

# Mandate //

The ombudsman, within the limitations of the mandate, provides members of the public with an independent, confidential, neutral, fair and equitable mechanism for resolving complaints relating to the activities of the NCC, when avenues internal to the NCC have been exhausted.



[www.ombudsman.ncc-ccn.ca](http://www.ombudsman.ncc-ccn.ca)

How to contact the NCC Ombudsman confidentially:

Telephone: 613-947-4330 or 1-877-947-4330 (toll-free)  
613-947-4339 (TTY) or 1-877-947-4339 (toll-free TTY)

Email: [info@ombudsman.ncc-ccn.ca](mailto:info@ombudsman.ncc-ccn.ca)

Fax: 613-947-4311

Mail: NCC Ombudsman, 311-40 Elgin Street, Ottawa ON K1P 1C7



The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, appointed an independent panel to

review the mandate of the National Capital Commission (NCC) in 2006. The panel recommended that the NCC establish an ombudsman to be appointed by, and report to, the NCC board of directors. In October 2007, the Board of Directors approved the creation of the office of ombudsman, and the position was filled officially for the first time in September 2008 with the appointment of Laura Bruneau.

Her appointment is part of the cultural transformation that the Board is implementing, with the goal of strengthening trust and collaboration between the NCC and the community.

Working with the Board and the Ombudsman, I look forward to supporting the ongoing provision of ombudsman services to Canadians seeking independent recourse for the resolution of their complaints relating to NCC activities.

Russell Mills  
Chair, National Capital Commission



I was pleased and proud to accept my appointment in September 2008 as the first ombudsman for the National Capital Commission (NCC). Over

the past year, much of my time has been spent researching and assessing industry best practices and standards. Out of that process, I was able to establish a framework that is suitable for this office. I have worked hard to communicate our own practices and standards throughout the organization. I believe this is the essential first step to lend credibility to the NCC's dynamic decision to create the office of ombudsman.

I thank the Board of Directors for the opportunity to work with Canadians who are interested in the National Capital Region and to contribute to a renewed relationship between the NCC and Canadians.

In the year ahead, there is much to do as we consolidate an ombudsman office worthy of the trust and respect of Canadians. I look forward to serving in 2010, and remain committed to providing quality services to those who may call upon me.

Laura Bruneau  
NCC Ombudsman

## The Year in Review: Building

The terms of reference for the NCC ombudsman were developed, circulated and approved by the Board of Directors late in 2008. The terms of reference entrench the ombudsman's role, responsibilities and reporting lines, recognizing the fundamental principles of independence and neutrality. The annual budget for the office is approved by the board of directors and administered by the NCC corporate secretariat.

A service-level agreement with the NCC corporate secretariat was established to procure human resources, facilities, and financial and information technology services. It was agreed that, if necessary, the NCC ombudsman may retain legal counsel. The ombudsman is responsible for internal audit and communication services relating to the ombudsman office. Secure, sealed and private office space was constructed on the third floor of NCC headquarters in February 2009. The physical set-up, while within the organizational space of the NCC, is separate and removed from executive NCC offices.

During her first year in office, the Ombudsman conducted research into complaint management practices and standards, drawing on the extensive experience of other Canadian ombudsman offices. With appropriate modifications to meet the needs of the NCC mandate, an operational framework was established for this office.

Building awareness and understanding required web and print materials, written in plain language and set in an easy-to-follow format. A key message was developed that the Ombudsman is "committed to listening," an integral part of the complaint resolution process. The office officially opened on April 8, 2009. The website ([www.ombudsman.ncc-ccn.ca](http://www.ombudsman.ncc-ccn.ca)), launched at the same time, provides useful details about the mandate and services of the NCC ombudsman. The site explains how to make a complaint and provides an email inbox. This has been the most frequently used method of submitting complaints to date. Media coverage included radio, television, print and blogs in Ontario and Quebec. Information kits were created and circulated to members of the public, elected officials and key Cabinet ministers. A colour brochure is always on display at NCC information centres.

