

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN  
FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE AND THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES  
TO THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

# Annual Report

2021



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**Telephone:** 1-888-828-3626

**Fax:** 1-877-471-4447

**Mail:**

Office of the Ombudsman  
for the Department of National Defence  
and the Canadian Armed Forces  
100 Metcalfe Street, 12th Floor  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada  
K1P 5M1

**E-mail:** [ombudsman-communications@forces.gc.ca](mailto:ombudsman-communications@forces.gc.ca) (non-confidential information only)

**Twitter:** [https://twitter.com/DND\\_CF\\_Ombudsman](https://twitter.com/DND_CF_Ombudsman)

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# Letter to the Minister

7 June 2021

The Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan, PC, OMM, MSM, CD, MP  
Minister of National Defence  
National Defence Headquarters  
Major-General George R. Pearkes Building  
13th Floor, North Tower  
101 Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2

Dear Minister Sajjan:

I am pleased to submit to you the 2020-2021 Annual Report for the Office of the DND/CAF Ombudsman. This report provides an overview of our activities and operations from 1 April 2020 to 21 March 2021.

Pursuant to paragraph 38 (2) (a) of the Ministerial Directives, I intend to make the Annual Report public on the expiration of 60 days from the date of this letter.

Should you or your office have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my office directly.

My team will be in touch with your staff to arrange for final copies and a date for tabling in Parliament.

Sincerely,

**Gregory A. Lick**  
**Ombudsman**



# Contents

Our mandate	<b>1</b>
Ombudsman's message	<b>2</b>
Our response to the COVID-19 global pandemic	<b>4</b>
Employer of choice	<b>5</b>
Harassment and Violence Prevention and Resolution Program	<b>6</b>
Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation	<b>8</b>
Overview: Corporate priorities and initiatives	<b>9</b>
• Engage the Defence community	<b>9</b>
• Assist and educate the Defence community	<b>10</b>
• Effectively address systemic issues	<b>10</b>
• Demonstrate value for money	<b>10</b>
Implementing corporate priorities and initiatives	<b>12</b>
• Intake, early resolution, and investigations	<b>12</b>
• Systemic investigations	<b>17</b>
• Education and research	<b>18</b>
• Parliamentary engagements	<b>21</b>
Ombudsman's Advisory Committee	<b>23</b>
Appendix I—Disposition of cases	<b>24</b>
Appendix II—Financial report	<b>25</b>

# Our mandate

The Office of the Ombudsman was created in 1998 to increase transparency in the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) as well as to ensure the fair treatment of members of the Defence community.

The Office acts as a direct source of information, referral, and education. It helps members of the Defence community navigate a large and complex organization to access existing channels of assistance or redress when they have a complaint or concern.

The Office is also responsible for reviewing and investigating complaints from constituents who believe they have been treated unfairly by the DND or the CAF.

Ombudsman employees seek to resolve complaints informally, and at the lowest level possible. However, complaints can also be the subject of thorough individual investigations and can even lead to a systemic review resulting in a formal report with findings and recommendations that are made public.

The Ombudsman is independent of the military chain of command and senior civilian management, reporting directly to the Minister of National Defence. The Office derives its authority from Ministerial Directives and their accompanying Defence Administrative Orders and Directives.

The Ombudsman is supported by federal public servants including investigators, intake officers, complaint analysts, and other specialist staff who provide legal, communications, and internal support services.

Any member of Canada's Defence community can approach the Office of the Ombudsman. This includes:

- current and former CAF members of the Regular Force, Reserve Force, Supplementary Reserves and Canadian Rangers;
- current and former DND employees;
- current and former members of the Cadets, including Junior Canadian Rangers;
- current and former Non-Public Funds employees;
- applicants to the CAF;
- immediate family members of any of the above-mentioned; and individuals on exchange or secondment with the CAF.

Members of the Defence community who bring a concern or complaint to the Office can do so without fear of reprisal.<sup>1</sup> In addition, all information obtained by the Office during the handling of cases is treated as confidential. When dealing with complaints, the Office will not provide any information related to a case or investigation to anyone without written consent from the constituent.

<sup>1</sup> Canada, Minister of National Defence, *Ministerial Directives Respecting the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces*, Refusal or Failure to Assist the Ombudsman, para 31(1)(i)



# Ombudsman's message

The year 2020-2021 posed important challenges for my office. These challenges were rooted in the COVID-19 global pandemic, the changing needs of the Defence community and new virtual technology developments.

Faced with this situation, our office continued to exercise its important mandate with energy and innovation: operating at arm's length from the DND and CAF to help individuals access existing channels of assistance or redress when they have a complaint or concern, and to contribute to substantial and long-lasting improvements for the Defence community.

## Highlights of 2020-2021

- We handled 1,572 cases of Defence community members seeking our help in the face of individual and systemic issues.
- We delivered our systemic investigation report *Engaged in the World: A systemic investigation into the administration of postings assignments, and employments of Defence Team personnel outside of Canada* on 15 December 2020. This report presented 13 recommendations which, if implemented, will help improve the administration of the OUTCAN Programme for the Defence Team and their families. As of the end of the report period, we are awaiting the response of the Minister of National Defence regarding how the DND and CAF will address our recommendations.
- We launched an investigation of the administrative, procedural, and policy challenges faced by CAF members and their families who request compassionate postings.
- We began the preliminary work that is essential for conducting an investigation of diversity issues such as employment equity within the DND and CAF as requested by the Minister.
- Of the files closed by the general investigation team, the DND and CAF accepted 100 per cent of the recommendations we made.
- We continued our educational and outreach work by employing existing and new tools to meet Defence community needs in contemporary circumstances. These tools included educational documents published on our office web site, social media postings, the Military Benefits Browser, and virtual meetings conducted with constituents at CAF Bases and Wings within and outside Canada. This is in addition to our established tools such as our live chat, our online booking tool, our toll-free phone number and online complaint form.

