.

All four complaints were investigated and assessed individually. They also were evaluated collectively, as they raised systemic issues related to the status and standing of the Peggy's Cove Commission and the role of the superintending entity, the Department of Economic Development (now Growth and Development.)

A report was issued to Economic Development in April 2024 containing the following recommendations:

1. Undertake a review and amendment of the Peggy's Cove Commission Act to address the governance and fairness issues identified during the land-use by-law process and reflected in this report.
 - a. Any revision, amendment, or replacement of the Peggy's Cove Commission Act reflect a continued awareness of the need to protect and encourage sustainability of the permanent-resident community, the need to assure rights of non-resident property owners, and the need to encourage economic growth and business development designed and scaled to reflect community, maritime, and Nova Scotia cultural heritage.
 - b. In the interim, pending any review and amendment of the Peggy's Cove Commission Act, and given the identified urgent need for a zoning appeal process, improved by-law enforcement, and greater clarity regarding the uses of various zones, a timely decision regarding the acceptance of the land-use by-law as proposed by the Peggy's Cove Commission and the consulting company, Upland Planning + Design studio be made by the Department.
 - c. Any revision, amendment, or replacement of the Peggy's Cove Commission Act provide for an effective by-law enforcement regime to include a compensated by-law enforcement officer and deterrence penalties that match the average levels or better than in Nova Scotia Municipalities.
 - d. Any revision, amendment, or replacement of the Peggy's Cove Commission Act ensure fairer representation of all stakeholders on the Peggy's Cove Commission. As a possible model, no more than one representative from each of these components: the permanent-resident community, non-resident property owners, the Province, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), and an independent urban and land-use planner.
2. Initiate the expeditious hiring of a development officer as recommended in the proposed land-use by-law with authority to hear zoning variance applications with any appeals to go to a newly constituted Peggy's Cove Commission or revised iteration.
3. Undertake a review of the existing compensation rate for Peggy's Cove Commission members on a per-meeting basis to ensure parity with Provincial remuneration rates for members of commissions, and with a requirement for a minimum set schedule of meetings.
4. In consultation with the Peggy's Cove Commission or revised iteration thereof, develop an updated Conflict-of-Interest policy for the Commission. Such a revision could be well informed by current language in the Nova Scotia Conflict of Interest legislation, by a sampling of any recent new codes in municipalities, and by relevant

provisions regarding impartial conduct expressed in the document titled “Values, Ethics, & Conduct: A Code for Nova Scotia’s Public Servants.”

5. Oversee the amendment of the Peggy’s Cove Commission Governance Policy to require open meetings as routine, with narrowly defined exceptions regarding personnel matters, disciplinary cases, and confidential bidding and contractual business.

The Department of Growth and Development (Economic Development) and the Peggy’s Cove Commission accepted all recommendations. In November 2024 the proposed new By-law was presented to Growth and Development by the Commission and accepted.

As of publication of this report, work has progressed on the Development Officer recommendation. Growth and Development has indicated that the legislation, The Peggy’s Cove Commission Act, will be amended to address defects but a time frame for doing so has not been established.

Investigation & Recommendations: Temporary Emergency Arrangement (TEA)

Respondent: Opportunities and Social Development (formerly Community Services), Child and Family Wellbeing

Our Office was contacted by a Complainant whose child had been placed in a Temporary Emergency Arrangement (TEA) while under the temporary care of the Department of Community Services (the Department). According to the Complainant, the child alleged that staff members of the TEA would engage in inappropriate use of physical intervention. Additionally, the Complainant expressed concern regarding the communication during the subsequent Child Protection investigation. The Complainant alleged a lack of communication on the part of the Department regarding the outcome of the joint protocol investigation and requested that an Ombudsman Representative review the matter.

A review of the Child Protection investigative case notes by an Ombudsman Representative confirmed that the Department had responded and investigated in keeping with policy. However, during the joint protocol investigation, it appeared the investigating Caseworker received no communication from the police Constable assigned to investigate the matter from June 2023 until the beginning of January 2024. Communication received in January 2024 indicated that the police Constable had been off work from August 2023 until January 2024. Upon following up with a Regional Service Delivery Manager, it was confirmed that no steps had been taken by the Caseworker or Casework Supervisor to attempt to contact the Constable's supervisor regarding the lack of communications.

In April 2024, this Office issued the following recommendation to the Department:

1. The existing policy pertaining to joint protocol investigations be reviewed, and where appropriate, amended to reflect communication expectations among the relevant agencies and provides a mechanism to escalate communication concerns within the relevant agency in situations where collateral information required by the Department is not being received in a timely fashion, remains outstanding, or communication becomes inactive or non-responsive.

