

ANNUAL REPORT

2017 - 2018

*National Defence and
Canadian Armed Forces*



Ombudsman

*Défense nationale et
Forces armées canadiennes*

20
1998 • 2018

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



Contact Us

Online: www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca
+ *Secure Online Complaint Form:*
www3.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/ocf_e.php

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11 June 2018

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

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to submit to you the 2017-2018 Annual Report for the Office of the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. This report provides an overview of our activities and operations from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Pursuant to paragraph 38(2)(a) of the Ministerial Directives, please be advised that we intend to publish this report on the expiration of 60 days from this date.

Sincerely,

Gary Walbourne, MBA, CHRL, CPA, CMA
Ombudsman



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Ombudsman's Message

Fiscal year 2017-18 was very busy for our office. Our outreach team continued to crisscross the country raising awareness amongst the entire Defence community about the services the Office provides, and completed over one hundred engagements this year alone. Our intake and general investigations teams continued to be busy bringing important individual concerns to resolution, and our systemic investigations team remained focused on producing reports containing evidence-based recommendations

that seek to bring lasting positive impact to those we serve. With the introduction of our Online Booking Tool as well as the extension of our working hours so we can better serve the community from coast-to-coast, we are making our office more accessible for all.

We also continue to find new and innovative ways to connect with the Defence community through our digital and social media footprint, which now includes Instagram in addition to Twitter, Facebook, and our website. The establishment of our education and collaboration directorate demonstrates that we have become more proactive in fulfilling one of the core objectives of our mandate: being a trusted source of information, education and referral for our constituents.

In 2017-18, I submitted one report to the Minister of National Defence. This report titled *Canadian Rangers: A Systemic Investigation of the Factors That Impact Health Care Entitlements and Related Benefits of the Rangers* contains evidence-based recommendations that I believe will contribute to significant, positive, long-term change for our “eyes and ears in the North.” I am especially proud of this report as we have not only published it in English and French, but also in Denesuline, Ojibway, Ojicree, Inuktitut, and Montagnais.

Our office has also worked diligently on introducing new and updating existing Progress Reports or “Report Cards” that closely track the progress made by the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces on implementing the recommendations made in our investigative reports. They continue to be updated regularly to keep the Defence

community and Canadians informed on these important matters, and we encourage you to check back every couple of months to see if the recommendations that matter the most to you have been addressed.

2018 marks the 20th year since the Ombudsman's Office opened its doors and its phone lines to assist members of the Defence community. I am incredibly proud of the work that the current and former members of this office have accomplished over that time. We have a lot planned for our anniversary year, so please visit our website, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts for more details.

**Gary Walbourne,
MBA, CHRL, CPA, CMA
Ombudsman**

An Office That Can Help

The Office of the Ombudsman was created in 1998 to increase transparency in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, and 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 in order 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 Department of National Defence or the Canadian Armed Forces.

Ombudsman employees attempt to resolve complaints informally and at the lowest level possible. However, complaints can also be the subject of thorough investigations and/or 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 itself derives its authority from Ministerial Directives and their accompanying Defence Administrative Orders and Directives.

Organizational Chart



***Independent and
Impartial. We
are dedicated to
fairness for all.***

The Ombudsman is supported by an office of over 60 federal public servants, including investigators, intake officers, complaint analysts, and other specialist staff. Ombudsman employees include former Canadian Armed Forces members of a variety of ranks and occupations, police officers, lawyers, social workers, and public servants from across the federal government.

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

- Current and former members of the Canadian Armed Forces (Regular Force, Reservists and Rangers);
- Current and former employees of the Department of National Defence;

- Current and former members of the Cadets;
- Current and former Non-public Fund employees;
- Individuals applying to become a member of the Canadian Armed Forces;
- Immediate family members of any of the above-mentioned; and
- Individuals on exchange or secondment with the Canadian Armed Forces.

Members of the Defence community who bring a concern or complaint to the Ombudsman's Office can do so without fear of reprisal*. 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 complainant.

* 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)



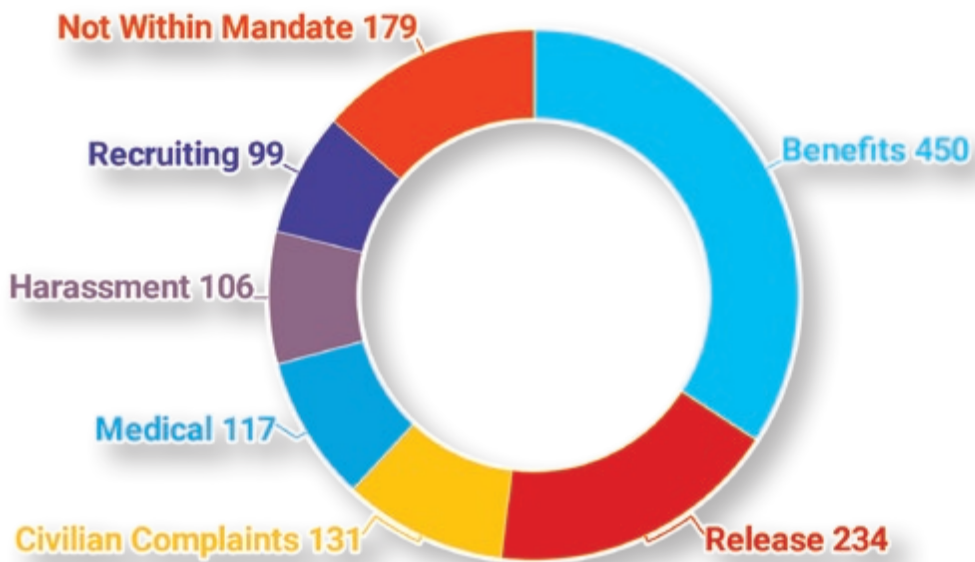
The Year in Review

Over the past year, the Office of the Ombudsman achieved real and positive results for Canada's Defence community.