The Ombudsman interacted with peers by serving as Treasurer of the Forum of Canadian Ombudsmen, and as an executive committee member of the Canadian Bar Association's Alternative Dispute Resolution Section.

## Strategic Goals Achieved in Year One

Launch Ombudsman Services // Outreach and Education // Service Access and Excellence // Beginnings of Complaint Processing //

## Ongoing Core Services

### Timely Complaint Processing

It is important to ensure that complaints are addressed in a comprehensive, objective and independent manner. Careful consideration of complaint resolution processes was undertaken in October, November and December 2008, resulting in the adoption of the following complaint processing objectives:

- Timely completion of complaint reviews
- Suitable and timely exchanges between the ombudsman and NCC representatives
- Developing mutual and inclusive relationships to achieve a better understanding and respect among all parties
- Use of technology for workplace efficiency
- Document preservation and management

### Education and Outreach

It was important to develop and promote both citizen and internal NCC awareness and understanding about the role and services of the ombudsman during the inaugural year. Communication strategies that served to clarify the role and mandate, as well as enhance the NCC's connection to the community, in 2009 included the following:

- Extensive media outreach, including public interviews and print coverage in April 2009
- Launch of public website and print brochure in April 2009
- Internal presentations and consultation within the NCC starting in November 2008
- Meetings with interested parties throughout the year

### Complaint Prevention and Reduction

By way of direct contact, the Ombudsman sought to offer problem solving through early intervention that embraces prevention, identification, internal consultation, collaboration and effective resolution of complaints.

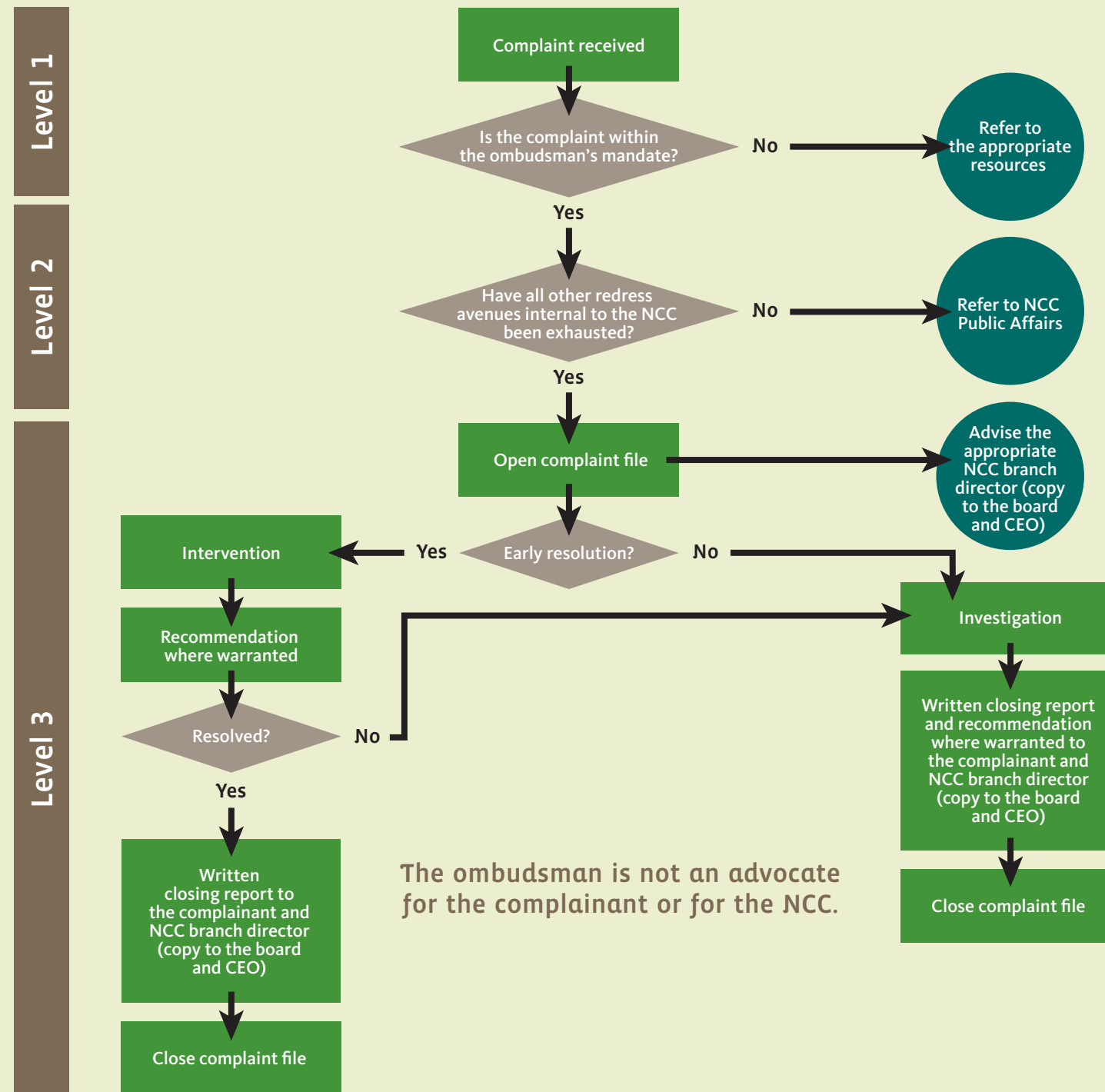
Pursuing this goal on an ongoing basis is intended to assist in the longer term with building healthy, balanced relationships between the NCC and citizens.



