

2013-2014 ANNUAL REPORT



Ombudsman

National Defence
and Canadian Forces



Défense nationale
et Forces canadiennes

Canada



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May 2014

The Honourable Rob Nicholson, P.C., QC., M.P.
Minister of National Defence
National Defence Headquarters
Major-General George R. Pearkes Building
101 Colonel By Drive
13th Floor, North Tower
Ottawa, Ontario
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Dear Minister,

I am pleased to submit to you the 2013-2014 Annual Report for the Office of the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces. This report provides an overview of our activities and operations from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014.

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 the date of this letter.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Walbourne', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gary Walbourne
Ombudsman
Department of National Defence
and Canadian Forces




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OMBUDSMAN'S MESSAGE

It is a pleasure and honour to be at the helm of this organization – the Government of Canada's oldest Ombudsman's Office. In my former role as Executive Director General of Operations and Deputy Ombudsman at the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, I gained valuable insight into some of the concerns of the Defence community, as well as into the world of ombudsmanship. I recognize how important it is to ensure that Canadian Armed Forces members, their families, civilian employees, and other constituents, are being treated fairly.

Looking back at the progress this Office has made over the past 16 years, I feel very fortunate to be part of an organization that is truly committed to the overall well-being and quality of life of the people it serves. I would like to thank my predecessors for addressing a number of important issues, such as operational stress injuries, the grievance process, and the treatment of military families, Reservists and veterans, to name but a few.

I am committed to keeping up the momentum in terms of bringing the Defence community's issues to the forefront. This Office is in a unique position to inform the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces of concerns that they might not be aware of or of problems before they become systemic in nature. It is therefore critical that we provide evidence-based advice to the Minister and senior officials of the organization, so that they can more effectively address concerns related to the fair treatment of the Defence community. Systemic change – such as revising an out-of-date policy – can help ensure fairness for constituents as well as increase performance for the organization. Fairness and efficiency are not mutually exclusive.

While attention is naturally drawn to reports that my Office releases, the reality is that in many cases, identified or flagged issues and concerns are tackled by the Department and Canadian Armed Forces as soon as they are brought to their attention by my Office. The multi-level consultations enable timely responses to identified issues.

Looking ahead, I will invest considerable time in building relationships with senior officials of the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure that the Office is in a position to engage when we find unfairness in the system, and that the needs of the Defence community are considered throughout the decision-making process. Informing parliamentarians and other stakeholders will also be a priority.

I also wish to pursue a greater relationship with the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman due to the overlap in issues experienced by our constituents, and a need to address their concerns using a collaborative approach. This notion of collaboration is one that I commit to supporting in relationships with all stakeholders.

Ultimately, the operational effectiveness of the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces depends on specific programs that contribute to the morale and well-being of all personnel. This fundamental obligation is fulfilled, in part, through the mandate of the Ombudsman's Office. We are here to support and strengthen the Defence team.

I look forward to building upon the accomplishments of the past 16 years as our Office and the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces work together to improve our organizations and the lives of those we serve.



Mr. Gary Walbourne, MBA, CHRP, 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 Canadian Armed Forces members, departmental employees, and their families.

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.

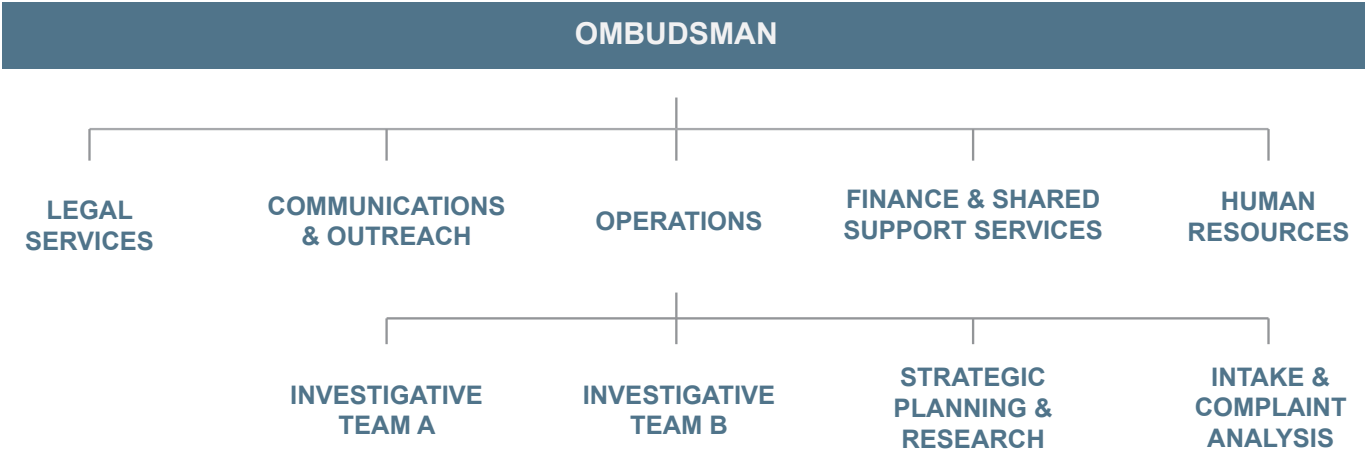
Independent and impartial, we are dedicated to fairness for all.

The Office is also responsible for reviewing and investigating complaints from constituents who believe they have been treated improperly or unfairly by the Department of National Defence or the Canadian Armed Forces.

Ombudsman investigators always attempt to resolve complaints informally and at the lowest level possible. However, complaints can also be the subject of thorough investigations, leading 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.

The Ombudsman is supported by an Office of 58 federal public servants, including investigators, complaint analysts and other specialist staff. Ombudsman investigators include former police officers, former Canadian Armed Forces members of all ranks and occupations, and public servants from across the federal government.