- We successfully managed the implementation of the new virtual outreach program that enhanced our reach to over 1,000 of our constituents by bringing information, programs and recordings to the DND/CAF community regardless of their location.
- We undertook 40 outreach sessions with constituents to educate and inform them about our office, the services we provide and how they can contact us. Some of these sessions were also used to gather preliminary information to support our systemic investigations.
- We hosted our first virtual Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation ceremony. Even during these unprecedented times, we recognized and celebrated those who made significant contributions to the Defence community.

As 2020-2021 drew to a close, we were faced with the very public allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of authority in the DND and CAF, even at the highest levels. Those bringing forward allegations must be empowered to make their own choices about what steps to take next and must be able to do so without fear of reprisal. At Parliamentary appearances in March and April 2021, I reiterated that the current system, with no fully independent recourse mechanisms, must not continue. I proposed possible solutions to the committees, and look forward to their forthcoming reports.

In conclusion, I want to thank and say how proud I am of my staff. They adapted to ever-changing circumstances during 2020-2021, while continuing to provide excellent service in caring and meaningful ways.

We remain ready to help our constituents in the Defence community.

**Gregory A. Lick**  
**Ombudsman**



# Our response to the COVID-19 global pandemic

The COVID-19 global pandemic exerted a major impact on our operations during the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

Initially, we faced infrastructure challenges such as equipment and computer network availability. Employees and management worked together to procure and deploy the required equipment to access network access in an efficient and financially-responsible manner. This allowed for a quick resumption of all of our services.

The COVID-19 global pandemic led us to implement certain infrastructure changes earlier than anticipated. For instance, we quickly obtained software that allowed us to collaborate virtually, and we successfully launched our virtual outreach program.

Our intake officers quickly adapted to the new tools and flexible work arrangements to provide a continuity of service to our constituents. At the same time, they provided information and referral for appropriate government resources to Canadians looking for information on matters outside of our mandate. Despite the numerous technological and other challenges related to the pandemic, we met our service standards and provided timely service to constituents, many of whom were facing time sensitive and compelling circumstances. We continue to use innovative ways to connect with constituents such as live chat and our online booking tool.

Our successes with service delivery wouldn't have been possible without the dedication and support of our team. Management and employees pursued virtual learning opportunities to learn how to manage effectively during an unprecedented time and to adapt to working efficiently remotely. We adopted flexible work arrangements and continued to prioritize and support the physical and mental health of employees by sharing numerous resources and remaining flexible to their individual needs.

# Employer of choice

Supporting our employees' health and wellness is critical to our organization's success.

Our Healthy Workplace Committee (HWC) organizes activities to help staff maintain their physical and mental health. Over the past year, these activities included online coffee chats and virtual lunchtime workouts. The HWC also shared resources to support staff and continued to foster a respectful and healthy work environment while working remotely.

In June 2020, we introduced the [Not Myself Today](#) program. This program, created by the Canadian Mental Health Association, helps reduce stigma and foster a safe and supportive work culture. This initiative employs informational activities, tools, and resources that are available to all staff.

We promote a positive workplace culture by encouraging employee recognition. We do this formally by way of an awards and recognition program. We also pursue this goal informally through e-mails and activities like "Thank you Tuesdays."

We believe fostering and promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace is crucial in helping us to be better colleagues and to serve our constituents. When racial unrest in our world made us consider our biases, we supported our employees in this self-evaluation. We also supported and provided resources for employees who were impacted and faced struggles through this time. As well, we provided all staff with tools and resources help them react and understand the importance of a diverse workforce.

We believe diversity and inclusiveness means our workplace must be open and accepting of diverse groups of people. We consider how other factors such as race, ethnicity, gender diversity, gender expression, religion, age, mental or physical disability shape our experiences.

In this regard, our Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) committee promotes diversity and inclusiveness amongst our staff by organizing staff activities and sharing information to recognize special heritage days or months such as Black History Month, Asian Heritage Month, International Francophonie Day, National Indigenous History Month, and LGBTQ2+ History Month. The committee also helps us review our internal processes and external communications through a GBA+ lens. This helps us eliminate conscious bias in our communications as well as identify and address unconscious bias.

We recognize the importance of communicating with our constituents and staff in a manner that is free of bias. In 2020-2021, all our operational staff and those who interact with constituents underwent mandatory unconscious bias training. This training helped attendees recognize their own unconscious bias in their writing, words, and actions, and provided strategies to avoid their biases in the future.

We are proud of the efforts we have made to make our organization an employer of choice. Our Public Service Employee Survey results consistently indicate that we support employee career development, implement activities and practices that support a diverse workplace, and raise awareness of mental health in the workplace.

# Harassment and Violence Prevention and Resolution Program

On January 1, 2021, the *Work Place Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations* came into effect. These regulations govern the prevention and resolution of harassment and violence in the federal sector, including the federal public service.

To comply with the regulations, the Ombudsman's Harassment Advisor worked with the Occupational Health and Safety Committee to draft a policy and guidelines on harassment and violence. As part of the consultation process these were discussed at union and management consultative meetings. The draft documents were circulated to all Ombudsman staff for feedback during summer 2020. The final documents reflect the comments and concerns raised during the consultation process, and were presented to staff in December 2020. This ensured that staff would have the necessary information in time for the implementation of the new regulations.

The new Regulations require that all staff be trained in the new requirements. This training highlights the important differences between the old and new definitions of harassment.

