

Ombudsman

National Defence
and Canadian Forces



Défense nationale
et Forces canadiennes



2015 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

CONTACT US

ONLINE: www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca

**SECURE ONLINE
COMPLAINT FORM:** www3.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/ocf_e.php

TELEPHONE: 1-888-828-3626

FAX: 1-877-471-4447

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

E-MAIL: E-mail: ombudsman-communications@forces.gc.ca
(non-confidential information only)

TWITTER: @DND_CF_Ombudsman

June 23, 2016

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 2015-2016 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, 2015 to March 31, 2016.

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.

Yours truly,

Gary Walbourne
Ombudsman
Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces

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OMBUDSMAN'S MESSAGE

The past year has been a busy and productive one for the Office. Caseloads, for instance, have increased by approximately 25 percent compared to the previous year. Why?

It's hard to pinpoint the exact reasons but we have made a concerted effort to raise the awareness of the Defence community with respect to the services we offer. Additionally, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have republished a number of education pieces that we have produced for our website. These pieces are meant to help our constituents navigate their way through programs and processes which can sometimes prove challenging.

We also increased our stakeholder engagement across the country with Regular Force members, Reservists, Canadian Rangers, National Defence civilians and family members. I have personally spoken to several thousand constituents. I have also had the opportunity to testify before Parliamentary and Senate Committees and have met with individual Members of Parliament and Senators from all parties. I've had very productive meetings with both the Defence and Veterans Affairs Ministers. My office is in regular contact with the offices of the Defence Minister and Chief of the Defence Staff on a range of issues.

My office released four key systemic reports over the past year: two on Reservists, one on Boards of Inquiry and one on the 1974 grenade incident at the Valcartier Cadet Camp. The following items were added to our website and have proven to be very popular based on Web traffic:

Videos:

- Are you being medically released from the Canadian Armed Forces?
- Making the Transition to Civilian Life
- How did we help the Defence Community in 2014-2015?
- What if I am unhappy with a complaint I made through another mechanism?
- What is a Board of Inquiry?

Education Pieces:

- The Primary Reserve
- Your Transition to Civilian Life – The Three Phases of Medical Release
- What the Veterans Hiring Act Means for Medically Releasing Members
- Veteran Friendly jobs now available on Kijiji Canada
- Taking control of your retirement – from the start of your career
- Travelling with a Psychiatric Service Dog or Emotional Support Animal: A Guide for Canadian Armed Forces Members and Veterans
- Checklist for Canadian Armed Forces Members and Veterans Who Wish to Travel with an Assistance Animal
- The ABCs of Military Postings

Mr. Gary Walbourne, MBA, CHRL, CPA, CMA

Ombudsman

AN OFFICE THAT CAN HELP

Independent and impartial, we are dedicated to fairness for all

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, cadets 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.

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 employees 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 60 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.

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. The Office will not provide any information related to a case or investigation to anyone without written consent from the complainant.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN



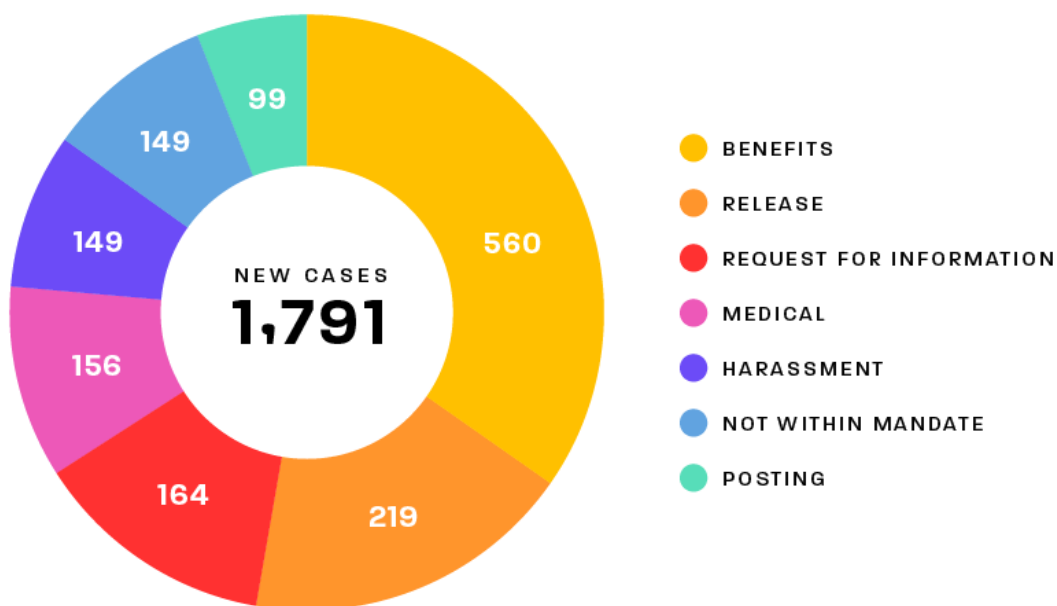
THE YEAR IN REVIEW

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

Individual Cases

The Office received 1,791 new cases in fiscal year 2015-2016, compared to 1,436 cases in 2014-2015.