OUR CONSTITUENTS

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 and Reservists);
- 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. The Office will not provide any information related to a case or investigation to anyone without written consent from the constituent.



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2013-2014

Throughout the past fiscal year, the Office capitalized on its recent reorganization of the Operations branch to become a more innovative, nimble and constituent-focused service provider. In particular, the Office:

- Refined the portfolio approach in the Operations branch, stabilized service standards, and implemented a customer feedback questionnaire;
- Initiated the digitization of Operations files;
- Created a tracking mechanism for systemic issues and refined the systemic investigations processes through improvements to training, decision making and reporting; and
- Completed five systemic investigations and published three special reports.

Our Successes Are Your Successes

When a long-serving Reservist decided to retire, an administrative misunderstanding resulted in him being transferred to the Supplementary Reserve List, instead of being released. Members of the Supplementary Reserve List are not considered to be released from the Canadian Armed Forces, which prevents them from drawing a pension. However, they are entitled to collect a pension while they are on the Supplementary Reserve List if one year has passed and they have not received any income from the Canadian Armed Forces during that year. Since the Reservist did not know that he had been transferred to the Supplementary List, he was undoubtedly confused when he did not receive his first pension payment.

The member soon discovered that an error had been made. Unfortunately, despite his numerous attempts to correct this mistake, it took six months for the member to be released. During that time, he was still unable to collect his pension, and was unable to recover those funds upon his ultimate release. It was at this point that he turned to the Ombudsman's Office for assistance.

Following an extensive review by our Office, and excellent cooperation by the member's former Commanding Officer and staff at the Director of Military Careers and Administration, it was made clear that the member had intended to release on his preferred date and not be transferred to the Supplementary Reserve List. Fortunately, the member's pension was restored to his preferred date of release and he received the pension payments owed.

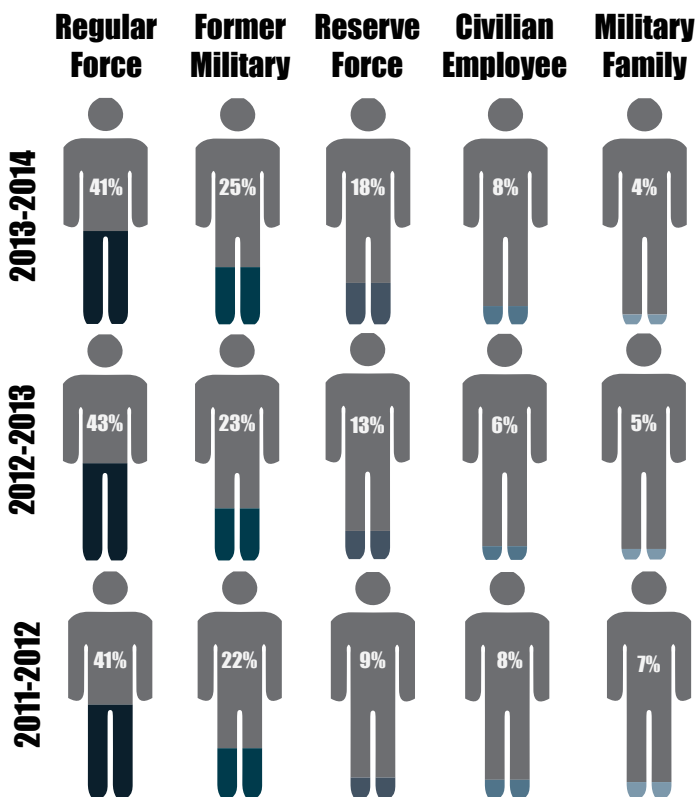


INDIVIDUAL CASES

The Office received 1,507 new cases in fiscal year 2013-2014, compared to 1,539 cases in 2012-2013.

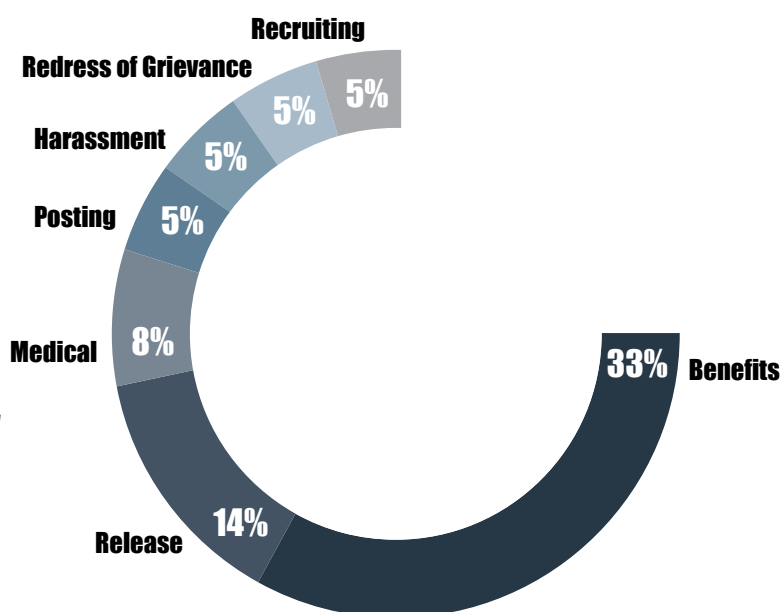
NEW CASES BY TOP FIVE CONSTITUENT GROUPS

As in past years, the majority of new cases came from members of the Canadian Armed Forces.