## Success stories: Denial of Compassionate Status

A CAF member received a posting to a new location. This posting was for career advancement. However, the member felt the move would be disruptive and harmful to dependants who were receiving counselling as a result of a separation.

The approving authority, Director Military Careers (D Mil C), denied the initial request for a compassionate status as it was assessed that the family could not resolve their situation in a specific amount of time.

With no other options available, the member asked our office for assistance. Due to the potential hardship, the member requested a release from the CAF which was approved by D Mil C. One of our office's investigators conducted an initial review. As is usual, the investigator discussed the matter with D Mil C and the member's social worker. During these discussions, the school of one of the dependants suggested that a one-year posting delay would be less disruptive to the child's routine.

Given this new information, the investigator asked both D Mil C and the SW to reconsider their initial assessment. The social worker agreed to conduct a second interview which led to the submission of a new recommendation for D Mil C to consider. The D Mil C agreed the issue could be resolved within the necessary time limits and that the member's personal circumstances warranted a Compassionate Status. As a result, D Mil C cancelled the posting instruction, and the release approval was rescinded.

The member, who had faced imminent release, remains a productive CAF member.

# Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation

The Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation is awarded annually to recognize Defence community members who have gone the extra mile and exceeded expectations in bringing about positive and lasting change to that community

Liz Hoffman was an investigator with the Ombudsman's Office who had a deeply-rooted sense of fairness and was a tremendous force for positive change. This commendation recognizes those in the Defence community who, like Liz, are dedicated to helping others and making a difference.

Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and the public health restrictions in place, the 2020-2021 ceremony was held virtually on 15 October 2020. Over 100 guests attended our first ever virtual ceremony. Many distinguished guests sent their congratulations to the recipients by video, including Dr. Andrea Hoffman, Liz Hoffman's daughter.

This year's recipients were Captain John S. Niles, Mrs. Devon Travers, and the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services leadership team as represented by Mr. Chad Phinney, Mr. Todd Stride, and Ms. Vanessa Walsh. Their inspirational stories are on our website at [ombuds.ca](http://ombuds.ca).



(L-R) Mr. Chad Phinney representing the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services team, Mrs. Devon Travers, and Captain John S. Niles.

# Overview: Corporate priorities and initiatives

Our services are broad and range from providing information, referrals, and educational products to individual complaint resolution and systemic investigations.

To fulfill our mandate, we strive to be an innovative, agile, and constituent-focused service provider that is also vigilant and responsive to our constituents' concerns. In 2020–2021, we delivered our services in ways that reflect our key organizational objectives: recruitment, training and retention, Canada's social diversity, wellness and resilience for our people, military family support, and the building of our data capacity.

Our emphasis on service provision that is mindful of our constituents means we pursued four corporate priorities and initiatives during 2020–2021:

## Engage the Defence community

We are committed to communicating with members of the Defence community and stakeholders no matter where they live and work. In 2020–2021, we moved to a predominately online model—to help ensure our constituents were aware of and understood our mandate and role within the DND and the CAF.

In 2020–2021, we launched a virtual outreach program that allowed us to offer online presentations aimed toward specific topics and constituent groups at any time, in any location. The ability to contact our constituents in any location and at their preferred time became more important as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Existing tools, such as the website's live chat function, online booking tool, and online complaint form, ensured we remained accessible to our constituents.

We tailored our communications to reach the widest possible audience by using online and traditional publishing in both official languages. We also promoted accessibility and diversity by writing our communications in plain language using gender- and diversity-inclusive terms. We provided simultaneous interpretation for our online videos in American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ).

Finally, we continued to pursue strategic engagements with DND and CAF stakeholders as well as collaborate with government officials at various levels. During 2020–2021, we worked with different organizations such as the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat at Heritage Canada, the Centre on Diversity and Inclusion at Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the Centre of Expertise on Mental Health in the Workplace at the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, and the Canadian Federal Ombudsman Offices.



# Assist and educate the Defence community

We are a direct source of information, referral, and education. We deliver information about topics and issues that affect the defence community through one on one interactions with our intake officers and information available on our website and social media accounts. We provide information on topics of interest and recourse mechanisms widely available and accessible to our constituents. We also offer tools for individuals to make informed decisions and be proactive in resolving their concerns.

We review and investigate complaints from constituents who believe they have been treated improperly or unfairly by the DND or CAF. Through individual investigations, we address compelling individual cases, and liaise with DND and CAF to bring meaningful impacts and changes for our Defence community.

# Effectively address systemic issues

We are committed to identifying and addressing systemic issues that affect the Defence community. To do this, we conduct systemic investigations, case study analyses, and issue assessments, based on our monitoring of information from external and internal sources. In 2020–2021, we completed one systemic investigation and launched two more investigations.

# Demonstrate value for money

During 2020–2021, we continued to demonstrate value for money by way of operational innovation and performance measurement.

We conducted regular internal financial and human resource management audits to ensure effective financial management processes and compliance to financial acts, regulations, processes, and procedures. We participated in rigorous budgeting processes to ensure the efficient and effective use of funds, while maintaining a performance measurement framework to ensure our internal program activities are effective and achieving their intended results. We continue to update and improve our policies and standard operating procedures across all business lines based on our experiences.

Finally, through the use of report cards and follow-ups, we track whether recommendations are implemented and whether change has occurred as a result. This information is posted on our website, as follow-ups to systemic investigation reports. We also report our performance on an annual basis through [Infobase](#).



## **Success stories: Receipt of retroactive Specialist Pay**

Reserve Force members deployed on an operation as Specialists (Spec) were entitled to tax-free Spec pay. However, the funds were never paid, and this resulted in financial implications for those members.