The recommendation was accepted and implemented by the Department.

Investigation Outcomes (Recommendations)

The Ombudsman Act provides the authority to make recommendations to provincial government departments, agencies, boards, commissions, and municipalities. Recommendations are generally the result of in-depth investigations conducted by Ombudsman Representatives.

For each recommendation issued, the public body involved is requested to report back to this Office on their acceptance, or not, of the recommendation, and any plans they have to give effect to and implement the recommendation, often within a prescribed time frame. The authority to issue recommendations is how this Office informs and enhances government public policy, procedures, and service-delivery. The public body may choose to accept and implement the recommendations, implement them in part, or refuse to accept them. That said, most government departments choose to accept and implement the recommendations in full. There are several reasons why a party responding to a recommendation may choose to implement in full, including a genuine desire by public officials to improve policy and procedures, and concerns about how failure to do so may be perceived by the public.

The following table describes the recommendations issued in 2024-2025. The table also describes the public body involved as the respondent, as well as the nature of the complaint. Not all recommendations stem from new matters addressed in the year under review, some examples are derived from investigations initiated in an earlier fiscal year that were concluded in 2024-2025. Of the recommendations issued, all have been accepted and are being monitored for implementation.

This year, we will be publishing the outcomes of Formal Investigations via our website, on a quarterly basis. Data will include the name of the responding government entity, recommendations made, and whether they were accepted (i.e. status) by the respondent.

Complaint	Recommendations
<p>This Office received a complaint alleging noise emanating from a curling club was much louder than the noise prior to its reconstruction (due to ice making), impacting quality of life in the neighbourhood.</p> <p>An investigation of these concerns resulted in the following recommendations.</p>	<p>In keeping with Section 20 of the Ombudsman Act, it is recommended that Halifax Regional Municipality:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the existing Noise By-law to determine whether the provisions therein are relevant and enforceable, specifically in relation to ice-making and snow-making equipment. 2. Review the existing Noise By-law for the purpose of exploring options to incorporate objective mechanisms to measure noise into the noise complaint investigation process. 3. Review the 2016 and 2022 noise complaints referenced in this report to ensure that the [curling club] is in compliance with the requirements of the Noise By-Law. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Should it be determined that the Curling Club is not in compliance with the By-law, that the Municipality assess the situation and initiate appropriate enforcement action and/or steps to ensure its compliance. <p>The recommendations were accepted by the respondent and are being monitored for implementation.</p>
Respondent	
<p>Halifax Regional Municipality (re: By-law Enforcement)</p>	

Complaint	Recommendations
<p>This Office received a complaint alleging inaccurate information was being provided by Efficiency Nova Scotia in respect of the provision of home energy assessments, upgrades and appeals concerning the HomeWarming Program.</p> <p>An investigation of these concerns resulted in the following recommendations.</p>	<p>In keeping with Section 20 of the Ombudsman Act, it is recommended that Efficiency Nova Scotia:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure information regarding program eligibility requirements is available and accessible to the public, such as on the Home Warming Program website and application materials. 2. Develop and implement policy regarding the communication of program eligibility decisions under the Home Warming Program to applicants in writing. Written communication ought to include the decision made and, in those instances, where an applicant is deemed to be ineligible, include the rationale for the decision and available avenues of redress should the applicant not agree with the decision. 3. Develop and implement a review process and/or an appeal mechanism for applicants who have concerns regarding the program eligibility process and related decisions. <p>These recommendations were implemented by the respondent to the satisfaction of this Office.</p>
<p>Respondent</p>	
<p>Efficiency Nova Scotia (re: HomeWarming Program)</p>	

Complaint	Recommendations
<p>This Office received complaints citing concerns regarding the creation of a new land-use by-law and how it might affect their property values.</p> <p>An investigation of these concerns resulted in the following recommendations.</p>	<p>In keeping with Section 20 of the Ombudsman Act, it is recommended that the Department of Economic Development:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake a review and amendment of the Peggy's Cove Commission Act to address the governance and fairness issues identified during the land-use by-law process and reflected in this report. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Any revision, amendment, or replacement of the Peggy's Cove Commission Act reflect a continued awareness of the need to protect and encourage sustainability of the permanent-resident community, the need to assure rights of non-resident property owners, and the need to encourage economic growth and business development designed and scaled to reflect community, maritime, and Nova Scotia cultural heritage. b. In the interim, pending any review and amendment of the Peggy's Cove Commission Act, and given the identified urgent need for a zoning appeal process, improved by-law enforcement, and greater clarity regarding the uses of various zones, a timely decision regarding the acceptance of the land-use by-law as proposed by the Peggy's Cove Commission and the consulting company, Upland Planning + Design studio be made by the Department. c. Any revision, amendment, or replacement of the Peggy's Cove Commission Act provide for an effective by-law enforcement regime
<p>Respondent</p>	
<p>Department of Growth and Development (formerly Economic Development)</p>	