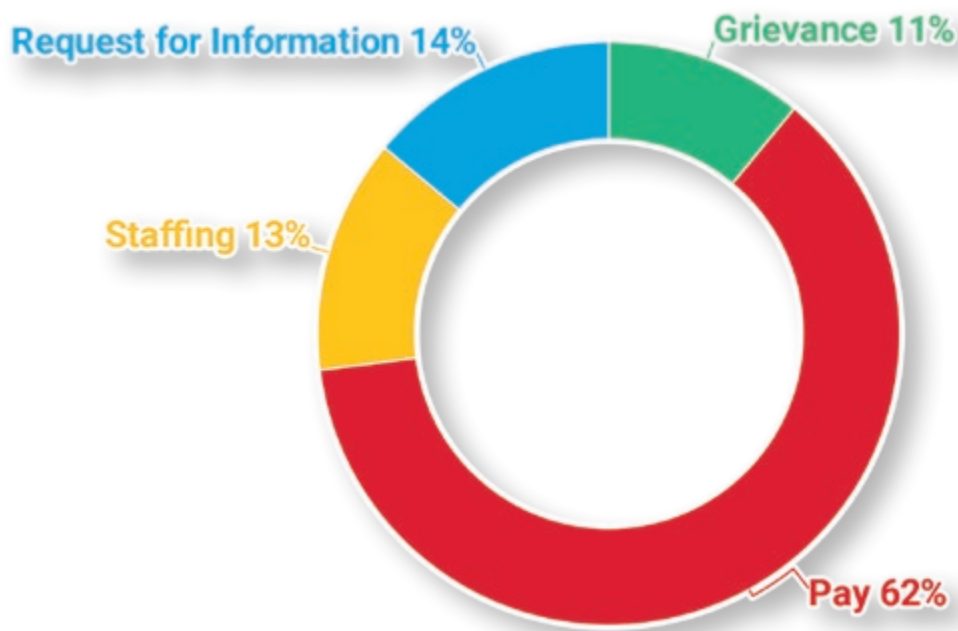
Individual Cases

The Office received **1,650** new cases in fiscal year 2017-2018, and re-opened **188** cases.

Top Seven Categories of New Cases



Civilian Complaints by Category

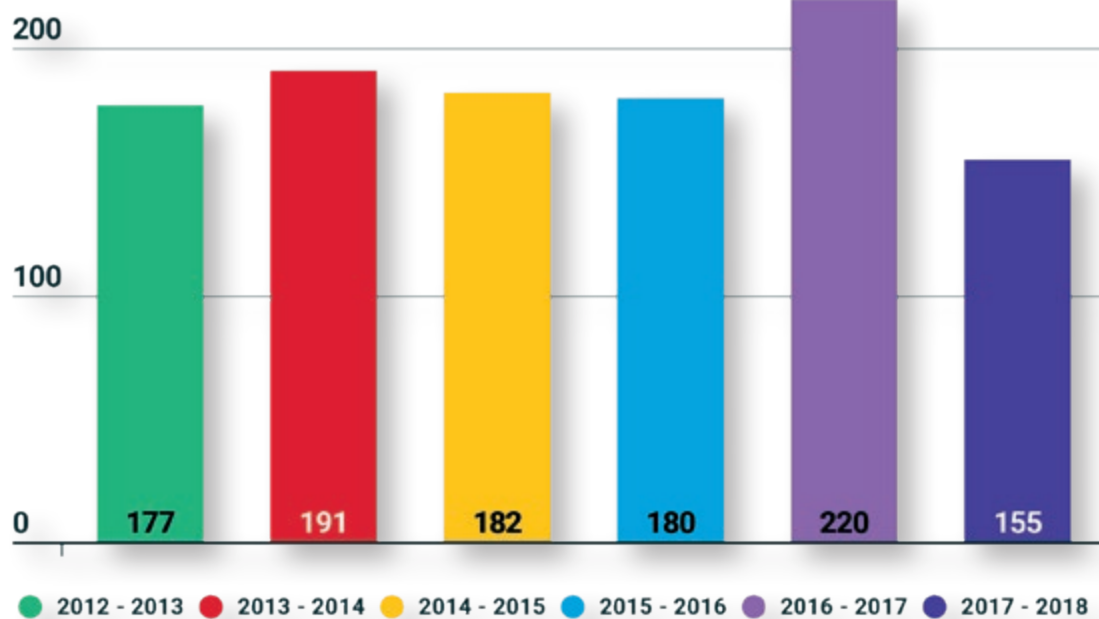


The Ombudsman’s Office also assisted members of the Defence community with questions and concerns related to grievances, posting, promotions, leave, access to information, training and disciplinary action.

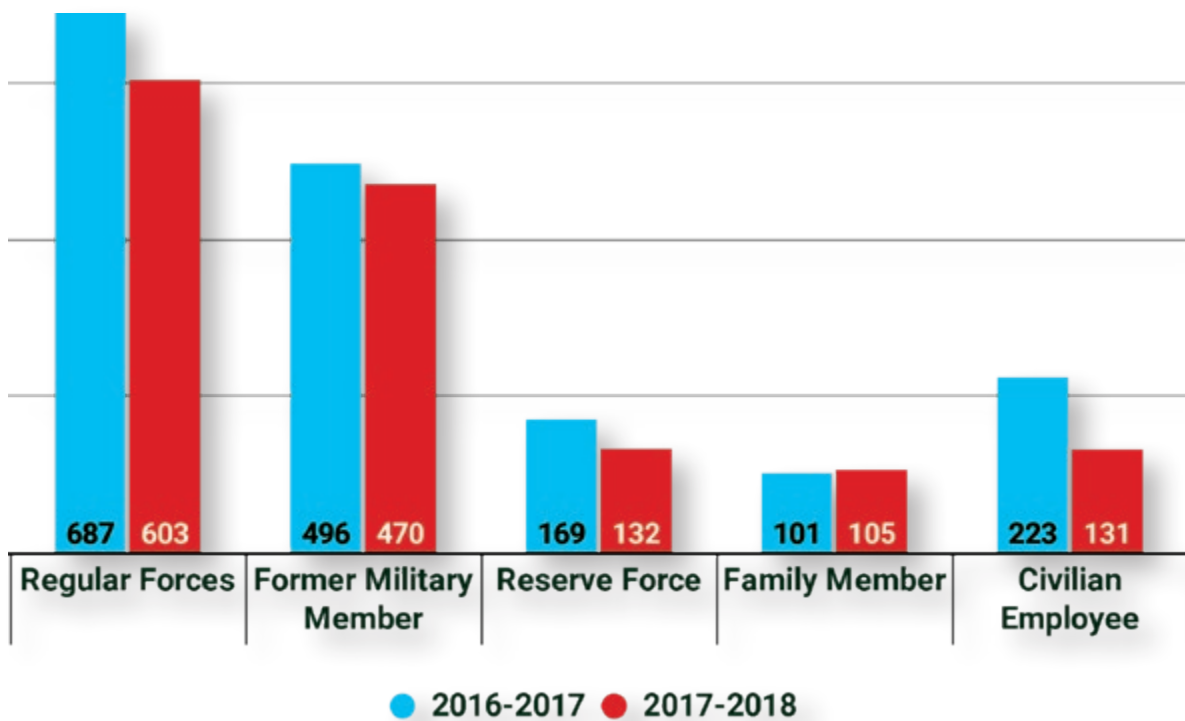
In total, we handled **2,058** cases (this includes new cases, re-opened cases and cases carried over from previous fiscal years) and closed 1,898 cases.