One of the members contacted our office after they returned to Canada and faced continuous delays. Our investigator worked collaboratively with the member's administrative officer. The administrative officer noted that there were errors in the deployment message and the member's file that prevented the payment.

As the situation progressed, another member in a similar circumstance also approached our office for assistance. The investigator informed the administrative officer, and they agreed to address this issue as well. However, progress on the file stalled once the administrative officer left the member's unit.

At that point, the investigator contacted the Director Military Pay and Allowances Processing (DMPAP) to determine the reason for the delay. DMPAP found that a computer problem caused the delay, and thanked the investigator for shedding light on the situation. DMPAP then took corrective measures, reviewed the relevant files, and completed the retroactive payments for all affected Reserve Force members in addition to the two members who contacted our office.

# Implementing corporate priorities and initiatives

## Intake, early resolution, and investigations

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Our teams always attempt to resolve complaints informally, and at the lowest level possible, whether through providing information, referral, investigation, or other means. Complaints can be the subject of thorough investigations. They can also lead to a systemic review resulting in a formal report within findings and publicly available recommendations.

### Intake and early resolution

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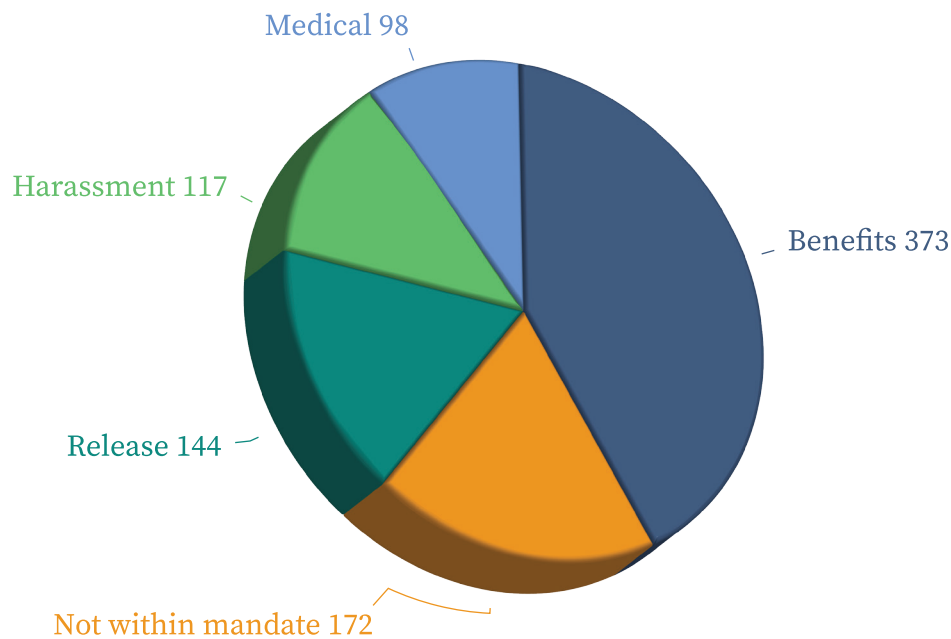
During 2020–2021, we received 1,405 new cases and re-opened 167 cases. In total, we handled 1,572 cases, including new cases, re-opened cases, and cases carried over from previous fiscal years. We closed 1,497 cases.

The following three charts summarize key case characteristics. When we classify cases as "not within our mandate," those requests or issues are often linked to the mandates of other organizations, such as Veterans Affairs Canada and the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman. We provide information, and refer these cases as appropriate.

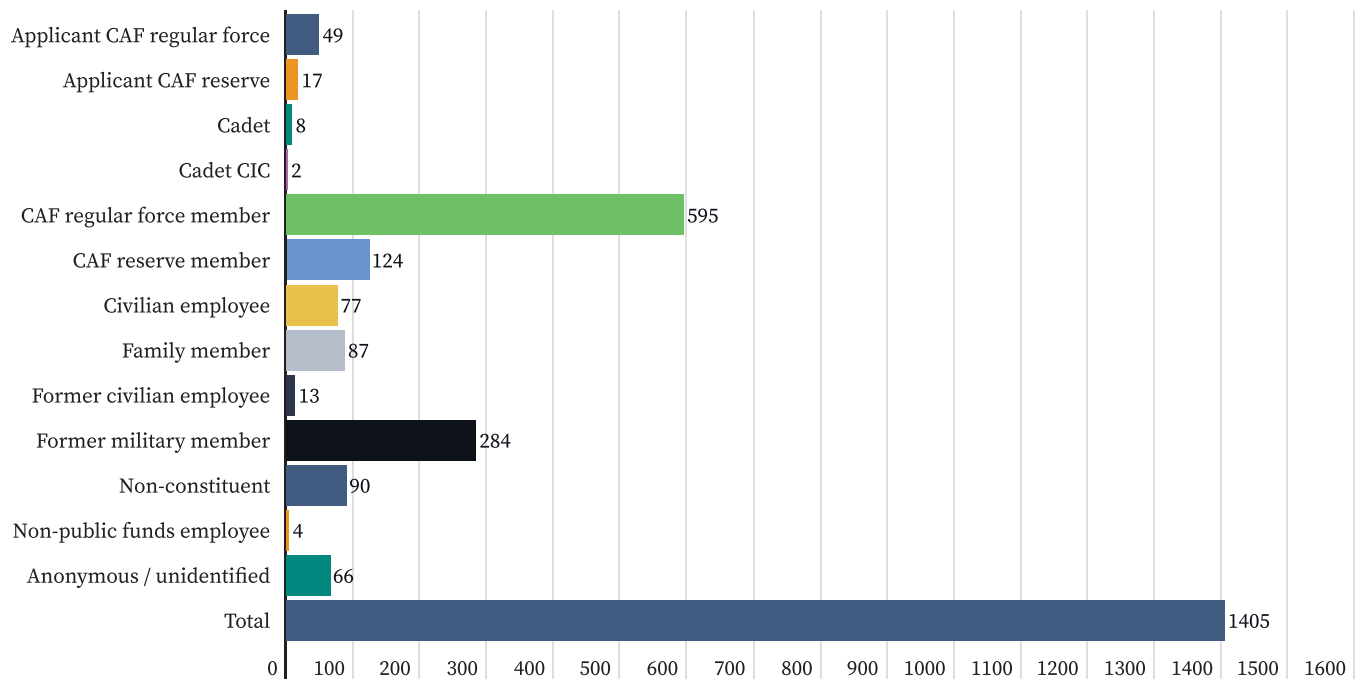
This year we saw an increased number in cases not related to our mandate and contacts received through our online booking tool and LiveChat services. We fielded over 900 inquiries related to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit and other information related to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Although these cases were not within our mandate, our staff dealt with each inquiry by directing them to the appropriate government resources.