	<p>to include a compensated by-law enforcement officer and deterrence penalties that match the average levels or better than in Nova Scotia Municipalities.</p> <p>d. Any revision, amendment, or replacement of the Peggy's Cove Commission Act ensure fairer representation of all stakeholders on the Peggy's Cove Commission. As a possible model, no more than one representative from each of these components: the permanent-resident community, non-resident property owners, the Province, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), and an independent urban and land-use planner.</p> <p>2. Initiate the expeditious hiring of a development officer as recommended in the proposed land-use by-law with authority to hear zoning variance applications with any appeals to go to a newly constituted Peggy's Cove Commission or revised iteration.</p> <p>3. Undertake a review of the existing compensation rate for Peggy's Cove Commission members on a per-meeting basis to ensure parity with Provincial remuneration rates for members of commissions, and with a requirement for a minimum set schedule of meetings.</p> <p>4. In consultation with the Peggy's Cove Commission or revised iteration thereof, develop an updated Conflict-of-Interest policy for the Commission. Such a revision could be well informed by current language in the Nova Scotia Conflict of Interest legislation, by a sampling of any recent new codes in municipalities, and by relevant provisions regarding impartial conduct</p>
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	<p>expressed in the document titled “Values, Ethics, & Conduct: A Code for Nova Scotia’s Public Servants.”</p> <p>5. Oversee the amendment of the Peggy’s Cove Commission Governance Policy to require open meetings as routine, with narrowly defined exceptions regarding personnel matters, disciplinary cases, and confidential bidding and contractual business.</p> <p>These recommendations were accepted and are being implemented by the respondent.</p>
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Complaint	Recommendations
<p>This Office received a report alleging a child placed in a Temporary Emergency Arrangement, under temporary care of the Department of Community Services, was subjected to inappropriate use of physical intervention by staff.</p> <p>An investigation of these concerns resulted in the following recommendation.</p>	<p>In keeping with Section 20 of the Ombudsman Act, it is recommended that Opportunities and Social Development:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The existing policy pertaining to joint protocol investigations be reviewed, and where appropriate, amended to reflect communication expectations among the relevant agencies and provides a mechanism to escalate communication concerns within the relevant agency in situations where collateral information required by the Department is not being received in a timely fashion, remains outstanding, or communication becomes inactive or non-responsive. <p>This recommendation was accepted and implemented by the respondent.</p>
Respondent	
<p>Opportunities and Social Development (formerly Community Services)</p>	

Month at a Glance: June 2024

Department/Organization	
<p>Amherst, Town of: 1</p> <p>Cape Breton Regional Municipality: 2</p> <p>Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage: 2</p> <p>County of Annapolis, Municipality of the: 1</p> <p>County of Kings, Municipality of the: 1</p> <p>Dept of Advanced Education: 1</p> <p>District of Yarmouth, Municipality of: 2</p> <p>Education & Early Childhood Development: 1</p> <p>Efficiency One: 1</p> <p>Halifax (HRM): 10</p> <p>Health and Wellness: 8</p> <p> Mental Health and Addictions (6)</p> <p> Primary Health Care (2)</p> <p>Human Rights Commission, Nova Scotia: 1</p> <p>Information and Privacy Commissioner: 1</p> <p>Justice: 22</p> <p> Adult Corrections (18)</p> <p> Court Services (3)</p> <p> Other (1)</p> <p>Labour Board: 2</p> <p>Municipal Affairs 10</p> <p> NS Provincial Housing Agency: 7</p> <p> *Now reporting to Growth and Development</p>	<p>Natural Resources and Renewables: 1</p> <p>Nova Scotia Health Authority: 6</p> <p>Nova Scotia Legal Aid Commission: 3</p> <p>Opportunities & Social Development: 29</p> <p> Child and Family Wellbeing (25)</p> <p> Employment Support & Income Assistance (4)</p> <p>Public Prosecution Service: 1</p> <p>Public Service Commission: 1</p> <p>Public Works: 3</p> <p>Regional Centres for Education: 5</p> <p> Annapolis Valley (2)</p> <p> Halifax (2)</p> <p> Chignecto Central (1)</p> <p>Seniors & Long-Term Care: 1</p> <p>Service NS & Internal Services: 2</p> <p>Stellarton, Town of: 1</p> <p>Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal: 1</p> <p>Workers' Compensation Board: 2</p> <p>Total complaints: 176</p> <p>Total outreach: 14</p> <p>Non-jurisdictional matters: 53</p>