Every year, the majority of cases come from members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Files Carried Over From Previous Years



New Cases by Top 5 Constituent Groups



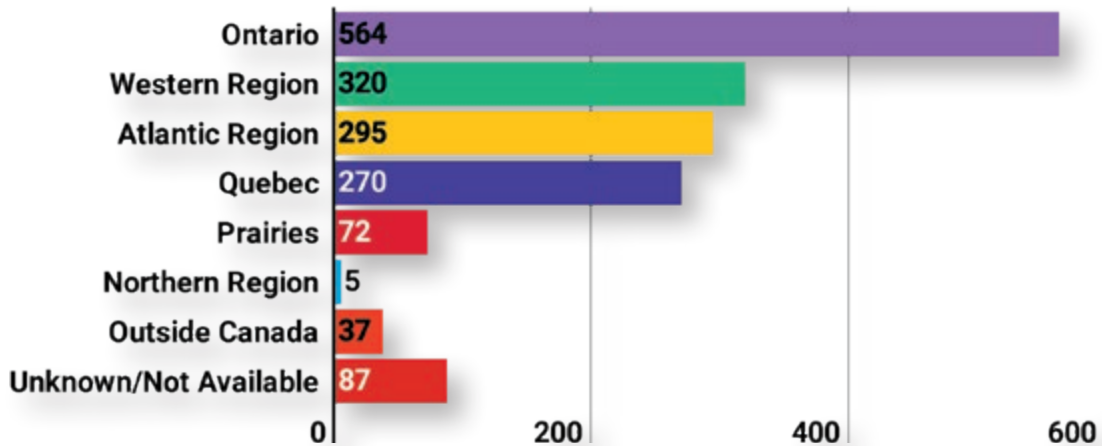
* Total Cases 2016-2017: **1,865**

* Total Cases 2017-2018: **1,650**

New Cases by Region

This year, the largest number of cases came from the following regions:

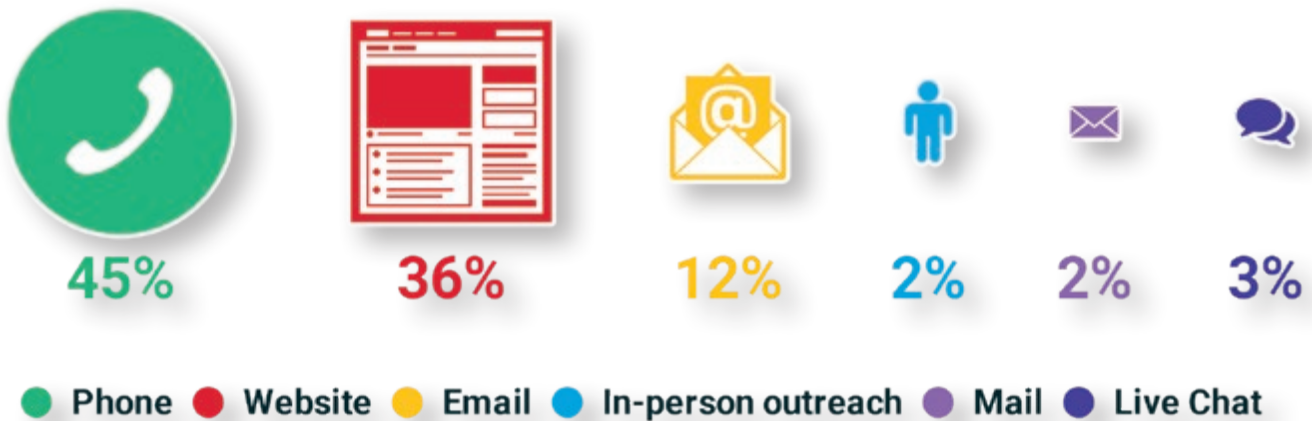
1. Ontario
2. Western Region
3. Atlantic Region



Communicating with the Office

Over the past year, the majority of contacts made to the Ombudsman’s Office were through our toll-free telephone number (1-888-828-3626) and our website (including our secure online complaint form and Live Chat). Members of the Defence community also contacted us by email, letter, fax, in person, and through their Member of Parliament.

Means of Communication



Live Chat, new since October 2016, is a convenient way for the Defence community to receive help completing our online complaint form, have basic questions answered, and to be pointed in the right direction when they are not sure where to turn.

Since August 2017, our constituents can also go on our website and book a telephone appointment with one of our intake officers using our Online Booking Tool.

Accessible in both official languages from either a desktop or a mobile device, the Online Booking Tool allows members of the Defence community to go to our website and book a telephone appointment that will start at any time between 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. in any time zone in Canada (i.e. 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Eastern Time).

Highlights

Reports, Reviews, and Investigations

We published one new systemic investigation in fiscal year 2017-2018.

Canadian Rangers: A Systemic Investigation of the Factors that Impact Health Care Entitlements and Related Benefits of the Rangers

In fall 2015, my office launched an investigation into health care entitlements and related benefits of the Canadian Rangers, and the barriers that impede Canadian Rangers from accessing their entitlements. I am happy to report that we published, *Canadian Rangers: A Systemic Investigation of the Factors that Impact Health Care Entitlements and Related Benefits of the Rangers*, in December 2017.

