



National Capital Commission Ombudsman

Annual Report 2020–2021



Canada

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June 7, 2022

Dear Members of the Board,

I am pleased to submit this Annual Report of the NCC Ombudsman for the period December 1, 2020 to March 31, 2022.

I have appreciated the opportunity to serve the Board and the public during this initial period of my mandate.

Thank you for your ongoing support and confidence.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "O. Trombetti".

Oriana Trombetti





MANDATE OF THE NCC OMBUDSMAN

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

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

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

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



What is an Ombudsman?

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

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



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

This annual report covers the period of December 1, 2020 to March 31, 2022 and outlines activities carried out by the Office. This is the first annual report submitted by the fourth Ombudsman to occupy the position. An interim report was filed with the NCC in June, 2021.



The United Nations Resolution on the Role of the Ombudsman

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

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





Contacts With the Office

From December 1, 2020 to March 31, 2022, members of the public communicated with the Office of the Ombudsman on 58 occasions. The issues raised included the following:

- Access to NCC Assets during the Pandemic
- Meech Lake Pilot Project
- Parking Infractions on NCC Property
- Procurement Processes
- Public Use of NCC land

The table below illustrates how the complaints were dealt with.

December, 2020 to March, 2022

Type of issue/inquiry	Number of issues/inquiries
Outside the NCC mandate	8
Standard referral to the NCC	43
Informal dispute resolution	4
Complaint investigated	3
TOTAL	58

Investigation Carried Out During the Period Under Review – Access to Gatineau Park Parkways by Motorized Vehicles

A notice of investigation was sent to NCC officials on August 6, 2021, following the receipt of three complaints concerning the limited access that motorized vehicles had to the Gatineau Park parkways during the 2021 spring and summer season. Some individuals and groups of the public were of the opinion that the access provided by the NCC resulted in favouritism towards cyclists and constituted unfairness and possibly discrimination against one or more citizens or groups of citizens including seniors, persons with disabilities, and families with young children.

The investigation inquired into the factors and reasons which led to the implementation of the 2021 pilot project; the NCC's adherence to internal policies and procedures; and the NCC's appreciation of the legal rights and standards affected by the decision.

A final investigation report with recommendations was delivered to the NCC at the end of November, 2021. In January 2022, the Ombudsman was advised that NCC officials would consider the recommendations in the development of options for the 2022 season.

The Ombudsman continues to follow this issue to ensure that future decisions about access to the Gatineau Park parkways are made with due consideration of relevant factors to ensure the best possible outcomes for all users of the parkways.





OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Development of New Website

During the summer of 2021 NCC officials in the Digital and Creative Services Group undertook a project to modernize the Ombudsman’s website. This had not been done for over ten years. The Ombudsman participated in meetings to discuss content, privacy issues, and relevant technology options and features. The transfer to the new website occurred on October 4, 2021. Visitors to the website should enjoy increased ease and functionality when using it to access information or communicate with the Office of the Ombudsman.

Forum of Canadian Ombudsman

The forum of Canadian Ombudsmen, formed in 2000, provides a (according to their website) “home” for their members who are working in government, the private sector, and in universities and colleges to provide services to their constituents. In 2022, the NCC Ombudsman joined the forum and will participate in future meetings and conferences in order to increase awareness about current issues facing ombudsmen and learn more about new and best practices.

How to contact the NCC Ombudsman confidentially

Email

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