TOP 7 CATEGORIES OF NEW CASES



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

In total, the Office handled 2,244 cases and closed 1,913 cases (this includes new cases, cases re-opened and cases carried over from previous fiscal years).

NEW CASES BY TOP 5 CONSTITUENT GROUPS	2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016	
	# OF CASES	% OF TOTAL CASES	# OF CASES	% OF TOTAL CASES	# OF CASES	% OF TOTAL CASES
Regular Force	619	41%	619	43%	722	40%
Former Military Member	377	25%	360	25%	471	26%
Reserve Force	177	18%	136	9%	193	11%
Family Member	115	8%	105	7%	144	8%
Civilian Employee	60	4%	71	4%	90	5%
Totals	1348	96%	1291	90%	1620	90%

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

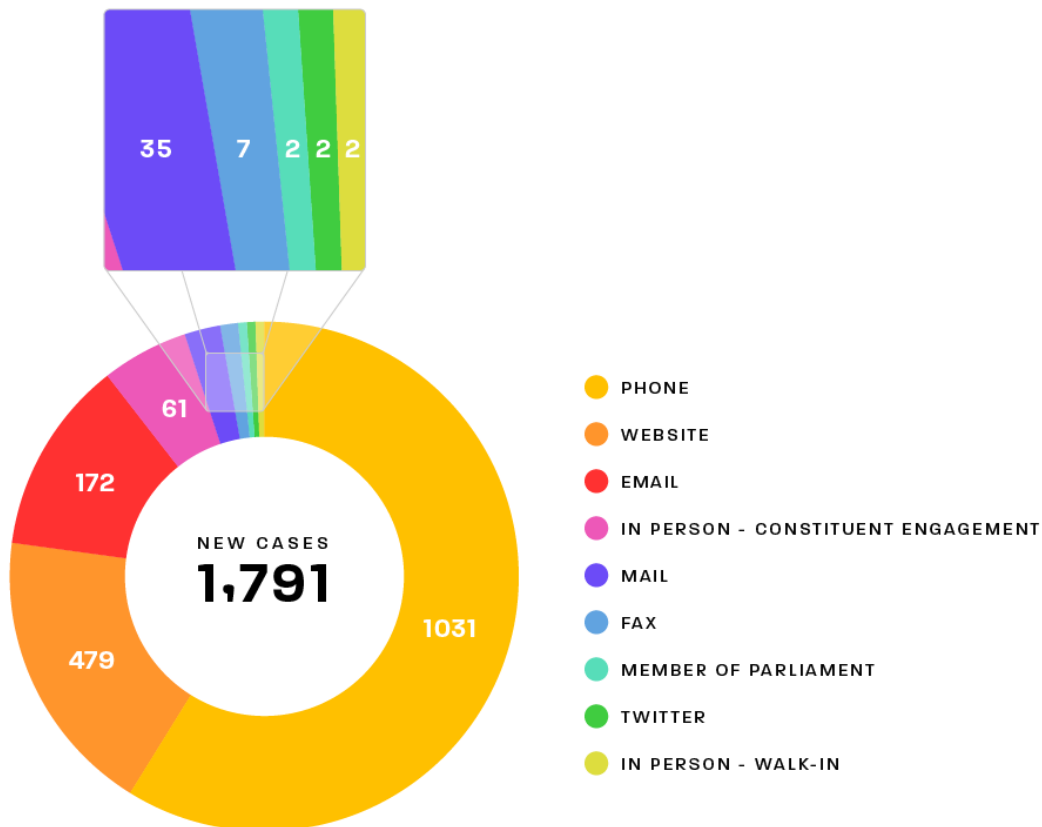
1. Ontario
2. Western Region
3. Atlantic Region

NEW CASES BY REGION	
Atlantic Region	141
Northern Region	2
Ontario	1077
Outside Canada	11
Prairies	37
Québec	138
Western Region	167
Unknown	218
Total	1791

COMMUNICATING WITH THE OFFICE

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

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION



SYSTEMIC INVESTIGATIONS

CADETS

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE 1974 VALCARTIER CADETS GRENADE INCIDENT

On July 28, 2015 our office released its investigation into the treatment of Army Cadets affected by a deadly grenade explosion at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier in 1974. It has been over 40 years since that tragic event, but many survivors continue to suffer today and have been left with long-lasting and life-altering injuries for which they received inadequate treatment and compensation.

Our office found that, although the National Defence Act gives the Canadian Forces control and supervision over cadet organizations, cadets are not considered members of the Canadian Forces or employees of the Department of National Defence. As a result, injured cadets were not eligible to receive assistance on par with what was offered to the Canadian Forces members present that day. With the exception of medical care received immediately following the incident, the cadets were not assisted or compensated under any National Defence policy or regulation in effect at the time.