During the course of this investigation, our systemic investigations team travelled across Canada and engaged with Canadian Rangers and members of the chain of command by way of focus groups and interviews. Key stakeholders both within the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces and other federal departments, including Veterans Affairs Canada and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, were also consulted.

The final report found that geographical location, low level of awareness of entitlements, and gaps in the administration of Canadian Ranger illnesses and injuries are impediments to Canadian Rangers receiving the health care and other benefits to which they are entitled.

In light of these findings, my office made four recommendations to the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.



Recommendation 1:

We once again recommend that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces eliminate ambiguity and inconsistency in language in the policy framework for Reservists, with a focus on health care entitlements, as soon as possible, and no later than spring 2019.

Recommendation 2:

We recommend that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces ensure compliance with the existing illness and injury reporting process so that Canadian Rangers are not inadvertently barred from accessing their health care entitlements and related benefits.

Recommendation 3:

We recommend that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces ensure the delivery of health care to Canadian Rangers to which they are entitled by:

3.1 Engaging with Canadian Rangers with the view of identifying the barriers to their access to Canadian Armed Forces health care, and their health care needs within their social and cultural contexts.

3.2 Identifying and implementing a service delivery model for Canadian Armed Forces health care that is responsive to the identified needs of the Canadian Rangers.



Recommendation 4:

We recommend that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces take concrete steps to ensure Canadian Rangers have a clear understanding of the importance of reporting injuries, and to improve their knowledge and awareness of the health care entitlements and related benefits available to them by:

4.1 Amalgamating information on Canadian Ranger health care entitlements and related benefits; distributing this information to Canadian Rangers in various languages and formats as necessary, by fall 2018.

4.2 Ensuring that this information is integrated into formal and any other relevant training offered to the Canadian Rangers, by fall 2018.

In a concerted effort to better reach our constituents, the final report and all related information products were published in five Indigenous languages — Denesuline, Montagnais, Ojicree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut.

I am pleased to report that the Minister of National Defence has accepted all four of our recommendations. I remain confident that the full implementation of these recommendations will improve the overall well-being of the Canadian Rangers. My office will continue to monitor progress in this regard, and we will provide periodic updates on the implementation of our recommendations.

Progress Reports On Recommendations

This office has published a number of reports on subjects ranging from periodic health care assessments for Reservists to military families, Canadian Rangers, Cadets, and to the basic mandate and governance model in which we operate.

As standard procedure, we track the progress made by the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces on implementing the recommendations made in our investigative reports. Though many of our recommendations have been accepted and fulfilled, there have been many over the years that simply have not been met or have only been partially executed.

In April 2017, I announced a new section on our website as an accountability tool dedicated to tracking the progress of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces in implementing these recommendations. The Progress Reports on Recommendations explains what the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces has done in response to our reports and is updated regularly to keep the Defence community and Canadians informed.

We released the following report cards during fiscal year 2017-2018. For more detailed information on progress related to specific recommendations, as well as newly released report cards, please visit our website at ombudsman.forces.gc.ca.

A Systemic Review Of Compensation Options For Ill And Injured Reservists

For this review, we examined the processes ill and injured Reservists must follow to obtain coverage for lost income. We found the application and review processes for Reserve Force Compensation to be too complex and cumbersome, relying on old-school paperwork. Moreover, the three environments of the Reserve Force follow different procedures — some faster than others. In all cases, the weakest link of the administrative chain determined how fast (or slow) an application was processed. Our recommendations were aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Reserve Force Compensation process and increasing the awareness of both individual Reservists and the Reserve Force itself of available options when Reservists find themselves ill or injured.



- ⚙️ 2 Recommendations **Made**
- ✓ 2 Recommendations **Accepted**
- ✗ 2 Recommendations **Not Implemented**

Up-to-date as of 2018-02-06

A Report Outlining The Delays In The Process Of Adjudications And Initial Authority Grievances By The Director General Compensations & Benefits

For this investigation, we focused on two main areas: delays in the adjudication of financial claims associated with door-to-door relocations (postings) and delays in the handling of related grievances. We found that Canadian Armed Forces members were waiting months — and in some cases years — for decisions with respect to their adjudication requests, and longer still if they chose to grieve the decision. Our recommendations were aimed at improving the timeliness in processing claims and grievances.



- ⚙️ 11 Recommendations **Made**
- ✓ 11 Recommendations **Accepted**
- ✓ 7 Recommendations **Implemented**
- ✗ 4 Recommendations **Not Implemented**

Up-to-date as of 2018-02-01

On The Homefront: Assessing The Well-Being Of Canada's Military Families In The New Millenium

The objective of this systemic review was to independently evaluate the ability of Canadian military families to lead relatively stable, nurturing family lives in the Canadian Armed Forces environment. Our recommendations were aimed at how the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces could address three characteristics we found to have a direct and unique impact on the life of military families: mobility, separation and risk.



- ⚙️ 18 Recommendations **Made**
- ✓ 18 Recommendations **Accepted**
- ✓ 6 Recommendations **Implemented**
- ⊖ 10 Recommendations **Partially Implemented**
- ✗ 2 Recommendations **Not Implemented**

Up-to-date as of 2018-02-01

Helpful Information

In keeping with our mandate to act as a direct source of information referral and education to constituents, we published a number of educational products on our website. These products highlight issues impacting the Defence community and are reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure accuracy and timeliness:

Civilian Employees

- **Civilian Classification**
Information on civilian classifications, classification grievances, standardized job descriptions and cyclical job description reviews

Military Families

- **Communicating with Families**
Resources for military families to receive information and support and to stay engaged within the military family community
- **Establishing Partnerships**
Information about local, regional and national partnerships with the Canadian Armed Forces in support of military families

- **Spousal/Partner Employment**
Resources for military family members seeking employment
- **Promoting Research**
Information on ongoing research to understand Canadian military families and better support their needs

Canadian Rangers

Information provided in Denesuline, Montagnais, Ojicree, Ojibway, Inuktitut, French and English

- **Canadian Rangers Tasks and Operations**
A guide containing information specific to the tasks and operations of Canadian Rangers
- **Ranger Health Care Entitlements**
A guide containing health care benefits for Canadian Rangers



Military Benefits Browser

My staff worked in collaboration with Director Casualty Support Management to develop the Military Benefits Browser — a user-friendly web browser to help identify which benefits and services may be available to military members who are ill, injured, or transitioning out of the Canadian Armed Forces, their families, and families of the deceased.

