

MANITOBA

OMBUDSNEWS

Manitoba Ombudsman and Access and Privacy Newsletter

Welcome to our inaugural issue of Manitoba Ombuds-News, a quarterly newsletter produced by the Office of the Manitoba Ombudsman.

Our intent is to share information with you and keep you updated on the activities that our office is involved in throughout the year.

We will feature articles about upcoming events, special projects, fact bits, our outreach

activities within the province, messages from our staff and much more.

We plan to send the newsletter to provincial and municipal government departments and agencies, as well as public bodies and trustees under *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and *The Personal Health Information Act*.

As we embark upon this new initiative, we hope that you will find it of

value. From the staff of the Manitoba Ombudsman, Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for a Happy New Year.



BROWN BAG TALKS ON ACCESS AND PRIVACY TOPICS



December 20th will mark Manitoba Ombudsman's last Brown Bag Talk presentation for 2006.

This popular initiative which was introduced by our office in May, provides a regular forum for access and privacy officers and coordinators to meet with our Access and Privacy Division staff to discuss topics of interest. These informal lunchtime discussions are led by members of our staff on the third Wednesday of each month in our Winnipeg boardroom.

We are also pleased to take these talks to organizations and communities in Manitoba upon request, as time permits. In addition to the eight talks held in Winnipeg in 2006, our staff has also

presented Brown Bag topics in Beausejour to a group of administrators from 12 Eastman municipalities and in Thompson to personnel of the Burntwood Regional Health Authority.

Manitoba Ombudsman Practice Notes are prepared to accompany each new Brown Bag Talk topic, setting out written advice on the subject discussed. The Practice Notes and a listing of topics in our Brown Bag Talk series presented to the end of December, have been distributed by email to public bodies and trustees around Manitoba. As well, they are posted in English and French on our website at www.ombudsman.mb.ca

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OMBUDSMAN AND THE CHILD WELFARE REVIEW

On March 20, 2006 following the death of a child who had been involved with a child and family services agency, the Minister of Family Services and Housing announced a review of the child welfare system.

The Manitoba Ombudsman was appointed as one of three co-chairs. A 10 person team with expertise in child welfare and external investigations was assembled (6 from the Ombudsman Office, 1 from the Office of the Children's Advocate, 1 from the Auditor General's office and 2 from the child welfare system).

The review focused on examining administrative issues affecting service delivery. The team reviewed the legislative

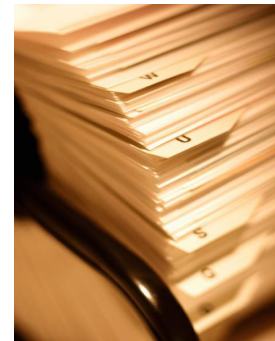
and financial frameworks of the system, previous internal and external reports, and existing policies and standards.

Focus groups/interviews were held in 32 First Nations and/or Manitoba communities. In total, the team considered information from over 760 individuals. The review team found that the concerns, although expressed from different perspectives, were generally consistent throughout the Province.

A final report containing 106 recommendations was provided to the Minister on September 29, 2006. All the recommendations were accepted by the Minister and a total of 42 million dollars was committed to strengthening

the child welfare system in Manitoba.

The Ombudsman will be provided with updates and will follow up and report on the implementation of the government's plan "Changes for Children: Strengthening the Commitment to Child Welfare" in 2007.



REACHING OUT TO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES



Over the last year, the Office of the Manitoba Ombudsman has been reaching out to Aboriginal Communities across the province. Outreach and communication activities included:

The Ombudsman and staff attended the Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Achievement Awards;

Staff provided information at the Manito Ahbee, Manitoba Aboriginal Festival at the MTS Center;

An office representative was interviewed on two occasions on NCI Radio, 105.5 FM;

Staff conducted interviews and held focus groups in First Nations Communities across the province during the course of the Child Welfare Review;

Our office published corrections posters which advise that our services are available in the Cree language;

Staff delivered a presentation about best practices under *The Personal Health Information Act* during the First Nations Home and Community Care Conference.

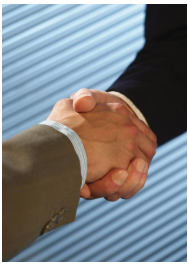
These activities promote face-to-face interaction and assist in building relationships with citizens and communities, and reflect our commitment to communicating more effectively with the public and increasing the awareness about our office.

This summer, staff participated in a two day workshop at Red Willow Lodge learning about aboriginal culture. The Ombudsman and staff also took part in four workshops over the course of an eight month period and examined the concept of cultural proficiency. We see that we have much to learn and are only at the beginning stages of our journey.