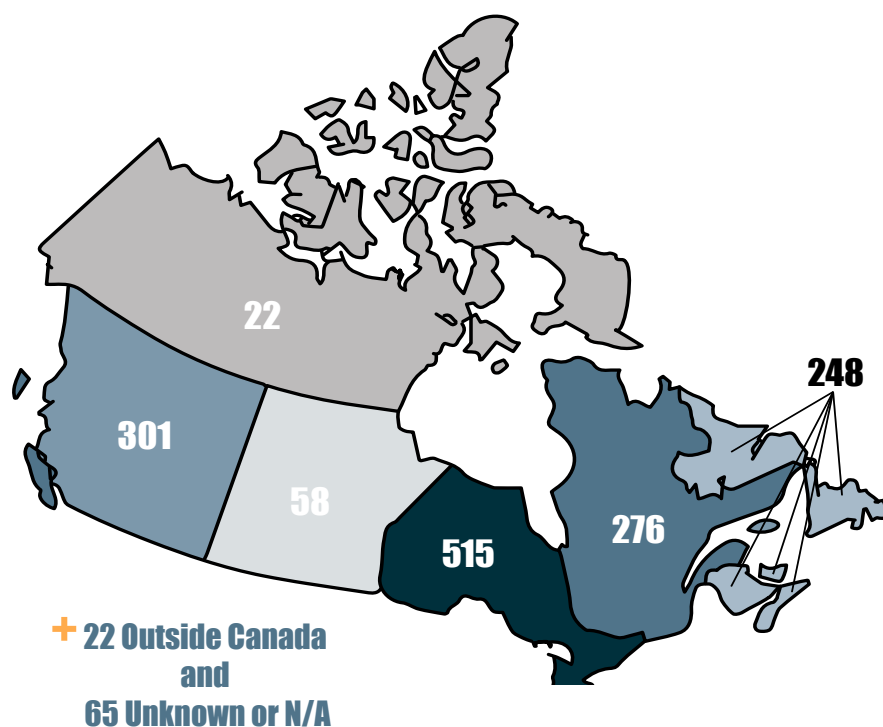
TOP 7 CATEGORIES OF NEW CASES

In total, the Office handled 1,811 cases and closed 1,617 (this includes new cases, cases re-opened and cases carried over from previous fiscal years).



The Ombudsman's Office also assisted members of the Defence community with questions and concerns related to such subjects as promotions, grievances, leave/vacation, access to information, training and disciplinary action.

NEW CASES BY REGION



This year, the largest number of complaints originated in the following regions:

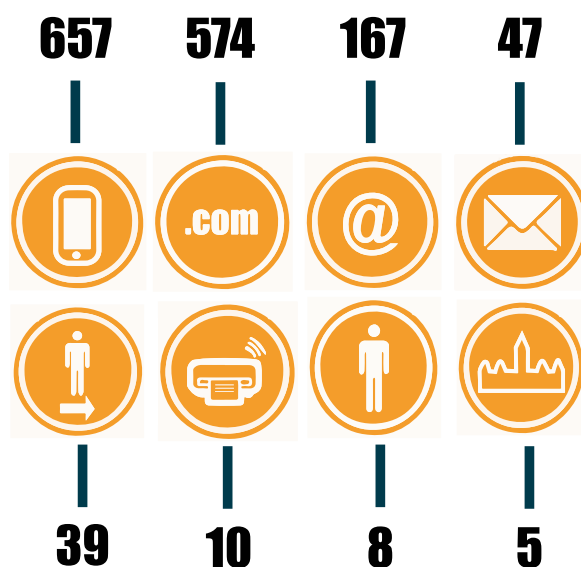
1. Ontario
2. Western
3. Quebec

COMMUNICATING WITH THE OFFICE

Most used means of communication:

1-888-828-3626
and
www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca

followed by e-mail, mail, outreach, fax,
in-person and through an MP





Our Successes Are Your Successes

A military spouse and her husband contacted our Office because of a two-year delay in processing their request for a one-year extension to their Intended Place of Residence (IPR). The couple proceeded with their last move from Alberta to Ontario, with the hopes that their expenses would be reimbursed at a later date. While they waited for a response, the moving expenses of \$20,000 were placing significant strain on their finances.

An investigator with the Office contacted the Director of Compensation and Benefits Administration (DCBA) seeking an update on the status of the member's IPR request. DCBA advised that they were aware of this request, but were unable to process it because they had not received all of the required information. At the urging of the Ombudsman investigator, DCBA agreed to treat the request as a priority and aggressively pursued the missing information.

Thanks in part to the intervention of the Ombudsman's Office, and given that the member completed the relocation within the three-year policy time limit, DCBA exercised Ministerial authority and approved the reimbursement of the family's eligible relocation costs shortly thereafter.

SPECIAL REPORTS

ON THE HOMEFRONT: ASSESSING THE WELL-BEING OF CANADA'S MILITARY FAMILIES IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

In November 2013, the Office released the findings of its evaluation of the well-being of Canada's military families.

Following an extensive investigation, the Office found that three characteristics, taken together, have a direct and unique impact on the life of military families. These characteristics are mobility, separation and risk.

The requirement for military families to pick up and move on a recurring basis, with little to no input on when, where and for how long, has a highly disruptive influence on family life. The report noted that many commanders and service providers indicated that the frequency of moves – three times more often than civilian families – is the single most unsettling feature of the Canadian Armed Forces lifestyle.

Operational deployments, during which families spend almost no time together, compound the issue. Relationships within the family unit suffer and the consequences for children are particularly troubling. The report noted the negative effect that the deployment of one or both parents can have on the health, behaviour and academic performance of Canadian Armed Forces children. Ombudsman investigators concluded that although military families are proud of their contribution to the Canadian Armed Forces mission, they are understandably concerned about the long-term consequences for their children.