Our office made two recommendations to address the lack of support provided to the victims of this tragic event. We recommended that:

- Under the authority of the Minister of National Defence, the Department of National Defence immediately offer assessments to all those who claim to have been adversely or permanently affected by this incident to determine the physical and psychological care required and,

based on these assessments, fund a reasonable care plan; and

- Following the full assessment and definition of the long-term needs of the affected individuals, and in order to ensure that they are treated in a way that reflects Canadian values, it is recommended that the Department of National Defence, under the direction of the Minister, award them an immediate and reasonable financial compensation in line with jurisprudence in similar situations.

The Minister of National Defence and the Department of National Defence accepted both recommendations.

Tangible steps have been taken since the publication of our report. On the morning of its release, two key individuals involved in bringing the impact of the incident to the attention of our office were briefed by senior members of the Canadian Armed Forces on the practical measures to be immediately undertaken to help affected cadets.

The Canadian Armed Forces has developed a screening tool that can be used by family physicians to determine their medical needs, and also appointed a Case Manager who will be responsible for managing medical assessments and the way forward in assisting the cadets. Our office continues to monitor any progress on the implementation of our recommendations.

A REVIEW OF THE CADET PROGRAM

In December 2015, our office launched an independent review of the current Canadian Cadet Program to identify any issues of unfairness in the event of an injury or death during a cadet activity. Ombudsman investigators are looking into what cadets and their families would be entitled to and how they would access these entitlements.

The review will identify and assess any similarities or differences in benefits offered to Canadian Armed Forces

members or civilians, cadets from comparable commonwealth countries, and members of other youth organizations.

In October 2013, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces announced a five-year renewal initiative of the Cadet Program. As a means of assisting the Department, this review, scheduled to be published in the fall of 2016, aims to ensure that cadets and their families receive fair treatment and proper entitlements in the event of injury or death today.

RESERVE FORCE

THE PRIMARY RESERVE 101 - REACHING OUT TO RESERVISTS

Reservists, both serving and retired, as well as their immediate families, are an important part of our constituency. In July 2015, our office introduced a Focus on Reserves to increase awareness of our services with Reservists and to gain a better understanding of the issues they face.

During the past fiscal year, we published two educational products with an emphasis on members of the Primary Reserve.

In the fall of 2015, we released information on our website outlining who Primary Reservists are, how and where they are employed, and their participation in domestic and international operations.

In the winter of 2016, we published general information on the three compensation options available to Reservists who become ill or injured as a result of military service and how to apply. Those options include:

- Extension of Class “C” Service for personnel whose injury or illness was sustained on Special Duty Service;

- Reserve Force Compensation During a Period of Injury, Disease or Illness; and
- The Government Employees Compensation Act.

In early fiscal year 2016-2017, our office will release further information on health care for Reservists on such topics as:

- Where to find information on Reserve entitlements to health care;
- What those health care entitlements are; and
- Where and how to access health care services offered by the Canadian Armed Forces.

FOCUS ON RESERVES

A Joint Study to Examine Providing Regular Medical Assessments to Primary Reservists

In October 2015, our office released its first joint study with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. Produced in partnership with the Canadian Forces Health Services Group, this study is the first collaboration between the Ombudsman’s Office and a Defence

organization – the Director Health Services Reserves.

The final report, *The Feasibility of Providing Periodic Health Assessments to All Primary Reservists*, examines and reports on the resources involved in providing regular medicals to members of the Primary Reserve at the same standard as the Regular Force.

The Primary Reserve is a voluntary force. Members may be asked to serve in domestic operations, such as security at events and search and rescue efforts, as well as responding to natural disasters such as the Saskatchewan wildfires or Manitoba floods. Over the last 25 years, Reservists have also participated in international operations in the Balkans, the Middle East and Africa, and in humanitarian crises such as in Haiti and the Philippines. Reservists were heavily involved in the combat mission in Afghanistan where sometimes more than 20 percent of the troops were Reservists.

Notwithstanding the increased requirement to employ Reservists on international and domestic operations, it is imperative that Reserve Force members are fit for regular training and exercises, which can be challenging and strenuous. Universality of Service mandates that all Primary Reservists must be free of medical conditions that would limit their ability to be employed and deployed.

The Canadian Armed Forces is currently conducting a comprehensive review to define the role of the modern Reserve Force so policies, directives and any instruments related to operational and medical fitness can be updated and aligned with the Reserve Force's current role.

Three initiatives are currently underway in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.

The first is a comprehensive review of the Reserve Force as per the recommendation proposed in the

Primary Reserve Employment Capacity Study in 2011. Once the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces leadership define the role of the modern Reserve Force, administrative policies and directives should be aligned and updated, including those related to operational and medical fitness.

The second is the updating of *Queens Regulations & Orders* Chapter 34, Medical Services which was last amended in June 2014. Chapter 34 states that Reserve Force personnel can only receive a Periodic Health Assessment for a specific military duty. The way it is currently written is vague in almost all areas of Reserve personnel's entitlement to medical services. This leads to different interpretations and applications and a considerable amount of healthcare providers' time devoted to determining entitlements. Although the Canadian Forces Health Services Group has been working on the update for over a decade, the proposed amendment, if adopted, will impact Reservists' access and entitlement to care, including assessments of medical fitness.