The Military Benefits Browser sources its information directly from *The Guide to Benefits, Programs, and Services for Serving and Former Canadian Armed Forces Members and their*

Families, and is accessible on our website through multiple devices, including smart phones. The information is offered in a sortable format so members and their families can quickly and conveniently view which benefits may be applicable to their unique situation. The list of benefits and services can also be sorted by category such as: peer support, health and employment.

Although initially developed for members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families, the Military Benefits Browser can also be a tool for

Integrated Personnel Support Centre Services Managers in supporting Canadian Armed Forces members. This is a tangible initiative in working towards introducing a concierge service to guide members through the various processes during their transition.

The creation of the Military Benefits Browser directly supports the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Veterans

Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence in delivering on their mandate to reduce complexity and overhaul service delivery within their respective portfolios.





Constituent and Stakeholder Engagement

As part of my office's efforts to enhance awareness and understanding of our role and mandate, members of my team and I connected with constituents at military bases and wings, and departmental events across the country—reaching out to military and civilian leaders, stakeholders and like-minded organizations. These engagements provided us with a better understanding of the issues and challenges facing members of the Defence community

Visits to Bases and Wings

My office connects directly with constituents where they live and work. We travel regularly to Canadian Armed Forces bases and wings where we meet with senior leaders, non-commissioned members of all ranks and occupations, family members, health care providers, chaplains, social workers and civilian and non-public fund employees. These sessions allow us to provide information on our services, discuss issues of importance and receive complaints.

During the past fiscal year, my staff and I met with more than 18,000 constituents, either individually or in group settings, at the following locations:

- **Canadian Forces Base Kingston, Ontario from 19-23 February 2018**
- **Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, New Brunswick from 5-9 February 2018**
- **Canadian Cadet Organizations in Ontario from 24-27 July 2017**
 - Connaught Cadet Training Centre
 - HMCS ONTARIO Cadet Training Centre
 - Mountainview Cadet Flying Training Centre
 - Blackdown Cadet Training Centre
 - Trenton Cadet Training Centre
- **Canadian Cadet Organizations in the Yukon, Alberta and Manitoba from 18-20 July 2017**
 - Whitehorse Cadet Training Centre
 - Cold Lake Cadet Training Centre
 - Gimli Cadet Flying Training Centre
- **Canadian Cadet Organizations in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick from 17-20 July 2017**
 - Argonaut Cadet Training Centre
 - HMCS ACADIA Cadet Training Centre
 - Greenwood Cadet Training Centre
 - Debert Cadet Flying Training Centre
- **Canadian Cadet Organizations in British Columbia from 11-13 July 2017**
 - Albert Head Cadet Training Centre
 - Comox Cadet Flying Training Centre
 - HMCS QUADRA Cadet Training Centre
 - Vernon Cadet Training Centre
- **Canadian Cadet Organizations in Québec from 10-13 July 2017**
 - Bagotville Cadet Training Centre
 - Eastern Region Cadet Flying Centre, Cadets de Saint-Jean
 - Valcartier Cadet Training Centre
 - Mont St-Sacrement Cadet Music Training Centre



Interacting with Constituents at Departmental Events

In 2017-2018, my office met with constituents at a series of military and departmental events. This type of engagement allowed us to reach out in formal and informal settings and provide valuable information about our office and the services available.

- **Commemorative and diversity events at National Defence Headquarters**
in Ottawa, Ontario, including the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Indigenous Awareness Week, Black History Month and the International Day for Persons with Disabilities
- **Orientation programs for new civilian employees**
at the Learning and Career Centre in Ottawa, Ontario
- **Ombudsman Reservist Awareness Campaign**
in Gatineau, Quebec
- **Presentations to various groups**
across the country such as, Military Family Resource Centres, Joint Personnel Support Units, the Chaplain General Conference in Cornwall, Ontario, and the Royal Canadian Legion in Sackville, Nova Scotia
- **Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research** in Toronto, Ontario
- **Military Family Event** in Ottawa, Ontario; St-Jean, Québec; and Borden, Ontario
- **The Seventh Annual Defence Community Family Appreciation Day**
at Uplands military site in Ottawa, Ontario
- **Invictus Games** in Toronto, Ontario
- **Presentations to military personnel at a number of leadership courses**
including the Senior Leadership Program in St-Jean, Québec, and Canadian Forces College in Toronto.

*Would you like someone from the Ombudsman's Office
to speak to your group/organization?*

*E-mail the details of your request to:
ombudsman-communications@forces.gc.ca
or call 1-888-828-3626.*

Parliamentary Engagements

As part of my commitment to foster and maintain constructive working relationships, I regularly meet with Parliamentarians to discuss issues of importance and concerns brought forward by constituents.

This past fiscal year, our office provided updates on key issues through individual meetings with members of Parliament as well as through appearances before the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, and the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs. Our Director General of Operations also presented on our mandate, role, and responsibilities at the Library of Parliament Seminar Program: *The Role of a Federal Ombudsperson*.



International Engagements

As an office, we participate in international events and often meet with ombudsman organizations from other countries to help advance issues of fairness and human rights for armed forces personnel—an area in which Canada is recognized as a world leader.

This past fiscal year, our Director General of Operations participated in the Ninth International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces held in the United Kingdom, and the United Kingdom Community Forum hosted by Canadian Forces Support Unit (Europe), Detachment London.

Online Engagements

NATIONAL DEFENCE AND
CANADIAN FORCES OMBUDSMAN

ONLINE BOOKING TOOL

NOW AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE

Members of the Defence community can now go on our website and book a telephone appointment with one of our intake officers.

The online booking can be accessed from a desktop or a mobile device on our website.

The online booking tool is accessible in both official languages.

A convenient way to communicate with our office.

[HTTP://WWW.OMBUDSMAN.FORCES.GC.CA/](http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/)

Ombudsman
National Defence and Canadian Forces

Canada

Constituents want to be heard without necessarily meeting with us in person. By engaging the Defence community via our website and on social media, we can actively listen to individuals, provide access to information 24/7, and ensure our services are meeting their needs.

Throughout the past year, we continued our efforts to reach out to our constituents with the launch of our Instagram page and an online booking tool on our website.

