



National Capital Commission Ombudsman

Summary of Activity 2023–2024



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July 3, 2024

Dear Members of the Board,

I am pleased to submit this Summary outlining the activities of the NCC Ombudsman for the period April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

It has been my privilege to serve the public and the NCC Board for more than 3 years now. I would be pleased to discuss any issues mentioned in this Summary at your convenience.

I look forward to continuing my work with members of the public, officials at the NCC and you.

Thank you for your ongoing support and confidence.

Yours truly,



Oriana Trombetti





MANDATE OF THE NCC OMBUDSMAN

The Ombudsman for the National Capital Commission is required to provide members of the public with an independent, neutral, fair, and confidential process to resolve complaints concerning the decisions and activities of the NCC. The goal is to reach the best possible understanding of a situation or concern and create a positive outcome, if possible. In some cases, the circumstances will require that a full investigation of a decision or a situation be carried out. Where appropriate, recommendations can accompany findings.

The mandate of the Ombudsman is articulated in Terms of Reference dated July 31, 2017. The Ombudsman can intervene or investigate NCC activities and decisions that include:

- Use of Public Assets
- Fees Charged to Access Public Assets
- Processes Carried out to Maximize Use of Public Assets
- Maintenance of NCC Property and Assets

There are matters where the Ombudsman does not have authority and therefore cannot become involved. For example, decisions of the Board of Directors or its committees are not reviewable.



What is an Ombudsman?

The word Ombudsman is of Swedish origin. The role was established in Sweden to create a process to address complaints made by individuals against public organizations and agencies.

An ombudsman is an independent, neutral official who investigates complaints about an organization or agency. While the role originated with public institutions, increasingly private organizations such as banks and universities provide ombudsman services to their constituents. In dealing with an inquiry or a complaint, an Ombudsman must first decide whether or not the issue falls within a clearly established mandate. Then the Ombudsman seeks to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the parties involved through discussion, negotiation, or another conflict resolution method.



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

This summary covers the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024 and outlines activities carried out by the Office.

Contacts With the Office

From April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, members of the public communicated with the Office of the Ombudsman on 51 occasions. The issues raised included the following:

- Access to NCC assets such as the Queen Elizabeth Driveway, Rideau Canal Skateway and Gatineau Park
- Enforcement Activity of the NCC
- Safety Issues Related to the Use of NCC Roads
- Maintenance of NCC Public Art

The table below shows how the Ombudsman dealt with the complaints.

April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

Type of issue/inquiry	Number of issues/inquiries
Outside the NCC mandate	16
Standard referral to the NCC	34
Informal dispute resolution	1
Complaint investigated	0
TOTAL	51

In some cases where the issue raised did not fall within the mandate of the Ombudsman, efforts were made to redirect citizens to other avenues for information or redress, in keeping with the role of an Ombudsman.



The United Nations Resolution on the Role of the Ombudsman

On December 16, 2020 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Resolution on Ombudsman and Mediator institutions. The resolution recognizes the role that ombudsmen play in protecting citizens and their rights, advocating for strong governance practices, and promoting respect for rules and the law.

There is a growing interest throughout the world and, indeed in Canada, in the creation and strengthening of Ombudsman institutions based on their demonstrated effectiveness in resolving issues faced by a citizen or group of citizens. Such offices can also serve as a source of information or advice to those who develop public policies, procedures, and laws resulting in more informed and citizen centric outcomes.



EXAMPLES OF THE WAYS THE OMBUDSMAN HAS ASSISTED CITIZENS WHO CONTACTED THE OFFICE

Event Permit

The Ombudsman was contacted by a group of individuals seeking to launch a new festival in Ottawa. Their preferred location was on NCC grounds and they would require a permit.

The Ombudsman worked with the NCC and the event organizers to increase understanding and awareness about the policies and rules around the issuance of NCC event permits. Following several meetings, and phone calls, and the presentation of requested documentation, the file was ready for consideration by the NCC. The outcome is positive with a permit having been granted.

Enforcement Activity

A local citizen was approached by an NCC conservation officer concerning a possible regulatory infringement when walking her dog. The interaction was problematic from the citizen's perspective because the citizen felt unfairly treated. Following a meeting with the Ombudsman an NCC official contacted the citizen and provided clarification concerning the interaction and the reasons for which the conservation officer behaved the way he did and requested the information that he did. The matter is concluded.





Access to Gatineau Park Parkways by Motorized Vehicles – Complaint Before the Canadian Human Rights Commission

Early in 2023, the Canadian Human Rights Commission decided to refer a complaint (previously received and reported upon in the last annual report) concerning access to the Gatineau Park Parkways by motorized vehicles and alleged discrimination to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal for adjudication. A panel was to have been constituted. In the fall of 2023, the Ombudsman learned that the complaint did not go forward for adjudication. The parties discussed the matter during mediation and the complaint is being held in abeyance.



How to contact the NCC Ombudsman confidentially

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