The third undertaking is the Periodic Health Assessment Renewal initiative. If process amendments are adopted, the frequency of the assessment and/or tests conducted as part of the exam may change.

The Canadian Forces Health Services Group will further investigate all courses of action in greater detail and will prepare a follow-up report on its findings.

A SYSTEMIC REVIEW OF COMPENSATION OPTIONS FOR ILL AND INJURED RESERVISTS

In light of concerns raised through individual complaints, as well as those noted in previous systemic investigations, our office examined the compensation options available to

Reservists who experience an illness or injury due to military service.

We set out to review the governance and administration of Reserve Force Compensation, its process and reporting procedures, and Reservists' level of knowledge and awareness of their entitlements available under Reserve Force Compensation and the *Government Employees Compensation Act*.

The investigation began in November 2013 and included a review of Office case files and information gathered during previous systemic investigations. The team conducted fifty-one interviews with members of the Canadian Armed Forces leadership within the Army, Navy and Air Force and employees from the Director Health Services Reserves, Director General Compensation and Benefits, Director Casualty Support Management and various Joint Personnel Support Units, Chief Reserves and Cadets, Veterans Affairs Canada, and Provincial Workers Compensation Boards.

We found that:

- There is no clear direction on how to properly cease periods of Reserve service for members who become ill or injured.
- The application and review processes for Reserve Force Compensation are cumbersome and cause delays in the adjudication of the files.
- There is no tracking or performance measurement in place to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the Reserve Force Compensation process.
- There is a lack of knowledge and awareness of the compensation options available to ill and injured Reservists.

We made recommendations to the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces to address these areas. Our final report is scheduled for a spring release.

A SYSTEMIC REVIEW OF CANADA'S PRIMARY RESERVE FORCE AND OPERATIONAL STRESS INJURIES

Given the significant role of Reservists in international operations, our office undertook to review operational stress injuries in the Canadian Armed Forces with a focus on Reservists. Despite an emphasis on international operations, it is acknowledged that domestic operations can also contribute to the development of operational stress injuries.

The Office began its investigation in April 2013 with a review of related policies. Ombudsman investigators conducted over 160 interviews with Reserve chains of command and Reservists from across Canada and within the Army, Navy and Air Force. Interviews were also conducted with service providers associated with selected units; from both health care and social services' perspectives.

We will be making recommendations to the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces to address these areas in our final report to be released in the summer of 2016.

TRANSITION AND FAMILIES

TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN LIFE

Progress continues in our joint investigation with the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman concerning Canadian Armed Forces members' transition to civilian life and the impact of the process on their families.

To date, our review and analysis of the Department's response to reports from Parliament, the Senate, and the Office of the Auditor General, played a key role in the development of the Care Compassion Respect 2020 (formerly known as Veterans 2020) project charter, objectives and action plan.

We completed the first mapping of the transition process for Regular Force members which contributed to the development of the Veterans 2020 Enhanced Transition Services, a joint initiative between the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada.

Our analysis of the Service Income Security Insurance Plan, the Veterans Affairs Canada Rehabilitation Program, and the Department of National Defence Vocational Rehabilitation Program for Serving Members was used to inform the development of the statement of work for an independent review of the Veterans Affairs Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces Income Support and Rehabilitation programs.

We have also outlined the release process for Reserve members. This will allow us to identify opportunities to streamline and simplify transition. In addition, we are finalizing a review of the extent to which transition services being offered to medically-releasing members by third party organizations complement those provided by the departments.

To support members through education and resources, our office created and released an informative Web-based

video on transition to civilian life and is developing a convenient reference tool with specific information on the three phases of a medical release. Each phase involves its own key events, steps and resources, which we will publish online. We also examined the role and support provided to families during transition and released an information graphic on our website in March 2016.

BOARDS OF INQUIRY: FAMILIES IN FOCUS REPORT

The Office of the Ombudsman has been tracking and reporting on issues related to the Canadian Armed Forces' engagement of families during a Board of Inquiry process for the past 10 years. In 2013, we launched a review to assess the staffing and administration of Boards of Inquiry and Summary Investigations in situations of non-combat deaths and serious injury. Our report, *Boards of Inquiry: Families in Focus*, was published in April 2015.

Effective June 1, 2014, the Minister of National Defence delegated the authority for the administration and oversight of the Board of Inquiry process for serious injury or death not arising from Canadian Armed Forces operations to the Assistant Deputy Minister (Review Services). Although the Department has made clear incremental progress over the past five years, the Board of Inquiry process remains military-centric and difficult to understand for many families. The human dimension sometimes gets lost in a process designed for fact gathering, not family engagement. As such, existing mechanisms surrounding the Board of Inquiry process appear insufficient for families seeking answers while also experiencing the emotional fallout from the loss or serious injury of a loved one.

Families need to be heard throughout the Board of Inquiry process. However,

there is not enough data, or feedback from families themselves, to determine the best way to make this happen.

To help identify the needs of families and how to effectively communicate with them, the Office recommended the Department of National Defence establish a family coordinator position for a one-year trial period and offered a member of the Ombudsman team. The Chief of the Defence accepted the recommendation.

