

NEWS RELEASE

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Manitoba Ombudsman releases 2009 Annual Report under *The Ombudsman Act, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, The Personal Health Information Act and The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act.*

Manitoba Ombudsman Irene Hamilton released her Annual Report for the calendar year 2009. The report highlights the variety of work undertaken by the office, and includes summaries of several investigations and reviews conducted by both the Access and Privacy Division and the Ombudsman Division.

"Government is large and complex, and for the most part, serves Manitobans well. Every so often, though, things go slightly off track. That's where the Ombudsman can play a role. We can assist Manitobans in their dealings with government, and we can assist people delivering public services to do so in a fair manner and in accordance with legislation and policies," Irene Hamilton noted. In 2009, office staff responded to 4076 complaints and inquiries.

FIPPA and PHIA Highlights:

- In 2009, the Ombudsman commented on privacy implications of Flin Flon School Division's proposed voluntary drug testing policy (**pages 53-56**), and monitored Manitoba Public Insurance's implementation of its Enhanced Driver's Licence and Enhanced Identification Card Program (**pages 56-58**).
- A position within the Access and Privacy Division was assigned responsibility for conducting systemic investigations and audits; a position that will have wider impact on compliance with FIPPA and PHIA in the future (**page 44**).

The Ombudsman Act Highlights:

- The Ombudsman reports on progress and continuing concerns with high risk/high needs inmates in provincial correctional facilities (**pages 34-38**), as well as concerns regarding the composition of inmate discipline boards (**pages 38-39**).
- In addition to large systemic investigations such as the review of the Employment and Income Assistance Program (**page 26**), the 2009 Annual Report includes cases where the

Ombudsman was able to assist individuals with personal property matters (**pages 22-23**).

The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act Highlights:

- This is the second full year of experience with PIDA. In the 2009 Annual Report, more information is provided on the process followed after a disclosure is received by the Ombudsman (**pages 28-29**).
- No new PIDA investigations were initiated in 2009. Two investigations of wrongdoing related to the same healthcare facility received in 2008 were completed in 2009. The investigations did not find gross mismanagement as alleged, and as a result of the Ombudsman's investigations, the facility itself assessed the situation and implemented new policies to prevent the occurrences which had given rise to the disclosures (**pages 29-30**).

The 2009 Annual Report is available at <http://www.ombudsman.mb.ca> by clicking on "Reports and Publications" under either the Ombudsman or Access and Privacy Divisions. It is also available on CD or in print by calling (204) 982-9130 (Winnipeg) or 1-800-665-0531 (toll free in Manitoba). The CD version includes Manitoba Ombudsman publications.

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