The Ombudsman's report also documented difficulties that military families experience in accessing and maintaining health care. Canadian Armed Forces families are wholly dependent on provincial health care systems, like any other Canadian. The difference, however, is that as a result of frequent relocations, military families often bounce from one provincial waiting list to the next, rarely making it to the top. Canadian Armed Forces families are four times less likely to have a family physician compared to civilian families. Extended periods without preventative and regular health care were identified as a significant preoccupation for many military families. It should be noted, however, that the Department has worked extensively with the provinces and territories to get the normal 90 waiting period for health care coverage waived for family members.

Feedback on our Military Families Report

There's a vast array of recommendations and opportunities presented to us from [the Ombudsman's] report. Which is really a road map for the way ahead, and I would have to say that we'll be working on these for years to come. We will address the ones we can hit quickly as quickly as we can and a number of initiatives will come out in the months ahead. Others are going to take longer such as influencing provinces and engaging in dialogues with ministries of labour, education and health. [...] But where we have control, we will move quickly, and we are committed to serving families better.

~ Colonel Russ Mann, Director of Military Family Services

Frequent relocations also make it difficult, if not impossible, for the spouses of Canadian Armed Forces members to find and sustain reasonable, gainful and continuous employment. Many spouses experience periods of unemployment or underemployment; most reported frustration at having to make most, if not all, of the professional compromises. The spousal employment challenge was repeatedly identified as a major consideration for serving members leaving the Canadian Armed Forces.

*On the Homefront*¹ identified 12 findings and made 18 recommendations on how the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces can address the identified concerns.

¹ <http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-reports-stats-investigations-military-families/military-families-index.page?>

AN EXAMINATION OF CANADIAN FORCES BASE COLD LAKE (4 WING)

In May 2012, during an outreach visit to Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Cold Lake in Alberta, the Ombudsman and his staff received a number of complaints related to the overall quality of life for Canadian Armed Forces members and their families posted to the area. The complaints prompted the Ombudsman to launch a comprehensive investigation in the fall of 2012. Released in July 2013, *An Examination of Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake (4 Wing)*² detailed a number of issues.

In recent years, the cost of living in Cold Lake has increased significantly – driven largely by growth in the region's oil and gas industry – and rising costs have had a ripple effect on the Cold Lake Defence community. The resulting challenge in making ends meet was found to be attributable, at least in part, to the Post Living Differential (PLD), a taxable allowance designed to provide a mechanism to stabilize regional differences in the cost of living for Canadian Armed Forces members and their families while serving in Canada. PLD was first applied to Cold Lake in 2007, but, while the cost of living in the area has increased significantly over the past four years, rates have been frozen since 2009. Canadian Armed Forces members reported that the Cold Lake PLD rate of \$319 per month – roughly half of the rate received by Edmonton-based personnel (\$684) – was insufficient to offset the increased cost of living. As a result, an increasingly large number of CFB Cold Lake personnel have had to take on second jobs in order to make ends meet.

Members and their families also cited lack of safe and affordable housing as an area of concern. The City of Cold Lake and surrounding region has a housing rental availability rate of just one percent. As a result, a high percentage of Canadian Armed Forces members live in military housing, most of which is over 60 years old. Ombudsman staff found that warnings about ungrounded plugs, pipes that freeze in the winter, and warnings about the possible presence of asbestos posed a significant concern for Canadian Armed Forces members and their families.

The report made nine recommendations, including a call to immediately re-establish a Post Living Differential allowance that reflects the Cold Lake economic environment.

Feedback on our Cold Lake Report

Good morning and greetings from Cold Lake. Just wanted to drop you a line and ask that you pass on to the Ombudsman how well received his report [with regard to] quality of life issues here at 4 Wing was. I know you guys see the problems and report but are not always aware of the amazing impact your work has. [...] I realize that we will have to wait and see if any tangible differences come from it. Having said that I just wanted you to know that win, lose or draw both the civilian and military people here truly appreciate the effort that was made on their behalf and your outreach program scored a big hit here.

~ Civilian employee from Cold Lake

² <http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-reports-stats-investigations-cold-lake/cold-lake-index.page?>



Feedback on our Military Families Report

[A] key partner of course is our ombudsman who ensures our programs to support our families remain evergreen, that they adjust to the changes in society and the needs of our families, and that they address the gaps that arise as we continuously improve.

*~ Major-General David Millar,
Chief of Military Personnel*

A REPORT OUTLINING THE DELAYS IN THE PROCESSING OF ADJUDICATIONS AND INITIAL AUTHORITY GRIEVANCES BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Since 2010, the Office of the Ombudsman has received a number of complaints from concerned Canadian Armed Forces members who have experienced lengthy delays related to the settlement of financial claims for postings.

In June 2011, the Ombudsman's Office raised concerns about these delays directly with the Chief of Military Personnel and recommended that an action plan be put in place to improve the timeliness in processing claims and grievances. However, despite measures made to address them, the delays with adjudication requests and grievances persisted. The substantial delays – and their impact on the financial health of Canadian Armed Forces members and their families – prompted the Ombudsman to launch a full investigation.

The investigation 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. Ombudsman staff 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.

The resulting report, *A Report Outlining the Delays in the Processing of Adjudications and Initial Authority Grievances by the Director General Compensation & Benefits*,³ contained 11 recommendations aimed at improving the timeliness in processing claims and grievances.

In May 2013, then Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Peter MacKay, indicated that both he and the Canadian Armed Forces supported the majority of the recommendations contained in the report.

³ <http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-reports-stats-investigations-dgcb/index-dgcb.page?>

ONGOING ISSUES

JOINT PERSONNEL SUPPORT UNITS

Following concerns raised by constituents regarding support to ill and injured Canadian Armed Forces members posted to Joint Personnel Support Units (JPSUs),⁴ the Office undertook an assessment to determine:

- **Staffing capacity:** Whether staff in the Integrated Personnel Support Centre's (IPSC) client services and JPSU platoon structure is adequate for the numbers of ill or injured members seeking services.
- **Training/staff skill and knowledge:** Whether JPSU/IPSC staff possesses the skills and knowledge, and has access to the training, required to effectively support and administer to the unique needs of JPSU/IPSC members and clients.
- **Other:** Whether there are other current or emerging trends/concerns that affect the effective operation of the JPSU as well as miscellaneous circumstances that may impact negatively on clients.