FOLLOW-UP COLLABORATION PROJECT

As a result of these concerns and the need to identify ways to engage families, the Department formed a collaborative working group in the summer of 2015 in partnership with the Director of Military Family Services. The joint team's goal is to identify the most appropriate and effective means by which the Canadian Armed Forces may be able to meet the information needs of families following a death or serious injury, whether through the Boards of Inquiry or other processes.

To achieve this, key stakeholders involved in what follows a serious injury, illness or a death will be consulted. Additionally, families who wish to share their experiences will be offered the opportunity to speak with members of the joint team and provide their input.

Following a rigorous analysis of the findings and results, measures to improve services to families will be identified, and an implementation strategy developed so the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces may better respond to the needs of families. It is expected the report on the findings will be published in the fall of 2016.

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES BENEFITS FOR ILL AND INJURED MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

A consistent issue raised with our office is the difficulty in determining what benefits are available to ill and injured Canadian Armed Forces members and their families. Various reports and studies highlight the issue of complexity within the services and benefits portfolio as the information is not easily and readily accessible in a clear and concise manner. What is disturbing is that Departmental staff responsible for assessing eligibility and managing the delivery of services and benefits also report having a difficult time. How can ill and injured Canadian Armed Forces members, who need to be supported the most, be sure they are accessing all the benefits available to them?

The Department's July 2015 Military Family Services research report entitled, *The Needs of Medically Releasing Canadian Armed Forces Personnel and Their Families – MFRC Environmental Scan and Subject Matter Expert Survey Results*, recommended the creation of a list or guide of all transition services and benefits be made available to families directly and also to Military Family Resource Centres.

There are resources available, but there is a need to make access to those resources easier to both constituents and benefits administrators. One of the key needs voiced to our office is a one-stop site accessible from anywhere. Our office has offered to work with Director Casualty Support Management at modernizing its guide into a simple format where members, families and administrators can access information on potential benefits and services in a few clicks.

GENERAL INVESTIGATIONS

RESERVE FORCE PENSION PLAN

Our office continues to receive individual complaints regarding delays in the processing of the Reserve Force Pension Plan (the Plan). Since the Plan came into effect in 2007, we have received 398 complaints (as of March 31, 2016).

In 2010, the Auditor General conducted a performance audit of the Plan, and released a report of its findings and recommendations in 2011. At the time, the Department of National Defence agreed with the Auditor General's recommendations, acknowledged the observations and 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, our 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. The Department's efforts to address delays have resulted in an important reduction

in the number of files, and as of December 2015, Pension Services had completed 73 percent of pension files received with a buy-back election. Unfortunately, there still remains a backlog of files, particularly Reserve Force pension files with a buy-back component. Excessive delays in processing persist.

As per the Auditor General's 2011 recommendation, the Department also took steps to establish service standards at Pension Services. Currently, once a file is received at Pension Services, they aim to complete processing within 2-4 weeks. However, this timeframe is highly dependent on file complexity and timely submission of necessary documents; deficiencies in the file can result in longer processing times.

Despite ongoing challenges, Pension Services continues to make progress, and are on-time to complete the backlog prior to the established deadline of December 2017. In the meantime, this office continues to monitor progress, address compelling individual cases, and is liaising with senior leadership in order to ensure the matter remains as much a priority for the Canadian Armed Forces as it is for our constituents.

CONSTITUENT AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

As part of the Office's ongoing engagement activities to enhance the overall awareness and understanding of our role and mandate, the Ombudsman and his staff connected with constituents at military installations and departmental events across the country and reached out to military and civilian leaders, stakeholders and like-minded organizations. These engagements 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. 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, the Ombudsman and his staff met with more than 1,040 constituents.

- Canadian Forces Station St. John's, Newfoundland from April 13 to 17;
- 39 Canadian Brigade Group, Vancouver, British Columbia from October 26 to 30;
- 19 Wing Comox, Vancouver, British Columbia from November 2 to 6; and
- Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt, British Columbia from November 23 to 27.

INTERACTING WITH CONSTITUENTS AT DEPARTMENTAL EVENTS

In 2015-2016, the Office of the Ombudsman continued to meet with constituents at military and departmental events. These types of engagements allow the Ombudsman and his staff to interact with constituents in formal and informal settings and provide them with valuable information about the Office and the services available. We met with many members of the Defence community at the following activities throughout the year:

- **Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services Reservist Awareness Campaigns** across the country, including Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta; Sydney and Halifax, Nova Scotia; Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; Saint John, New Brunswick; and Kingston, Ontario;
- **Commemorative and diversity events at National Defence Headquarters** in Ottawa including the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Aboriginal 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;
- **The National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman Awareness Campaign** at the Canadian Forces Fleet School Québec, in Québec City, Québec; the National Defence Coventry building and the Montfort Hospital in Ottawa, Ontario;
- **National Child Day** at the Canada Aviation and Space Museum in Ottawa, Ontario;
- **The 5th Annual Defence Community Family Appreciation Day** at Uplands military site in Ottawa, Ontario; and
- **The Strengthening Resilience: Training for Military Family Service Providers 2015** conference in Cornwall, Ontario where we met with Military Family Resource Centre board members, staff and family members as well as some of our other partners who form a network of support to the military family community.