## Top new case categories

The most frequent topics that people contact our Office to discuss.

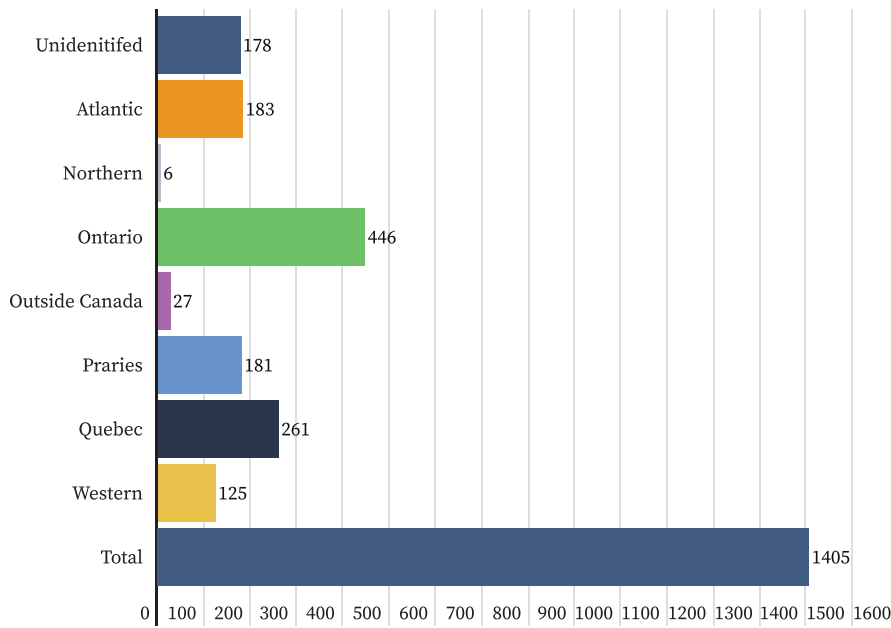


## New cases by constituency group

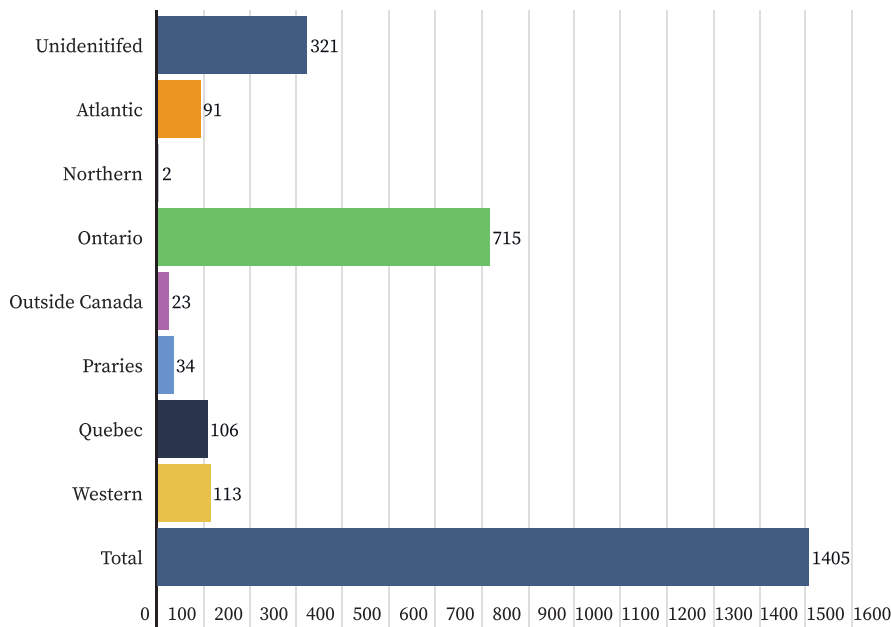


# New cases by region

## Region of the complainant



## Region of the person the complaint concerned



## General investigations

Through investigative work, our General Investigations team addresses both complex and compelling individual cases by conducting thorough reviews and investigations. Investigators ensure the fair treatment of constituents by making sound and informed recommendations to the DND and CAF, when necessary.

In 2020-21, out of all files closed by our General Investigations team the DND and CAF accepted 100 per cent of the recommendations made. These successes reflected our ability to achieve meaningful outcomes for our constituents by establishing credibility and trust with DND and CAF stakeholders.