The assessment identified issues with staffing levels, training, skills and knowledge, as well as the overall governance of the program. To that end, the Department has taken action to remove barriers to the hiring of Reservists and public servants in order to fully staff the JPSU. In addition, new training is planned for JPSU staff. The Chief of Review Services will launch a full review of Military Personnel Management. JPSU governance will be covered by the review.

The Office will continue to closely monitor and evaluate the efforts underway to address the concerns raised in the assessment.

RESERVE FORCE PENSION PLAN

The Office continues to receive individual complaints regarding delays in processing of the Reserve Force Pension Plan⁵ (the Plan). Since the Plan came into effect in 2007, the Office has received over 350 complaints.

Feedback on our report on Delays in the Processing of Adjudications and Grievances

The findings of your report were discussed at length with your staff and the Director General Compensation and Benefits staff, and as a result your vision and a number of recommendations are fully supported by me and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). [...] I agree with your observations that the processing time must absolutely be improved. In order to achieve this, the Chief of the Defence Staff is increasing its staff to ensure that the number of adjudication cases is reduced and processing times are improved.

~ The Honourable Peter MacKay, former Minister of National Defence

⁴ <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-support-services-casualty-support/contact-info.page>

⁵ <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2007-32/>



In 2009, the Office launched a preliminary investigation to assess the cause of delays in the processing of Reserve Force pension benefits, severance pay and gratuities. However, in June 2010, the Auditor General formally notified the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces of its intention to conduct a performance audit of the Plan. As such, the Ombudsman decided to review the Auditor General's report before finalizing the Office's position on the matter.

The Auditor General's report⁶ was released in the spring of 2011. At that time, the Department of National Defence agreed with the Auditor General's recommendations, acknowledged the observations and the areas for improvement, and indicated it would "proceed aggressively" while continuing to focus resources on the processing of file backlogs. Additionally, the Department confirmed it would "continue to focus efforts to develop and enhance the performance management framework for pension services," and would create "measurable and meaningful service standards."

Since that time, the Office has conducted a number of follow-up activities to determine the extent to which improvements have been made to the system to reduce wait times. Unfortunately, despite efforts to raise and discuss these concerns with the Department, the backlog of files and chronic, excessive delays in processing persist. The most recent information obtained still indicates that the target to clear the backlog of files is December 2017.

A letter was sent to the Chief of the Defence Staff in December 2013 to highlight the Ombudsman's continued concerns.

INTEGRATED RELOCATION PROGRAM

Over the years, the Office has identified serious concerns with the Canadian Armed Forces' Integrated Relocation Program (IRP).⁷ Specifically, the Office has received a significant number of complaints related to the Home Equity Assistance (HEA) benefit and door-to-door moves, both of which fall under IRP.

The HEA benefit provides financial assistance to Canadian

⁶ http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag-_201104_03_e_35222.html

⁷ <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-policies-standards-benefits-relocation/toc-by+year.page>

Armed Forces members when selling their principal residence. Members who incur a loss when having to sell their home are entitled to reimbursement up to 80 percent of the difference between the original purchase price and the sale price, up to a maximum of \$15,000. A loss in excess of \$15,000 may be reimbursed in places designated as “depressed market” areas as defined by the Treasury Board Secretariat – the authority on the government’s relocation policy. The major criterion for a “depressed market” is real estate values in a specific market must have dropped by 20 percent or more during the concerned timeframe.

There are major weaknesses in the HEA provisions, which have resulted in a number of Canadian Armed Forces members incurring significant financial hardship. The IRP policy itself is vague, and the criterion too onerous. Between 2008 and 2013, 199 Canadian Armed Forces members have suffered losses greater than \$15,000 and, in some cases, up to \$100,000. In comparison, since 2008 only two members have been approved for 100 percent reimbursement of their equity loss, representing an overall denial rate of 99 percent.

In addition to issues associated with the HEA benefit, the Office continues to receive complaints about the requirements of the IRP and door-to-door moves. The complaints speak to the difficulties in obtaining interim lodging, meals and miscellaneous expenses in excess of the allowable five days during a move when the household goods and effects are ready to be delivered, but the new residence is not available. When members need more than five days, they must demonstrate that “every reasonable effort” was made to conduct a door-to-door move.

In a 2011 grievance decision, the former Chief of the Defence Staff directed a review of the door-to-door policy to determine whether it could be modified to increase its flexibility in order to respond to the needs of Canadian Armed Forces members and their families. The Office also brought this issue to the attention of the former Chief of Military Personnel in June 2011, and the current Chief of the Defence Staff in 2012. In 2013, the Chief of the Defence Staff advised that his officials had met with the Treasury Board Secretariat to discuss improvements to door-to-door moves, particularly for short distance relocation, with the intent of creating greater flexibility.

In 2013, the Ombudsman recommended that the Canadian Armed Forces pursue vigorously the approval of a revised IRP – and the HEA benefit by extension – with the Treasury Board Secretariat in order to ensure that it is in place before



the 2014 annual posting season. Unfortunately, the most recent information now estimates an updated version of the policy will not be available before 2015.

The Office remains concerned about the financial difficulties military members and their families are facing as a result of relocation.