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.

FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEADERS, STAKEHOLDERS AND OTHER OMBUDSMAN ORGANIZATIONS

As part of our commitment to foster and maintain constructive working relationships, the Ombudsman regularly 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 regularly attended 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. Participation in such events is critical to the advancement of issues and work of mutual or shared responsibility. Meetings this past fiscal year included:

- The Service Income Security Insurance Plan (SISIP) Conference at the Junior Officers Mess, in Ottawa, Ontario; and
- Ombudsman presentation and discussion with the Integrated Personnel Support Centre/Joint Personnel Support Unit (IPSC/JPSU) in Kingston, Ontario to convey our role and related services.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Office of the Ombudsman participates in international events and often meets with Ombudsmen 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, the Ombudsman met with the Service Complaints Ombudsman for the United Kingdom Armed Forces, members of the Office of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Poland and a team of scholars from the Jagiellonian University of Poland who were studying the Anglo-Saxon ombudsmanry model to provide a benchmark to establish a Polish model based on international best practices.

The Ombudsman and his senior management also met with officials from the Korean Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission who wanted to learn more about the role of our office in relation to such topics as contemporary military justice issues, redress of grievance, internal processes, tracking of issues, reporting mechanisms, and more.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENTS

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

Throughout the past year, we continued efforts to make our website more dynamic, user-friendly and educational. The Frequently Asked Questions section of our website continually makes it into the top five visited pages. The Sample Cases section also receives a lot of attention. The latest addition to the website – educational videos – is a sought-after communications tool, and one that we intend on continuing to expand upon in 2016-2017.

Our office launched its Twitter account in May 2013. Over the course of fiscal year 2015-2016, we saw a 32% increase in followers. We also saw a 156% increase in Twitter activity, in terms of retweets and favoured tweets.

OMBUDSMAN WEBSITE TRENDS

www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Total Visitors¹ to our Website	43,728	40,014	81,472
Total Visits² to our Website	55,051	51,582	100,239
Total Visits to our FAQs	2,274	7,446	51,582
Total Visits to our Videos	N/A	4,291	4,578*
Total Visits to our Sample Cases	N/A	1,168	2,442

¹ The number of individuals who came to our website

² The number of times individuals came to our website

* In addition, our Transition 101 video received over 7,000 views on the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman's Facebook page.

OMBUDSMAN TWITTER TRENDS @DND CF_OMBUDSMAN

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Total Follows on Twitter	1,230	1,343	1,774
Total Retweets and Favourited Tweets	N/A	93	753

TOP TWEETS	IMPRESSIONS*
By just listening, you can make a world of difference in someone's life. #CAF LetsTalk #Bell LetsTalk bit.ly/1KbdseC	7,129
#CAF members and families – getting posted this year? Here's the ABCs of Military Postings. bit.ly/1TvLoEI @CFCWO12 @CanadianForces	5,955
It's soon posting season! Do you have enough \$\$ to buy a house? Check out this map. Bit.ly/1LEMlyG @RentSeeker #MilitaryFamilies	5,240
You're posted? Compare the average cost of rent across Canada. bit.ly/1LENcF0 @RentSeeker #Housing #MilitaryFamilies #CAF	4,258
Equine therapy helps build a bridge between military and civilian life. Bit.ly/1JdgoqR #Veterans #Transition @CanadianArmy	3,776

*The number of times users saw the tweet on Twitter

CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

Aligned with the Department's priorities for 2013-2017 in terms of strengthening the Defence team and ensuring Defence resource, stewardship and 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 2016-2017.

1. ENGAGE THE DEFENCE COMMUNITY

In order to fulfill 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 of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. But awareness is only one part of being able to help; we also need to provide easy access to the Office. By regularly reaching out to constituents where they live and work, the Office can actively listen 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 increasing engagements with new recruits, Cadets, Rangers, and Reserve Force units, as well as visits to bases and wings across Canada. The Office will also focus on enhancing its online presence through improvements to its website content and regular participation in social media.

In addition, the Office will reach out to non-departmental stakeholders, such as Members of Parliament and Senators, on key issues affecting the Defence Community.

2. ASSIST AND EDUCATE THE DEFENCE COMMUNITY

The Office will build upon progress made in 2015-2016 with respect to improving its ability to be a direct source of information, referral and education, as well as providing impartial, evidence-based investigations. In particular, the Office will:

- Continue to focus on informal and early resolution of complaints (effective and timely investigations of individual cases will continue to be a priority);
- Review service standards to ensure a continued commitment to service excellence;
- Use knowledge resources such as an electronic reference tool to maintain a high level of expertise with staff as subject experts; and
- Increase its focus on education and awareness through user-friendly electronic tools (an interactive map and a benefits browser will be introduced on our website).

3. EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS SYSTEMIC ISSUES

In 2016-2017, the Office will maintain the ability to quickly identify and address systemic issues affecting the Defence Community and to launch systemic investigations, case studies or issue assessments without affecting daily operations. In order to be effective, information from external and internal sources will be continuously monitored.

The creation of a permanent systemic team has strengthened our capacity to deliver effective and timely recommendations related to systemic issues. The Office will continue to conduct systemic investigations and maintain a flexible approach to launching smaller issue assessments. Standard operating procedures and a multi-year systemic investigation plan have been established to formalize the process.

4. DEMONSTRATE VALUE FOR MONEY

The final key priority activity for the Office in 2016-2017 is to seek innovation and business improvements, and optimize the use of resources. Such initiatives will include:

- **Implementing a service level agreement with Shared Services Canada** to meet the growing demands of both our internal requirements and the need to ensure confidentiality;
- **Reviewing service standards** to ensure feasibility and relevance and to track and measure monthly performance. A review of service standards will ensure services are in line with what the community needs and provide a high quality service to our constituents in a timely fashion;
- **Maximizing Communications' in-house publishing capability** to develop new communications tools and products to help with the education goals of the organization;
- **Conducting quarterly reviews of finance files** as part of an internal control framework thus ensuring quality control over financial activities; and
- **Maintaining an Information Technology (IT) business plan** where all IT needs are identified including funding required to support all initiatives for the next three years.

OMBUDSMAN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Ombudsman's Advisory Council consists of eight volunteers with specialized expertise in 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 the Ombudsman with advice related to the mandate, professional principles and structure of the Office.

The following individuals were valuable members of the Ombudsman's Advisory Council during fiscal year 2015-2016. Lieutenant-Colonel Leslie Dawson retired in the winter of 2015 and we would like to express our thanks for her insightful contributions as a member of the Council over the past four years. We welcome Lieutenant-Colonel Guy Bélisle who will be joining us for the new fiscal year.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL J.L.G. BÉLISLE

joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1986 as an infantry officer with the Royal 22e Régiment. He changed trades after 12 years to Canadian Forces Chaplain. With many overseas deployments and missions under his belt, he currently is at Army Headquarters as the Canadian Army Command Chaplain.

COLONEL JOHN CONRAD

is a published author, lecturer and a Reserve Brigade Commander of 41 Canadian Brigade Group in Calgary, Alberta. He has 32 years of experience 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.

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

joined the Air Reserves in 1988 as a non-commissioned member and transferred into Regular Force in 1996. She accepted her commission in 1999 as a Naval Logistician and has served on both coasts. She is currently the Chief Staff Officer Corporate Services for the Naval Staff in Ottawa, enjoying the balance of home and work life.

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) (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, 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.

**CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER
MIKE SCARCELLA** is the 1 Canadian Air Division Chief Warrant Officer. Following his enrolment in the Canadian Armed Forces as a Weapons Technician Air in 1981, he 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, he completed a six-month deployment as the Theatre Support Element Chief Warrant Officer at Camp Mirage.

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 helping other members of the Defence community 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 22, 2015, the Ombudsman honoured three outstanding members of Canada's Defence community with commendations. The Office was pleased to have several senior Defence officials in attendance, including Vice Chief of the Defence Staff Lieutenant-General Guy R. Thibault and Senior Associate Deputy Minister Mr. Bill Jones.



(L-R) Mr. Gary Walbourne (Ombudsman), Mrs. Paula Ramsay, Corporal Frederick Michael Smith (Retired), Dr. Deborah Elliott, Dr. Andrea Hoffman, Mr. Bill Jones (Senior Associate Deputy Minister) and Lieutenant-General Guy R. Thibault (Vice Chief of the Defence Staff) (Photo credit: CFSUO)

RECIPIENTS OF THE 2015 LIZ HOFFMAN MEMORIAL COMMENDATION

MRS. PAULA RAMSAY

As the spouse of a military member injured in service, Mrs. Paula Ramsay has committed herself to improving the lives of military members and families by reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness and injury in the Canadian Armed Forces. Through her community involvement, Mrs. Ramsay demonstrates compassion and a commitment to fairness and problem solving. She approaches members, veterans, and their families not only to identify gaps in service and delivery, but to suggest changes for the benefit of those in need. She engages with senior officials to offer concrete recommendations that can be implemented quickly and without disruption to current programming. Her attention to detail and resourcefulness have been assets towards amending mental health documentation and policy for ill or injured serving members. In recognition of those struggling to find services for families, Mrs. Ramsay connected with spouses of veterans to form The Caregivers Brigade which offers a directory of evolving services available to the ill or injured and their families. Because of her work, Mrs. Ramsay was invited to be a part of the Military Family Panel Feedback Team and the Military and Veteran Family Leadership Circle. She also submits articles for the Chief Military Personnel newsletter where she provides a family perspective of service related mental injuries.