Section of the Mandate under which recommendations were made	Number of recommendations made	Number of recommendations accepted
36(a) the matter should be referred to the competent DND or CF authority for further consideration	3	3
36(b) an omission should be rectified	3	3
36(c) a decision or recommendation should be quashed or substituted	0	0
36(d) a law, policy, practice on which a decision, recommendation, act or omission was based should be reviewed	0	0
36(e) reasons should have been given for a decision or recommendation	3	3
36(f) A delay should be rectified	4	4
36(g) Other steps should be taken to achieve substantial and long-lasting improvements to the welfare of employees and members	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>

We track individual files to better understand our achievements and barriers to success. During 2020-21 technology, remote work, and other factors led to delays that were outside of the control of stakeholders, constituents, and our staff. We identified this early on and implemented mitigation strategies to ensure file continuity and appropriate intervention from our office. Our constituents—who found themselves in very challenging and stressful situations—were thankful to our team for interventions that led to positive outcomes for all parties.

## Success stories: Residential Housing Unit

A Regular Force member learned about being released from the CAF in 30 days. Typically, members must vacate their Residential Housing Unit (RHU) upon their release date. The member was a single parent of two high-school aged children. The member was also worried about the family having to vacate their RHU and finding suitable accommodations. The on-going COVID-19 global pandemic made finding affordable accommodations during a short time period more challenging.

The member had already contacted the Canadian Forces Housing Agency (CFHA) for an extension to remain in the RHU. The CFHA granted a two-week extension, with the proviso that this would be the only extension provided because other families were waiting for the unit. Despite numerous attempts, the member was unable to obtain suitable housing in keeping with the member's financial situation and province of residency. As a result, the member decided to move out-of-province in order to return to their place of enrollment. This decision complicated the move, and created much stress.

At this point, the member contacted our office. Given its compelling elements, lack of recourse options, and its time-sensitivity, we gave this desperate situation high priority.

The member had purchased a home in another province, and therefore asked the CFHA for an additional week to live in the RHU. This time was to allow the member and family to pack, load, and clean the unit before starting to travel to their new home under the Intended Place of Residence (IPR) policy. Equipped with this new information, we worked with the CFHA to find a resolution. The CFHA agreed to grant the member an additional one-week RHU extension.

Thanks to our help, the additional RHU extension time alleviated the member's stress linked to the release and the move. The member appreciated no longer having to worry about obtaining temporary family housing between moves during a global pandemic.

# Systemic investigations

## Administration of postings, assignments, and employment of Defence Team personnel outside of Canada

In summer 2019, we launched an investigation into the administration of the postings outside of Canada (OUTCAN) Programme. We published our report, *Engaged in the World: A systemic investigation into the administration of postings assignments, and employments of Defence Team personnel outside of Canada*, in December 2020.

Canada's participation in OUTCAN postings is essential in helping Canada meet international commitments and obligations. When the report was published there were over 4,000 CAF members, DND employees and Staff of the Non-Public Funds, as well as their families posted to 70 countries OUTCAN.

While some may believe that an OUTCAN posting is highly desirable, there are stressors and challenges unique to this experience. These challenges were shared by the 260 Defence Team members and their families interviewed over the course of this investigation.

The report contains 16 findings and 19 observations. It also makes 13 recommendations to the Minister of National Defence which, if accepted and implemented, will help improve the administration of the OUTCAN Programme for the Defence Team and their families. The full report, an executive report, and our recommendations are available on our website at [ombuds.ca](https://ombuds.ca).

We will continue to closely monitor the implementation of these recommendations. We will continue to collaborate with the CAF, DND, and Staff of the Non-Public Funds to help them improve the OUTCAN Programme. As of March 31, 2021, the Minister has not responded to our recommendations.

## Issues affecting military families with a focus on compassionate postings

In January 2021, we launched an investigation into issues affecting military families with a focus on compassionate postings. In 2021-2022, we will conduct virtual interviews with CAF members and their families as well as various stakeholders within the DND and CAF. In our report, we will provide decision makers with evidence-based recommendations concerning administrative, procedural, and policy challenges faced by CAF members and their families requesting a compassionate posting.



## Employment equity and diversity

In July 2019, the Minister of National Defence requested that we identify potential actions our office could take to investigate racism and racial discrimination with the CAF.

In December 2020, the Minister announced the creation of an Advisory Panel on systemic racism, discrimination with a focus on anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism, LGBTQ2+ prejudice, gender bias, and white supremacy. As a result of our preliminary review in 2019-2020 and in light of the announcement of the Panel, the Minister has asked our office to orient our investigation towards diversity issues within the DND and CAF including employment equity. We had already planned to look at diversity as an area for investigation as part of our five-year systemic plan, and had begun preliminary work.

## Education and research

Our Education and Research directorate monitors and provides feedback to our colleagues on emerging academic and government research. This helps inform our operational activities and highlight emerging issues and areas of interest in the DND and CAF environment. Our work with DND, CAF, and partnerships with external stakeholders allows us to stay informed about new and existing initiatives to improve the well-being of the Defence community. Areas of focus for 2020-2021 included mental health and morale, military families' access to health care, interprovincial relocations, spousal employment, diversity, and inclusion.

## Keeping our constituents informed during the COVID-19 global pandemic

During 2020-2021, the Education and Research directorate continued to publish a range of educational products about Defence community issues. We base these products on our analysis of intake cases, constituent engagement, and stakeholder meetings. We published [Educational Information](#) on our website and on our social media platforms, providing constituents with the appropriate resources.

Our office serves a diverse constituency, and our educational information reflects the evolving needs of the Defence community as well as the shift towards digital work. In 2020-2021, we developed educational information for CAF applicants who are navigating the application and virtual enrolment process. We also published products on our website for Staff of the Non-Public Funds. This group of our constituency delivers morale and welfare services such as health, fitness and recreational programs, retail, and financial services. We also continued to update and create information for current and former CAF members, military families, civilian employees, cadets, and Junior Canadian Rangers.