BROADER INVESTIGATIONS

BOARD OF INQUIRY PROCESS

Throughout 2010, the Ombudsman raised concerns with the Minister of National Defence about the treatment of military families after the death of a Canadian Armed Forces member. Specifically, his comments pertained to the Board of Inquiry (BOI) process and the ability of families to access and receive information about their loved ones arising from the BOI in a timely fashion. At the time, the Ombudsman recognized that the Canadian Armed Forces had made progress in implementing the recommendations from the Office's 2005 special report, *When a Soldier Falls*.⁸ At the same time, he noted significant problems remained and more needed to be done to ensure that military families are treated fairly and compassionately after the death of a Canadian Armed Forces member. The Minister informed the Ombudsman in December 2010 that the Canadian Armed Forces would be implementing 13 initiatives to "improve our processes, which are focused towards administrative excellence but which at times lack the compassion needed by families during these troubling times."

Because the Ombudsman's Office has several active files involving the same issues cited by the Minister in his letter, the Office launched a review to document the evolution of the Board of Inquiry process with respect to serious injury, sudden death or suicide from December 2010 onward. It will specifically benchmark the 13 initiatives noted in the Minister's letter to assess their implementation and, if possible, their impact on members and families. The report will be released this year.

OPERATIONAL STRESS INJURIES AND THE RESERVE FORCE

The Ombudsman conducted two investigations on Canadian Armed Forces health care and published a report on each in 2012. The first was *Fortitude Under Fatigue: Assessing the Delivery of Care for Operational Stress Injuries that Canadian Forces Members Need and Deserve*.⁹ It was a review of the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to respond to the challenge of mental health service provision to Regular Force members. The second report was *Reserved Care: A Follow Up into the Treatment of Injured Reservists*.¹⁰

This report re-examined the Office's 2008 recommendations regarding the provision of health care to members of the Reserve Force serving in Canada. The original report addressed the inconsistency in standards of the provision of care, as well as shortcomings in some benefits for injured Reservists. The report, however, did not speak to the mental health aspect of health care.

As a result of concerns and issues raised while conducting the two investigations, the Office launched a companion study to take a snapshot of how Reserve Force members are supported by the Canadian Armed Forces' mental health care and social support system when they are experiencing mental health issues related to operations. The findings of this study will be made public this year.

8 <http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-reports-stats-investigations-when-a-soldier-falls/index.page?>

9 <http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-reports-stats-investigations-fortitude/index.page?>

10 <http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-reports-stats-investigations-reserved-care-follow-up/index.page?>



OUTREACH

As part of the Office's ongoing outreach initiative aimed at enhancing the overall awareness and understanding of the Ombudsman's role and mandate within the Defence community, the Ombudsman and his staff: visited a number of military installations across the country; engaged constituents at military and departmental events; and reached out broadly to military and civilian leaders, stakeholders and like-minded organizations. These outreach visits have also provided the Ombudsman and his staff with a better understanding of the issues and challenges facing members of the Defence community.

VISITS TO MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

The Ombudsman's Office is committed to connecting directly with constituents where they live and work. In this vein, the Ombudsman and his staff travel regularly to Canadian Armed Forces bases and wings where they meet with senior leaders, non-commissioned members of all ranks and occupations, family members, health care providers, chaplains, social workers and civilian employees. These sessions are meant to provide information on the Office's services, to discuss issues of importance and to receive and document complaints.

In 2013-2014, the Ombudsman and Ombudsman staff travelled to a number of Canadian Armed Forces bases:

- Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, from June 3 to 7, 2013;
- Wainwright, Alberta, from November 27 to 29, 2013; and
- Borden, Ontario, from February 24 to 28, 2014.

Operations staff also visited Cold Lake, Alberta; Montreal, Quebec; Petawawa, Ontario; and Borden, Ontario, in the context of investigations and reviews.

The Ombudsman and his staff also presented at a number of leadership courses throughout the year. Staff made presentations to Canadian Armed Forces personnel in St-Jean, Quebec; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Kingston, Ontario; and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Feedback on our report on Delays in the Processing of Adjudications and Grievances

Thank you. People have no idea what these types of situations can do to soldiers and their families. After years of dealing with [Director of Compensation and Benefits Administration], getting nowhere and giving up, your report is the first light at the end of the tunnel for many military members. [...] Keep up the good work, it is the only way things will change.

~ Canadian Armed Forces Member

INTERACTING WITH CONSTITUENTS AT DEPARTMENTAL EVENTS

Over the course of 2013-2014, the Ombudsman's Office participated in several outreach events in the National Capital Region, meeting with constituents and increasing the organization's visibility. Office staff took part in the following functions:

- Information campaign for Montreal Reserve units on March 18 and 25, 2014;
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21, 2014;
- International Women's Day on March 6, 2014;
- Black History Month on February 12 and 25, 2014;
- International Day for Persons with Disabilities on December 4, 2013;
- Orientation for new civilian employees on October 16 and 22 and November 22, 2013;
- Canadian Defence Community Family Appreciation Days on June 1 and 2, 2013;
- Aboriginal Awareness Week on May 24, 2013; and
- Employee Assistance Program Week on May 7, 2013.

FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEADERS, STAKEHOLDERS AND OTHER OMBUDSMAN ORGANIZATIONS

In order to foster and maintain constructive working relationships, the Ombudsman often meets with military and civilian leadership to discuss issues of importance and concerns brought forward by constituents. Over the course of the year, the Ombudsman and other Office staff attended a number of meetings with key Defence officials, including the Minister of National Defence, the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chief of Military Personnel and a number of other senior leaders within the organization.

In addition to these meetings, the Ombudsman was invited to appear before the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence to discuss services and benefits provided to current and former members of the Canadian Armed Forces. The Ombudsman also testified at the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs to contribute to their examination of *Bill C-15: An Act to Amend the National Defence Act*.