Live Chat continues to be a positive option where members of the Defence community and visitors to our website have immediate and easy access to a bilingual intake officer who will help with completing our online complaint form or answering basic questions.

Since August 2017, our constituents can also go on our website and book a telephone appointment with an intake officer using our online booking tool. We understand that normal Ottawa business hours are not always convenient for everyone. With the online

booking tool, members of the Defence community can book a telephone appointment that will start any time between 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. in any time zone in Canada (6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Eastern Time).

With an increased focus on education, the Frequently Asked Questions section of our website continues to make it into the top-five visited pages. Messages from the Ombudsman, where we highlight new initiatives, educational products and summarize our reviews and reports, also receive a lot of attention.

Corporate Priorities and Initiatives

Aligned with Department of National Defence priorities in terms of strengthening the Defence team and ensuring Defence stewardship and affordability, my office continued to deliver quality services to the Defence community and value for money for Canadian taxpayers by focusing on four key areas.

1. Engaging the Defence Community

In order to fulfill my responsibilities effectively, I must ensure all members of the Defence community are aware of and understand my mandate and role within the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. However, awareness is only one part of being able to help. I also need to provide easy access to our services. By regularly reaching out to constituents where they live and work, we as an office can actively listen and ensure we are meeting their needs.

With this in mind, my office continued to enhance awareness of the ombudsman role and mandate by increasing engagements with new recruits, Cadets, Canadian Rangers, and Reserve Force units, as well as visits to bases and wings across Canada. We enhanced our online presence through improvements to our website content and regular participation in social media, including a new Instagram account.

In addition, we reached out to non-departmental stakeholders, such as military family associations, Members of Parliament, Senators, provinces, municipalities, and other provincial and federal departments about key issues affecting the Defence community.



2. Assisting and Educating the Defence Community

My office built upon progress made in the previous fiscal year with respect to improving our ability to be a direct source of information, referral and education as well as providing impartial, evidence-based investigations. In particular, we:

- continued to deliver informal and early resolution of complaints by giving our staff the tools to resolve issues at the lowest possible level;
- established an education and collaboration team to reinforce our ability to deliver a full suite of educational products;
- reviewed service standards with monthly tracking and data measurement to ensure a continued commitment to service excellence;
- increased our emphasis on education and awareness through user-friendly electronic tools (we introduced the Military Benefits Browser on our website, an interactive map is being developed and we have increased our social media presence with a series entitled, *Did You Know?* related to the Defence community); and continued to produce clear and effective communications products including investigative reports.



3. Effectively Addressing Systemic Issues

In 2017-2018, my office maintained the ability to quickly identify and address systemic issues affecting the Defence community and to launch systemic investigations, case studies or issue assessments. To remain effective, information from external and internal sources was continuously monitored.

My office continued to conduct systemic investigations while maintaining a flexible approach to launching smaller issue assessments. The creation of a permanent systemic team has strengthened our ability to deliver effective and timely recommendations related to systemic issues. Standard operating procedures and a multi-year systemic investigation plan have been established to formalize the process.



4. Demonstrating Value for Money

The final key priority for my office in 2017-2018 was to increase our performance and relevance within the Defence community. Initiatives included:

- reviewing service standards to ensure feasibility and relevance and to track and measure monthly performance;
- ensuring we provided high quality service in line with community needs and with an eye to reducing the time it takes from when a constituent contacts us to the resolution of their file;
- maximizing our in-house publishing capability to develop new communications tools and products to help with the education goals of the organization;
- continuing to ensure the efficiency of our internal Return to Work and Occupational Health and Safety programs and providing awareness training as required; and
- maintaining a service level agreement with Assistant Deputy Minister (Finance) and Chief Financial Officer to assure financial management of our office was in line with Treasury Board direction on modern comptrollership and that day-to-day financial activities were in line with government policy and departmental regulations.



Ombudsman's Advisory Council

The Ombudsman's Advisory Council consists of volunteers with specialized expertise in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, and comprehensive knowledge of the ombudsman profession. They play an integral part in guiding our office through the myriad of issues and challenges we face daily. The Council provides advice related to the mandate, professional principles and structure of our office.

The following individuals were valuable members of the Ombudsman's Advisory Council during fiscal year 2017-2018:

- **Colonel J.L.G. Bélisle** joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1986 as an infantry officer with the Royal 22e Régiment. After 12 years of service, he changed trades to Canadian Forces Chaplain. With many overseas deployments and missions under his belt, he is currently Director of the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service.
- **Colonel (Retd) John Conrad** is a published author, lecturer and a former Reserve Brigade Commander of 41 Canadian Brigade Group in Calgary, Alberta. For over 32 years, he served in the Canadian Armed Forces regular and reserve components. In 2006, he served as Commanding Officer of the Canadian Logistics Battalion, the unit responsible for sustaining the Canadian Task Force in Southern Afghanistan. Colonel Conrad retired in 2017.
- **Commander Deborah-Lynn Gates** joined the Air Reserves in 1988 as a non-commissioned member and transferred into the Regular Force in 1996. She accepted her commission in 1999 as a Naval Logistician and has served on both coasts. She is currently the Executive Assistant to the Commander for the Royal Canadian Navy in Ottawa, enjoying the balance of home and work life.
- **Chief Warrant Officer (Retd) Sharon Gosling** served in the Canadian Armed Forces for more than 27 years before retiring at the rank of Chief Warrant Officer. Since 2008, Ms. Gosling has provided administration and support to ill and injured soldiers first as the Officer in Charge of the Service Personnel Holding List followed by Services Manager/Coordinator at the Integrated Personnel Support Centres in Cold Lake, Alberta and Comox, British Columbia.