PARTNERING WITH THE FORUM OF CANADIAN OMBUDSMAN



In early 2005, the Office of the Manitoba Ombudsman became an official member of the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO).

The FCO is an umbrella organization that provides individuals in the ombudsman field with an opportunity to share good business practices and promote the ombudsman concept.

The FCO is comprised of many organizations which include: legislative ombudsman offices; specialty ombudsman offices at the federal level; The Association of

Canadian College and University Ombudspersons; and The Federal Ombudsman Forum composed of legislative and executive ombudsman offices at the federal level.

Since 2005, our staff have participated in the FCO training program titled, "The Ombudsman Specialist: Working Behind Prison Walls".

A representative of our office currently serves on the FCO Education and Training Committee. The purpose of this committee is to establish training opportunities for ombudsman personnel throughout Canada.

Our office is currently involved in the planning of a conference titled "Social Safety Nets and the Ombudsman: Complaints and Issues", which will take place in Edmonton in February, 2007. The focus of the conference will be on the issues and challenges relating to social safety nets that are presented to ombudsman staff and civil servants who respond to the public when problems are encountered. The goal is to assist participants in building upon their knowledge and skills to enable them to work more effectively with clients who require the provision of social safety nets.

CORRECTIONS OUTREACH

Our office regularly receives complaints from individuals incarcerated in provincial correctional centres. These individuals are dependent on Manitoba Corrections to provide their basic necessities and this is reflected in the issues that are raised.

In 2006, our office finalized 3 new posters and 2 pamphlets for inmates. Representatives from our office attended correctional centres and met with focus groups consisting of correctional staff and inmates. We also held a poster contest at the youth correctional facilities and developed a poster titled "Concerns".

The pamphlets and other 2 posters are titled, "How to Solve Problems While in Provincial Jails"

and "How to Solve Problems While in Youth Centres". Our goal was to outline the steps that inmates should follow when addressing problems, not only through our office but also involving correctional staff.

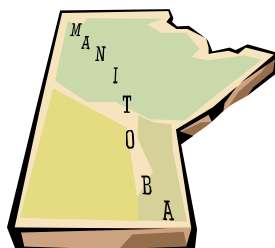
In addition, the role and function of the Manitoba Ombudsman is explained so that inmates are aware of the services offered by our office. These materials can also be accessed by visiting our website at www.ombudsman.mb.ca.



OMBUDSMAN'S REGIONAL OFFICE SERVING MANITOBA

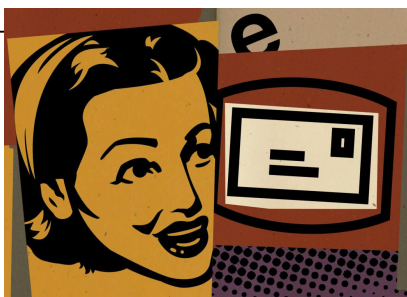
In an effort to better serve rural Manitobans, the Ombudsman opened an office in Brandon, Manitoba in April 1998. Now 8 years later, the Brandon regional office continues to investigate issues faced by rural Manitobans, including municipal government decisions, crop insurance disputes and licensing and enforcement with respect to drainage.

A speaking engagement blitz to promote the services of the Ombudsman to a variety of government departments and agencies, as



well as other public bodies under FIPPA and PHIA, was recently undertaken in the Brandon area.

Further sessions are already being organized for the New Year. If you are interested in learning about the services of the Ombudsman and are from the Brandon Region, please call the Brandon office at 1-204-571-5151.



Winnipeg Office

750 - 500 Portage Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3X1
Phone: 204-982-9130
Fax: 204-942-7803
Toll Free in MB: 1-800-665-0531

Brandon Office

603 - 1011 Rosser Ave.
Brandon, MB R7A 0L5
Phone: 204-571-5151
Fax: 204-571-5157
Toll Free in MB 1-888-543-8230

WEBSITE: www.ombudsman.mb.ca

UPCOMING EVENTS

- January 17, 2007 - Brown Bag Talk, "What to Expect from an Investigation of Access Complaints by Manitoba Ombudsman", for Access and Privacy Officers and Coordinators.
- February 21, 2007 - Brown Bag Talk, "What to Expect from an Investigation of Privacy Complaints by Manitoba Ombudsman", for Access and Privacy Officers and Coordinators.
- call (204)-982-9139 for details or to register for both the above events.
- February 11-13, 2007 - Conference, "Social Safety Nets and the Ombudsman: Complaints and Issues", Edmonton, Alberta.
(more information to be posted at: www.ombudsmanforum.ca)
- April 16, 2007 Conference, "Prairie Health Information Privacy Day 2007", Regina, Saskatchewan
(more information to be posted at: www.phipd2007.ca)