The Office was also invited to participate in the 4th Annual Military and Veteran Health Research Forum 2013. This year's forum hosted hundreds of participants, including international delegates, military personnel, keynote speakers, veterans, industry stakeholders and over 25 universities from across the country. The Director General of Operations presented on the Office's systemic investigation on military families.

INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

The Office participates in international events that help advance issues of fairness and human rights for armed forces personnel – an area in which Canada is recognized as a world leader. In particular, the Ombudsman participated as an expert speaker at the 5th International Conference of Ombudsman Institutions for the Armed Forces, as well as at an event organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.



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

CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

Aligned with the Department's priorities for 2013-2017 in terms of strengthening the Defence team and ensuring Defence affordability, the Ombudsman will continue to deliver quality services to the Defence community and value for money to Canadian taxpayers by focusing on four key areas in 2014-2015.

Enhance Awareness of the Ombudsman's Role and Mandate within the Defence Community

In order to discharge its responsibilities completely and effectively, the Office must ensure that all members of the Defence community are aware of and understand its mandate and role within the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces. But awareness is only one part of being able to help the Defence community – constituents also need to have easy access to the Office. By regularly reaching out to constituents where they live and work, the Office can actively listen to them and ensure that Ombudsman services are meeting their needs.

With this in mind, the Office will continue to enhance awareness of the Ombudsman's role and mandate by maximizing outreach opportunities with key internal and external stakeholders, including conducting outreach visits to bases and wings across Canada. In addition, the Office will focus on increasing its online presence through enhancements to its website and regular participation in social media.

Assist and Educate the Defence Community

The Office will build upon the progress made in 2013-2014 with respect to improving its ability to be a direct source of information, referral and education, as well as improving the provision of impartial, evidence-based investigations. In particular, the Office will:

- Continue to focus on early resolution of complaints at the lowest level (effective and timely investigations of individual cases will continue to be a priority);
- Review and refine service standards in order to improve the quality of contacts with the Office, including ensuring timely and accurate assessments of cases; and
- Create a culture of continuous learning by focusing on professional development, such as training, mentoring and job shadowing.

This priority will be further supported through the creation of multi-year training and developmental programs to ensure that the current staff has the necessary skill-sets moving forward. In doing so, the Office will help to ensure a robust and sustainable pool of candidates for the organization through better succession planning.

Effectively Address Systemic Issues

In 2014-2015, the Office will maintain the capacity to quickly identify and address systemic issues affecting the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces and the ability to quickly launch systemic investigations or case studies without affecting daily operations.

Moreover, in the upcoming year the Office will: conduct up to four systemic investigations (two planned and two unforecasted), including its systemic investigation on Reserve Force compensation issues that was launched in 2013; and develop standard operating procedures for systemic investigations.

Demonstrate Value for Money

The final key priority activity for the Office in 2014-2015 is to seek innovation and business improvements, and optimize the use of resources. Such initiatives will include:

- developing standard operating procedures, completing the digitization of Operations records, and finalizing a performance measurement framework; and
- implementing a Recordkeeping Protocol with the Assistant Deputy Minister (Information Management). The Office received its own Records Disposition Authority (signed by the Librarian and Archivist Canada) and joined the Defence Recordkeeping Implementation. The protocol with the Assistant Deputy Minister (Information Management) will help achieve the compliancy required by Treasury Board Secretariat to consistently manage records throughout their life-cycle.





THE OMBUDSMAN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Ombudsman's Advisory Committee consists of volunteers with specialized expertise in military matters and/or comprehensive knowledge of the ombudsman profession. The committee provides the Ombudsman with advice related to the mandate, professional principles and structure of the Office.

Fiscal year 2012-2013 saw a number of departures from the committee; therefore, in 2013-2014 the Ombudsman submitted a list of potential candidates to the Minister of National Defence for approval, as required under the Ombudsman's mandate. In February 2014, the Ombudsman welcomed the following new members: Mr. Yannick Beauvalet, Lieutenant-Commander Deborah-Lynn Gates, Ms. Sharon Gosling, Captain (Navy) (Ret'd) Kimberly Kubeck, and Chief Warrant Officer Mike Scarcella.

At the end of March 2014, the Ombudsman's Advisory Committee consisted of the following individuals:

Mr. Yannick Beauvalet graduated with a BA in Communications from the University of Ottawa in 1997. He joined the public service in 2002 and the Department of National Defence in 2003 where he served in a wide variety of roles, including acting Director of Communications for the Minister of National Defence and acting Director of Public Affairs Production in Multimedia.

Colonel John Conrad is a published author, lecturer and a Reserve Commanding Officer with more than 30 years of experience in the Canadian Armed Forces. In 2006, he served as Commanding Officer of the Canadian Logistics Battalion, the unit responsible for sustaining the Canadian Task Force in Southern Afghanistan.

Lieutenant-Colonel Leslie Dawson is the Director of Chaplain Services in Ottawa. Since joining the Canadian Armed Forces in 1989, she has served in numerous chaplain positions, including: Chapel Life Coordinator, Unit Chaplain, Base Chaplain, Brigade Chaplain and Formation Chaplain.

Lieutenant-Commander Deborah-Lynn Gates grew up on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia and has served in the Canadian Armed Forces – both Reserve and Regular Force – since the late 1980s. She currently has the dual responsibilities of Commanding Officer of Canadian Fleet Atlantic Headquarters and Logistics Officer for the Fifth Maritime Operations Group.

Ms. 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 at the Integrated Personnel Support Centres in Cold Lake, Alberta and Comox, British Columbia.

Ms. Gaynor Jackson is the Executive Director of the Esquimalt Military Family Resource Centre. She has worked in a variety of roles within the organization over the past 24 years, including: as a front-line social worker, community developer, educator, fundraiser and administrator.