Reservists had an essential role in providing support to Canadians as part of the federal government's response to COVID-19 global pandemic during 2020–2021. Our office revised our webpage for the Reserve Force with updated information for Primary Reservists and Canadian Rangers. This information includes leave from civilian employment or an educational program to participate in military service, medical and dental insurance, post-deployment health concerns, compensation options for ill and injured reservists, and Canadian Ranger tasks and operations.

## **Alleviating stressors of postings outside Canada (OUTCAN)**

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The Education and Research directorate conducts data collection and research. This work provides evidence-based information that supports systemic investigation reports. We also publish education products to highlight key information from those reports. In 2020–2021, we published educational information for Defence Team personnel outside of Canada and their families. Our website now offers information on OUTCAN postings, assignments and employment, health care coverage and claims while outside of Canada, provincial and territorial health care coverage, vacation travel allowance, and related frequently asked questions.

## **Military Benefits Browser**

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The [Military Benefits Browser](#) is a tool to help CAF Members, their families, as well as families of the deceased find information on benefits and services for members who are ill, injured, or transitioning out of the CAF.

This fiscal year, 3,771 users have taken part in a total of 4,613 Military Benefits Browser sessions. An increase of 50 per cent from last year. About 11 per cent of the visitors were accessed in French, through the [Navigateur des prestations militaires](#). About 12 per cent of users were returning users who utilised the browser more than once to view the list of benefits.

## **Outreach**

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To build awareness of our role and mandate, the Ombudsman and staff meet with constituents at CAF Bases and Wings and departmental events within and outside Canada. We meet with military and civilian leaders, military families, stakeholders, and like-minded organizations. These meetings serve to enhance our understanding of issues facing Defence community members. They also help us identify issues and trends so that we may better help our constituents.

## **Visits to Canadian Armed Forces Bases and Wings**

The COVID-19 global pandemic and related public health measures changed the way we conducted our outreach activities during 2020–2021. No longer able to travel or conduct in-person meetings, we quickly adapted and delivered our outreach activities online.

Our employees met virtually with almost 1,000 constituents in individual and group settings. We met with senior leaders, military members of all ranks and occupations, family members, health care providers, chaplains, social workers, civilian employees, and Staff of the Non-Public Funds.

We held seven armchair discussions with Defence community members. During these meetings we discussed important topics such as postings, housing, childcare, and medical care. We also conducted several online town hall meetings at Canadian Forces Base Trenton and Canadian Forces Base Valcartier.

We will continue to adapt to the ever-changing environment by using the virtual meeting format while public health measures remain in place. This will allow us to connect with the Defence community at any time and in any location while using a wide variety of tools, including our online presence, to supplement our virtual meetings.

<b>Armchair Discussions</b>	<b>Total in attendance</b>
Trenton (April 2020)	21
Greenwood (June 2020)	33
Postings (Relocation group) (July 2020)	59
Gander (September 2020)	27
Goose Bay (September 2020)	22
Prince Edward Island (September 2020)	20
Families with Special Needs and Compassionate Postings—Systemic Investigations (English - January 2021)	36
Families with Special Needs and Compassionate Postings—Systemic Investigations (French – March 2021)	17
<b>Virtual Base Visits</b>	<b>Total in attendance</b>
CFB Base Trenton (November 2020)	287
CFB Valcartier (March 2021)	444

## Parliamentary engagements

To foster constructive working relationships and provide key issue updates, the Ombudsman and staff met with parliamentarians to discuss issues of concern to the Defence community. During 2020–2021, we met virtually with 26 Members of Parliament and eight Senators.

The Ombudsman and Director General of Operations also appeared as witnesses before the House Standing Committee on the Status of Women in March 2021. This appearance will contribute to the Committee's study on sexual misconduct in the CAF.

During those one-on-one meetings, we discussed how our office can help our mutual constituents. We also discussed how MPs and Senators can support our recommendations to DND and CAF in our systemic reports.

## Success stories: Supplemental Death Benefit

A military spouse contacted our office about the delay in processing a Supplemental Death Benefit (SDB). After the CAF member passed away, the spouse submitted all of the required application paperwork to the pension centre in order to obtain this benefit.

Several months later, the widow still had not received payment, and in response to questioning the pension centre was providing only vague answers. This was difficult because, as an elderly person with a limited income, the constituent did not own a computer or have an e-mail address.

Once the widow brought the situation to our attention, one of our intake officers recommended that the file be reviewed by a complaint analyst due to the financial hardship and lack of recourse options. The analyst confirmed with the CAF Pension Liaison Team that the widow's file was subject to longer than usual delays. This was due to unique factors related to the COVID-19 global pandemic and restrictions at Library and Archives Canada which limited the pension centre's access to the military member's physical file.

Having determined the unique and difficult circumstances, we worked with the pension centre to prioritize the constituent's file. Then we acted as an intermediary between the widow and the pension centre because the centre only communicates with external bodies via e-mail. In this way, we were able to track the file's progress as well as facilitate communication between both parties.

The constituent received a SDB approval letter and payment two weeks before Christmas. As a result, the constituent appreciated our support and involvement.

# Ombudsman's Advisory Committee

The Ombudsman's Advisory Committee (OAC) consists of volunteers with specialized expertise in the Defence community. Together, they provide strategic advice related to the mandate, professional principles, and organizational structure of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Members of the Committee represent our constituency and stakeholder groups. During the summer of 2021, we will call for the submission of new Committee membership candidacies. This will allow us to create a pool of candidates for current and future vacancies.