- **Captain (Navy) (Retd) Kimberly Kubeck** joined HMCS Donnacona in 1980 and received her commission in 1989. Throughout her career, she served in a variety of positions including a secondment to Maritime Staff following the events of September 11, 2001. In June 2011, she was appointed as Director Reserves at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa and Naval Reserve Regional Advisor for Eastern Region. After more than 32 years of service, Captain (Navy) Kubeck retired in January 2013.
- **Captain Mike Scarcella** enrolled in the Canadian Armed Forces as a Weapons Technician Air in 1981. He served most of his career as a non-commissioned member attaining the rank of Chief Warrant Officer in December 2006. Having served at bases both in Canada and around the world, including a posting to Baden, Germany in 1987, Captain Scarcella held numerous leadership team positions and appointments including 407 Squadron Chief Warrant Officer, Theatre Support Element Chief Warrant Officer at Camp Mirage, 17 Wing Chief Warrant Officer and 1 Canadian Air Division/CANAR Divisional Chief Warrant Officer. He took his commission in 2017 and now serves as the Officer Commanding the Readiness Training Flight at 12 Wing Shearwater.
- **Lieutenant-General (Retd) Walter Semianiw** spent 32 years in the Canadian Armed Forces. As he rose through the ranks, he notably served with the Privy Council Office, as the Commandant of the Canadian Forces College, as the Canadian Contingent Commander in Afghanistan, as the Chief Military Personnel and as the Commander of Canada Command. He was also an Assistant Deputy Minister at Veterans Affairs Canada for Policy, Communications and Commemoration.

Members of the Advisory Council are drawn from individuals representing our constituency and stakeholder groups. In the summer of 2018, we will be calling out for new members from which we will create a pool of candidates for current and future vacancies.

Whether you are a serving or retired Canadian Armed Forces member (Regular Force or Reserve), a civilian Department of National Defence employee, a Canadian Ranger, an employee 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.

Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation

The *Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation* is awarded annually to recognize Canadian Armed Forces members, civilian employees and family members who have gone the extra mile and exceeded expectations in bringing about positive and lasting change to the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.

At a special ceremony held in Ottawa on 19 October 2017, it was our honour to recognize the outstanding contributions of four members of the Defence community. Many distinguished guests attended, including the Honourable Jean Rioux, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence; the Honourable Sherry Romanado, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence; as well as several Parliamentarians and members of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and the Standing Committee on National Defence.



(L-R) Ms. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport), Dr. Andrea Hoffman, Commodore Sean N. Cantelon (Director General Morale and Welfare Services), Ms. Margaret A. MacKenzie, Ms. Marie-Claude Michaud, Mrs. Cynthia Mills, Ms. Michelle Levesque, Ms. Robyn Hynes (Director General Ombudsman's Office), Ms. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence), Lieutenant-General Alain Parent (Acting Vice Chief of the Defence Staff)

Recipients of the 2017 Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation

Ms. Margaret A. MacKenzie

Connecting with military families can sometimes be challenging. They may be posted in remote locations, or may find it difficult to visit their local Military Family Resource Centre in person.

Noticing this support gap, Ms. Margaret MacKenzie created a virtual outreach program in Europe, bringing together more than 600 Canadian Armed Forces families in 16 countries. Connecting virtually allowed these families access to essential information on services and programs while providing a network of support.

As the Virtual Program Coordinator for the Military Family Resource Centre in Prince Edward Island, Ms. MacKenzie and her team developed a 12-week training program that has taught many Defence community service providers how to adapt a live presentation to an interactive virtual audience.

Virtual outreach has shown more than 700 military families how to access scholarships, saving families tens of thousands of dollars in post-secondary education. Another notable session is the virtual Ceilidh, using music to share stories and struggles.

Ms. Margaret MacKenzie is an exceptional teacher and community leader whose innovation has given the Defence community a way of connecting that previously did not exist.

Ms. Marie-Claude Michaud

As Executive Director of the Valcartier Family Centre, Ms. Marie-Claude Michaud's commitment and perseverance in advancing the cause of military families has made a significant impact in the Defence community.

After noticing staff exhaustion at the Centre, Ms. Michaud made changes to vastly improve the work environment and client services. She designed and implemented the Caring Leadership policy, a code of conduct with tools to build a workplace that fosters care and kindness.

Ms. Michaud implemented the first provincial symposium for Military Family Resource Centres, providing staff from Quebec's service centres the opportunity to discuss concerns, create solutions and share experiences.

She also mobilized 32 resource centres across Canada and created a petition, presented in the House of Commons, so military families could express their interests in the new defence policy. To further this initiative, she organized a meeting on Parliament Hill.

Military Family Resource Centres face uncertain financing which led Ms. Michaud to create the first Military Family Resource Centre foundation in Canada. This initiative secured funding for the Valcartier Centre, ensuring quality service for military families.

Mrs. Cynthia Mills and Ms. Michelle Levesque

Mrs. Cynthia Mills, a military spouse and journalist, saw a need in her community after reading a blog post from a military member's sister whose brother became lost in the system. Heartbroken by the tragic story, Mrs. Mills was inspired to create the Canadian Military Family Magazine.

Mrs. Mills envisioned a tool that would provide information and give a voice to military families, and with fellow military spouse and journalist Ms. Michelle Levesque, the Canadian Military Family Magazine has become that tool—covering a variety of topics specific to Canadian military families including deployment support, relocation and raising military families.

The magazine guides families to local programs and services, keeps them connected with activities in their communities, and tells the stories that need to be told to provide real and positive change for Canadian military families.

Under the direction of Mrs. Mills and the support of Ms. Levesque, the Canadian Military Family Magazine team go above and beyond with each issue that is published. They now hire military family members who are in the media industry and Magazines Canada accepted their publication as a member in early 2017.

Appendix I—Disposition of Cases

Total Cases Handled*

Cases Closed	1,898
Cases in Progress (as of March 31, 2018)	155

Cases Closed at Intake

Information or Assistance Provided	1,258
Outside Mandate	118
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	90
Withdrawn	51
Abandoned	90
Contact Provided Information	6

Cases Closed at Complaint Resolution

Informal Resolution	71
Information or Assistance Provided	36
Withdrawn	5
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	1
Abandoned	3

* This includes new cases, cases re-opened and cases carried over from previous fiscal years. Any discrepancies in totals are a result of rounding and the transition to a new case management system.



Cases Closed at Investigation

Information or Assistance Provided	66
Unfounded	24
Informal Resolution	6
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	10
Investigated: No Follow Up Required	47
Abandoned	1
Withdrawn	9
Outside Mandate	1
Contact Provided Information	3

Cases Closed at Systemic Investigation

Information or Assistance Provided	2
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Appendix II—Financial Report

Summary of Expenditures

In 2017-2018, the Minister of National Defence approved a budget of \$7,234,087 for the Office of the Ombudsman. Actual expenditures totaled \$6,541,254 of which \$5,259,141 was related to salaries.