Captain (Navy) (Ret'd) 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 11 September 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, Capt(N) Kubeck retired in January 2013.

Mr. Howard Sapers was appointed as Correctional Investigator of Canada in 2004. He has a strong background in corrections, rehabilitation of offenders and crime-prevention gained through employment and community service. He has also authored several publications and a number of articles regarding the role and principles of ombudsmanry. Mr. Sapers serves as the committee chair.

Chief Warrant Officer Mike Scarcella is currently the 17 Wing Chief Warrant Officer. Following his enrolment in the Canadian Armed Forces as a Weapons Technician Air in 1981, CWO Scarcella served at bases both in Canada and around the world, including a posting to Baden, Germany in 1987. Following his promotion to Chief Warrant Officer in December 2006, CWO Scarcella completed a six-month deployment as the Theatre Support Element Chief Warrant Officer at Camp Mirage.

LIZ HOFFMAN MEMORIAL COMMENDATION FOR COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

The *Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation for Complaint Resolution* is awarded annually to recognize Canadian Armed Forces members, civilian employees and family members who have gone the extra mile and exceeded expectations in helping their colleagues resolve a difficult problem or 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 October 17, 2013, the Ombudsman honoured three members of Canada's Defence community with commendations. The Senior Associate Deputy Minister, Mr. Michael Martin, the Chief of Military Personnel, Major-General David Millar, and a number of parliamentarians were present to recognize these outstanding members of the Defence community.



(L-R): Senior Associate Deputy Minister of National Defence, Mr. Michael Martin, Member of Parliament for Mississauga East-Cooksville, Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon, Major Kerry St. George, Ombudsman Pierre Daigle, Commander Elizabeth Syvertsen-Bitten, Ms. Marianne Ostopovich Freeman and Chief of Military Personnel, Major-General David Millar
(Photo credit: CFSUO)

RECIPIENTS OF THE 2013 LIZ HOFFMAN MEMORIAL COMMENDATION FOR COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

MAJOR KERRY ST. GEORGE

Throughout his career, Major St. George's primary focus, and personal challenge, has been to ensure that every Canadian Armed Forces member is treated fairly. Whether in his capacity as the Administrative Officer for ADM(PA) or his role in the overall coordination of the repatriation of soldiers killed in Afghanistan, he has worked to ensure that people are treated with compassion under even the most difficult of circumstances. Never one to turn a blind eye, when he discovered that some family members were being denied travel expenses to attend repatriation ceremonies at CFB Trenton, Major St. George engaged his chain of command, and ultimately the Chief of the Land Staff, in order to correct what he believed to be a systemic injustice for the families of fallen soldiers. Major St. George consistently goes above and beyond the requirements of his job and is an asset to Canada's Defence community.

MS. MARIANNE OSTOPOVICH FREEMAN

Ms. Ostopovich Freeman has devoted herself to supporting individuals dealing with challenging situations. A social worker with the Esquimalt Military Family Resource Centre for the past 17 years, Ms. Ostopovich Freeman has spent her career helping Canadian Armed Forces members and their families resolve conflict. As one of the founding members of the local Family Violence Crisis Team she has confronted the difficult issue of family violence head-on and developed prevention and education materials used by members of the Team and other teams across the country. Her commitment to the Team, and to continued awareness of family violence at CFB Esquimalt, is but one example of the hard work, dedication and compassion that has made her an invaluable asset to her community. She continues to play a key role in seeking creative and innovative ways to deal with complex issues and does so with an unfailing energy and a positive attitude.

COMMANDER ELIZABETH SYVERTSEN-BITTEN

Commander Syvertsen-Bitten consistently goes out of her way to help members of her ship's company. When one of her officers, a Reservist, was denied access to treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, Commander Syvertsen-Bitten lobbied on his behalf to ensure he received the care he desperately needed. Recognizing that there was a lack of accessible and coordinated care, Commander Syvertsen-Bitten remained engaged and followed the officer's case until he was safe and posted to the Joint Personnel Support Unit. Rather than walk away from the challenge of ensuring health care for Reservists, Commander Syvertsen-Bitten worked with care providers to ensure the officer and other Class A sailors had access to periodical medicals and other essential services. Her ability to solve problems logically and to propose innovative solutions ensures the fair treatment of all Canadian Armed Forces members under her command.

APPENDIX I - DISPOSITION OF CASES

Total Cases Handled*	1,811
Cases Closed	1,617
Cases in Progress (as of March 31, 2013)	191
Cases Closed at Intake	1,297
Information or Assistance Provided	993
Outside Mandate	96
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	91
Contact Provided Information	57
Withdrawn	36
Abandoned	21
Informal Resolution	2
N/A	1
Cases Closed at Complaint Resolution	173
Informal Resolution	86
Information or Assistance Provided	62
Withdrawn	9
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	6
Investigated: No Follow Up Required	5
Abandoned	3
Investigated: Follow Up Required	2
Cases Closed at Investigation	147
Investigated: No Follow Up Required	41
Information or Assistance Provided	29
Unfounded	21
Informal Resolution	18
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	16
Investigated: Follow Up Required	12
Abandoned	5
Withdrawn	4
Outside Mandate	1

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

APPENDIX II - FINANCIAL REPORT

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES

In 2013-2014, the Minister of National Defence approved a budget of \$5.75 million for the Office of the Ombudsman. Actual expenditures totalled \$5.28 million, of which \$4.71 million was related to salaries.

	(\$)
Mail and courier services	4,199
Supplies/furniture	18,599
Training and professional dues	100,635
Acquisition/rental of office equipment	8,046
Network maintenance and support	28,538
Telecommunications & IT connections	46,986
Travel and transportation	82,269
Communications & public outreach	32,925
Professional & special services	245,474
Salaries	4,712,664
Total	5,280,334