The Committee also serves as a sounding board for the consideration of important issues facing the Defence community. In the past, this has included discussion of questions such as operational stress injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, the treatment of military members who sustain service injuries, and the challenges that face military families.

This year, we engaged with the OAC virtually throughout the year to leverage their expertise and solicit their input on our Office's priorities. The Committee was engaged in the scoping of the families and diversity systemic investigations as well as in follow up activities, the development of educational products, the launch of the virtual outreach program, nominations for the Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation, and our strategic outreach plan.

Whether you are a serving or retired CAF member (Regular Force or Reserve), a civilian DND employee, a Canadian Ranger, staff of Non Public Funds, or a family member of any of the previously-mentioned, we invite you to apply and look forward to having you serve with us.

You can learn more by visiting our website at [ombuds.ca](https://ombuds.ca).

# Appendix I—Disposition of cases

Sample cases are available on our website, [ombuds.ca](https://ombuds.ca), which describe the types of cases we handle.

<b>Total Cases Handled*</b>	
Cases Closed	<b>1,572</b>
Cases in Progress (as of March 31, 2021)	<b>234</b>
<b>Cases Closed at Intake</b>	
Information or Assistance Provided	<b>984</b>
Outside Mandate	<b>119</b>
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	<b>203</b>
Withdrawn	<b>84</b>
Abandoned	<b>130</b>
<b>Cases Closed at Complaint Resolution</b>	
Informal Resolution	<b>21</b>
Information or Assistance Provided	<b>34</b>
Withdrawn	<b>8</b>
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	<b>3</b>
Outside Mandate	<b>1</b>
Abandoned	<b>2</b>
<b>Cases Closed at Investigation</b>	
Information or Assistance Provided	<b>22</b>
Unfounded	<b>6</b>
Informal Resolution	<b>3</b>
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	<b>2</b>
Investigated: No Follow Up Required	<b>22</b>
Investigated: Follow Up Required	<b>1</b>
Abandoned	<b>5</b>
Withdrawn	<b>2</b>

\* The Total Cases Handled includes new cases, cases re-opened, and cases carried over from previous fiscal years.



# Appendix II—Financial report

## Summary of expenditures

In 2020–2021, our office was allocated a budget of \$7,079,404 for the Office of the Ombudsman. Actual expenditures totalled \$7,255,736 of which \$6,472,212 was related to salaries.

The difference between the approved budget and actual expenditures represents final spending as provided in the Public Accounts of Canada. Money that remains unspent is returned to the Department throughout the fiscal year as part of its quarterly reporting process. In 2020–2021, we requested a total of \$693,830 from the Salary Wage Envelope and returned \$317,157 worth of non-salary related funds.

In the third quarter, we returned \$215,378 from the Operating and Maintenance fund due to restrictions on travel, delays in establishing billing for services with Shared Services Canada (SSC) for completed projects, and delays in establishing contracts with Public Services Procurement Canada (PSPC). We also requested \$387,640 from the Salary Wage Envelope to fund the salary increases and retroactive payments as a result of the newly signed collective agreement for Public Service Alliance of Canada represented employees.

In the fourth quarter of 2020–2021, the COVID-19 global pandemic led us to return \$16,234 from the Minor Capital & Asset Pooled Item Vote 5 fund due to delays in receiving IT equipment. The pandemic prevented the completion of procurement processes. From the Operating and Maintenance fund, we decided to return an additional \$110,545 in the fourth quarter for the same reasons as our Q3 return. We also requested an additional \$112,000 from the Salary Wage Envelope upon receiving confirmation that Phoenix Damage payments owed to employees through the collective agreement negotiations would be paid out within the fiscal year.

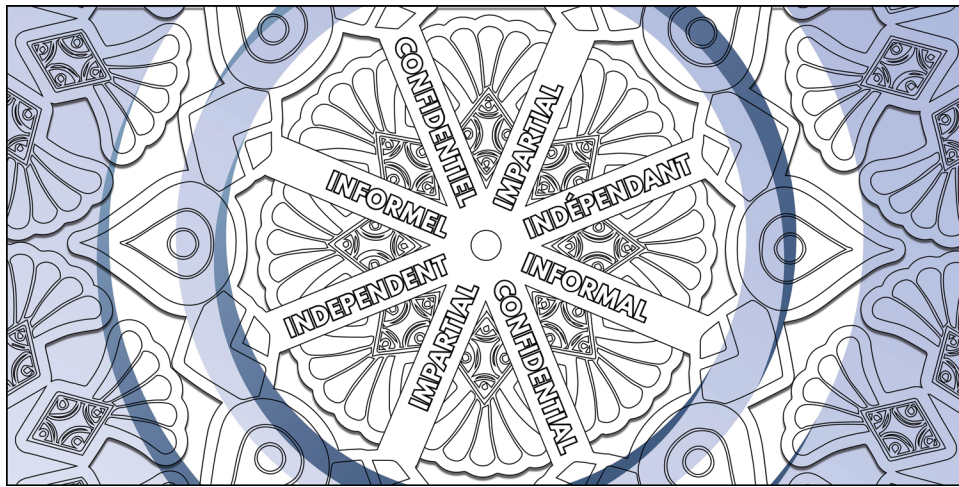
	(\\$)
Mail and courier services	\$596
Supplies/furniture	\$7,831
Training and professional dues	\$156,278
Acquisition/rental of office equipment	\$4,991
Network maintenance and support	\$0
Telecommunications and IT connections	\$68,651
Travel and transportation	\$582
Communications and public outreach	\$40,056
Professional and special services	\$453,773
Minor Capital & Asset Pooled Item	\$50,766
Salaries	\$6,473,212
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,256,736</b>

# Ombudsman

National Defence and  
Canadian Armed Forces



Défense nationale et  
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