Description	(\$)
Mail and courier services	1,408
Supplies/furniture	24,791
Training and professional dues	88,443
Acquisition/rental of office equipment	15,575
Network maintenance and support	188,501
Telecommunications and IT connections	106,340
Travel and transportation	74,987
Communications and public outreach	61,135
Professional and special services	720,934
Salaries	5,259,141
Total	6,541,254



Our Successes Are Your Successes

A Navy Regular Force member who had been deployed for over 200 days away from home in the previous 12 months, received a posting/promotion instruction resulting in another sea deployment three weeks later.

This situation was causing stress in the member's marriage and overall morale and spirit. The member believed that this posting and deployment were in breach of NAVGEN 035/16, an order to limit deployments to 180 days in a 12-month period unless approved by a Flag Officer. Due to the time constraints and unable to resolve the issue locally, the member requested assistance from the Ombudsman's Office one week prior to deployment.

Due to compelling circumstances and short time frames, the file was escalated to an investigator who contacted the Director Military Careers and the Royal Canadian Navy.

The investigator found that the order was interpreted differently by both entities—whether 180 days at sea or away from home. It was determined that it was “days away from home” and not “sea days.”

A misinterpretation of the order was corrected as a result of our intervention. Consequently, this posting/promotion instruction was rescinded and the member did not have to deploy, but was still promoted three weeks later.

A Regular Force member was on training for a component transfer from the Primary Reserve with a posting status of Prohibited (where the relocation of dependents and household goods and effects at Crown expense is not authorized). The member's family moved with the member at the member's own expense. Due to a difficult family situation, the member felt this was the best course of action.

After the move, the member requested to have the posting changed from Prohibited to Restricted to retroactively claim his moving expenses.

Months had gone by and the member was still waiting for a response on his request for a change of posting status. The member contacted our office and an investigator conducted a review of the file.

After various conversations with different directorates, it was concluded that, since the member had reached the Occupational Functional Point for another trade while in the Reserve Force, the member should not have been treated like a new and untrained recruit.

The posting status was changed to Restricted and the claim for reimbursement of moving expenses was processed.

Due to the intervention of our investigator, the Director Military Careers Support Services (DMCSS) acknowledged the need to review this policy, and will work closely with the Director Compensation Benefits Administration (DCBA) in order to do so.

During a release audit, a Regular

Force member was notified of a discrepancy in a leave cash out from 20 years ago and that the member's severance pay would be deducted that amount.

The member thought it was unfair to reduce severance pay for a clerical error made so many years ago, and therefore contacted our office.

The file was assigned to an ombudsman investigator. It was found that the time limit set out in the *Crown Liability and Proceedings Act* for recovery is six years after the cause of action.

Thanks to the intervention of our office, the member was quickly reimbursed and the severance pay remained intact.

A former member of the Reserve

Force communicated with our office after having tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to solve an issue on their own.

Nine months after a medical release, the former member was under a financial burden, still waiting to receive a pension. The former member could also not apply for the Public Service Health Care Plan.

Our office brought the file to the attention of the Canadian Armed Forces Pension Centre where the file was expedited for review. It turned out that a data entry error made it impossible for a pension to be issued.

Steps were taken to swiftly correct the error, pay the pension to the member and process the deductions for the Public Service Health Care Plan.

The former member was happy with the outcome





A Regular Force non-commissioned member contacted our office when the member was going to be transferred to a new unit and was encountering difficulty in obtaining funding for necessary ergonomic equipment.

The member's previous chain of command held off on purchasing the ergonomic equipment due to a lack of funds and the impending transfer to the new unit.

In order to help the member, our office engaged with the adjutant at the new unit. As a result, the adjutant sought and received authorization from the Commanding Officer to purchase the ergonomic equipment even though the member had not technically been transferred to this unit yet.

In addition, temporary arrangements were made to assist the member while awaiting the delivery of the equipment. As a result, the member was able to receive the necessary ergonomic equipment required to do the job.

A Reserve Force non-commissioned

member contacted our office regarding difficulties in reinstating Public Service Health Care Plan coverage. The member had worked previous periods of Class “B” reserve service and had not had any problems in obtaining coverage.

With this most recent period of Class “B” reserve service however, coverage was not reinstated. The member completed the application form in May 2017. When the member submitted a claim for reimbursement in July 2017, it was denied on the basis that the member was not enrolled in the Plan. The member made multiple attempts to get updates on the status of the application with no resolution.

An ombudsman complaint analyst was able to contact the acting manager of the Public Service Health Care Plan section within Director Military Pay and Accounts Processing and was informed that the section had been short staffed for a period of several months, resulting in delays in processing applications.

Applications are processed in the order that they are received. The initial submission for this member had been returned due to missing information and it was resubmitted in July 2017. At the time of contact, new staff had arrived in the section and they were processing applications from the month of July.

As soon as the application was processed, the acting manager informed our complaint analyst who was then able to advise the member to proceed with the claim for reimbursement.



Quotes

The individual I worked with was phenomenal. The Ombudsman's office was the most competent, professional and caring department throughout my release process. I cannot thank this department enough.

Once again I would like to thank you for your help and support in this very stressful situation. For the first time during this entire period, dating back to February 2016, I felt like someone was on my side and could do something to help resolve this case. What you do is important. You are literally saving people.

I was very satisfied with the assistance provided by the Ombudsman's Office. The process and assistance given throughout was helpful and professional. I have no doubt that without the assistance of the Ombudsman's Office the matter would have gone to federal court, at great expense and stress to our family.

I would like to thank [the investigator] and her associates for their diligence and tenacity. Were it not for the intervention of the Office of the Ombudsman, the implementation of the final authority decision in my case might not have ever happened.

Your office is doing excellent work. Your staff is competent, industrious and respectful. I am grateful that the Office of the Ombudsman was available to support me and help me achieve equitable treatment. Thank you.



First time involved with the Ombudsman and I was very pleased. They were very prompt in getting my case moving. The Ombudsman [representative] did all he could to help me. He was very informative. It is nice when you talk to someone and they know how the military works. I am very satisfied with how my case was handled. Thank you.

*Thank you again for everything,
especially keeping me in the loop.
Best service I have received in a while.*



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À VOUS AIDER.

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