Respondents to Complaints (2024-2025)

Agriculture	2
Amherst, Town of	2
Antigonish, Town of	1
Bridgewater, Town of	5
Canning, Village of	1
Cape Breton Regional Municipality	21
Chester, Village of	1
Clark's Harbour, Town of	1
Communities, Culture, Tourism, & Heritage	3
Cornwallis Square, Village of	1
County of Annapolis, Municipality of the	6
County of Cumberland	1
County of Inverness, Municipality of the	3
County of Kings, Municipality of the	2
County of Pictou	3
County of Richmond, Municipality of the	2
County of Victoria, Municipality of the	7
Digby, Town of	1
District of Argyle, Municipality of the	6
District of Chester, Municipality of the	3
District of Digby, Municipality of the	2
District of Guysborough, Municipality of	2
District of St. Mary's, Municipality of	3
District of Yarmouth, Municipality of	3
Education & Early Childhood Development	9
EfficiencyOne	10
Elections Nova Scotia	6
Emergency Management Office	1
Environment and Climate Change	5
Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives	1
Finance and Treasury Board	5
Growth & Development	6*
Halifax (HRM)	40
Halifax Harbour Bridges	1
Health and Wellness	48
Human Rights Commission, Nova Scotia	25
IWK Health Centre	4
Information and Privacy Commissioner	6
Justice	184
Kentville, Town of	3

Labour Board	5
Labour, Skills, and Immigration	14
Mahone Bay, Town of	1
Municipal Affairs —	76*
Municipality of Clare	3
Municipality of East Hants	3
Municipality of Shelburne	2
Natural Resources and Renewables	11
Nova Scotia Community College	5
Nova Scotia Health Authority	87
Nova Scotia Legal Aid Commission	27
Nova Scotia Pension Services Corporation	1
Nova Scotia School Boards Association	2
Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board	1
NS Police Complaints Commission	11
Office of the Ombudsman	8
Opportunities & Social Develop.	300
Premier, Office of	1
Property Valuation Services Corporation	4
Public Prosecution Service	2
Public Service Commission	7
Public Trustee	1
Public Works	25
Region of Queens Municipality	2
Regional Centres for Education	28
Service NS & Internal Services	48
Shelburne, Town of	1
Seniors & LTC	30
Stewiacke, Town of	1
Stellarton, Town of	2
Truro, Town of	5
Westville, Town of	1
Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal	3
Workers' Compensation Board	26
Windsor West-Hants Regional Municipality	4
Yarmouth, Town of	1

*NS Provincial Housing Agency fell under Municipal Affairs during a portion of this fiscal year, then was relocated under Growth and Development.

Complaint Statistics

Overall Statistics

Intake Assessments	1,452
Administrative Review Investigations	350
Formal Investigations	4
Own Motions	2
PIDWA Administrative Review Investigations	2
PIDWA Formal Investigations	0
*Other	8
Total Reviews/Complaints	1,818
Outreach Events	139
Total New Matters in 2024-2025	1,957

Youth

Outreach with Youth in Care & Custody	104
Youth Reviews/Investigations	124
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth (Unspecified) Youth Protection Youth Provision Youth Participation 	38 30 37 19

Outcome

Assistance Rendered	1,077
Resolved	23
Properly Implemented	34
Discontinued by Complainant	127
Discontinued by Ombudsman	33
Non-Jurisdictional	517
Outcome Ongoing	7

Contact Us

Ombudsman Representatives are available to meet with groups or organizations to discuss the services the Office provides.

The Office also has communication materials to distribute such as brochures and posters. Additional reference documents supplementing the Annual Report may be found on our website or by contacting the Office.

There are several ways to contact the Office of the Ombudsman:

Telephone:

Public Inquiries/Complaints: 1-902-424-6780 or Toll Free: 1-800-670-1111
Youth Inquiries/Complaints: 1-902-424-6780 or Toll Free: 1-800-670-1111
Disclosure of Wrongdoing Inquiries/Complaints: Toll Free: 1-877-670-1100
Fax: 1-902-424-6675

In person:

5657 Spring Garden Road Suite 200 (Park Lane Terraces) Halifax, NS B3J 3R4

Mail:

PO Box 2152 Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3B7

Online:

Website: www.ombudsman.novascotia.ca

E-mail: ombudsman@novascotia.ca

Facebook: Nova Scotia Ombudsman

Twitter: @NS_Omb