## Complaint-Handling Process

The complaint resolution process encourages the NCC to resolve complaints without redress to the ombudsman. Complaints must first be raised with the NCC's Client Contact Centre. Only when the NCC itself has rendered a

decision or responded to a complaint may the complainant choose to appeal to the ombudsman. The ombudsman works informally and independently of the NCC administration to assess the merits of a complaint and resolve disputes.



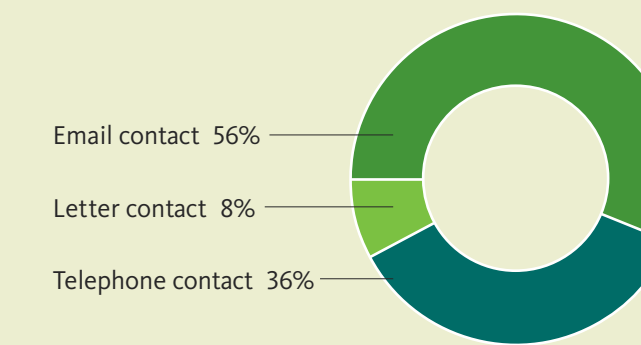
## Numbers at a Glance

In the six months that services were available to the public, there were 25 contacts with the Ombudsman. Some were presented as simple inquiries, but most were contacts that required action, as described below.

Classification	No. of Contacts	Practical Result
None	3	Inquiry. Further contact may or may not occur.
Level 1	7	Referred to external department or entity due to a mistaken belief that NCC was involved.
Level 2	12	Referred to NCC Client Contact Centre after it was found that internal redress avenues were not called upon or not fully exhausted.
Level 3	3 (2 of 3 closed)	Ombudsman file opened for examination or intervention.

The NCC Ombudsman represents a second level of dispute resolution. In responding to contacts to date, the Ombudsman has encouraged complainants and coached them, when appropriate, to resolve their concerns directly with NCC staff members or through the NCC Client Contact Centre.

There is no statistical evidence within the NCC, and only the limited experience described above, on which to base the performance of the Ombudsman Office, to date. Furthermore, it is not practical to include a case study. Volume, subject matter and degrees of complexity remain impossible to report or project at this time.



### Complaint Types

Information inquiries // Snow removal  
 Pavement repair // Construction debris  
 Personal injury // Parking ticket  
 Noise (festival and others)  
 Broken and dead trees  
 Universal access in NCC park // Bike path  
 Moore Farm // NCC website