CORPORAL FREDERICK MICHAEL SMITH (RETIRED)

A champion for homeless veterans and an advocate for former military members suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues, Corporal Frederick Smith (Retired) has spent the past ten years seeking out veterans in need at the legions, in shelters, treatment centres, soup kitchens and on the streets. Knowing firsthand the struggles facing military members returning from active deployment, Corporal Smith (Retired) has been able to identify their most urgent needs and connect them with Veterans Affairs Canada and the necessary resources. After years of being homeless himself and struggling with addictions and post-traumatic stress disorder, Corporal Smith (Retired) founded Veterans Helping Veterans to help others in situations like his. Through open and honest dialogue about his own struggles and experience, Corporal Smith (Retired) builds trust and is able to show others how they too, can overcome their circumstances. He funds the organization himself and many have been helped by his generosity, perseverance and resolve.

DR. DEBORAH ELLIOTT

As a psychiatrist at Canadian Forces Base Trenton, Dr. Deborah Elliott has been an advocate for fairness. Her empathy, integrity, and expertise have led to better care for mental health patients in the Canadian Armed Forces. Not one to back down from a challenge, Dr. Elliott's head-on approach has led to changes in policy which have improved the quality of life for both members and staff. She was instrumental in streamlining basic mental health assessments for air crew through changes to the Flight Surgeon Guidelines. This resulted in reduced wait times for patient reassessments. Dr. Elliott has provided managers with education around boundary setting and difficult conversations, allowing the chain of command to make informed decisions and giving them valuable tools to consistently care for members with mental health concerns. When patients feel they have been treated unfairly, Dr. Elliott has the great ability to explain policy and safety issues, allowing members to reframe their situation and make their health a priority. She has also provided critical feedback concerning the spectrum of care not funding certain medications. This started a dialogue around changes to funding for "off label use" medication or treatments.

APPENDIX I – DISPOSITION OF CASES

TOTAL CASES HANDLED*	
Cases Closed	1913
Cases in Progress (as of March 31, 2015)	180

CASES CLOSED AT INTAKE	
Information or Assistance Provided	1399
Outside Mandate	87
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	100
Contact Provided Information	2
Withdrawn	37
Abandoned	51
Unfounded	1
N/A	1

CASES CLOSED AT COMPLAINT RESOLUTION	
Informal Resolution	55
Information or Assistance Provided	76
Withdrawn	8
Outside Mandate	2
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	1
Abandoned	1

CASES CLOSED AT INVESTIGATION	
Information or Assistance Provided	25
Unfounded	14
Informal Resolution	8
Referred to Existing Mechanisms	5
Investigated: Follow Up Required	30
Abandoned	2
Withdrawn	4
Outside Mandate	3
Contact Provided Information	1

*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.

APPENDIX II – FINANCIAL REPORT

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES

In 2015-2016, the Minister of National Defence approved a budget of \$5,981,645 for the Office of the Ombudsman. Actual expenditures totalled \$4,982,193 of which \$4,196,634 was related to salaries and \$215,112 was transferred to the Assistant Deputy Minister (Human Resources - Civilian) for a service level agreement to improve efficiency in staffing and other human resource processes.

(\$)

MAIL AND COURIER SERVICES **3,548**

SUPPLIES/FURNITURE **28,417**

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DUES **80,767**

ACQUISITION/RENTAL OF OFFICE EQUIPMENT **8,264**

NETWORK MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT **18,902**

TELECOMMUNICATIONS & IT CONNECTIONS **65,003**

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION **84,228**

COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC OUTREACH **28,086**

PROFESSIONAL & SPECIAL SERVICES **468,343**

SALARIES **4,196,634**

TOTAL **4,982,192**

OUR SUCCESSES ARE YOUR SUCCESSES

A Regular Force member contacted the Office due to delays in the processing of a posting request to the Integrated Personnel Support Centre. The member, who was assigned a Temporary Medical Category, requested the posting to be closer to family and for urgent personal reasons. After many attempts, the member was unable to receive a status update on the request and contacted this office for help.

An Ombudsman investigator discussed the issue with all parties involved and it was determined the paperwork had been misplaced. Thanks to the intervention of the Ombudsman's Office, the member's posting request was located and a posting close to the member's family was granted.

A Regular Force member contacted our office concerning a request for posting to a Joint Personnel Support Unit (JPSU). The member was suffering from a debilitating medical condition requiring regular treatment to manage the pain. The member was assigned a Temporary Medical Category and told their doctor would be recommending a permanent category.

Close to retirement, the member requested a posting to the JPSU at the member's current place of duty in order to stay in their home, near to family. The member ultimately intended to remain at this location upon retirement. When the request was denied, the member reached out to this office for help.

While clearly a candidate for the JPSU posting, our investigator found there was miscommunication between the career and medical administrations, and the member was posted to another location for employment instead.

With the intervention of this office and the cooperation of Health Services, the member's chain of command, and Career Administration authorities, steps were taken to ensure the member's specialist treatments were not interrupted and the member was relocated to the support unit close to family. The member is now able to focus on recovering and transitioning from the Canadian Armed Forces.

Following a recurring injury which first occurred during training, a Regular Force member was issued a recorded warning and recommended for release from the Canadian Armed Forces. The member's chain of command was recommending the member be released for a lack of officer-like qualities. Concerned about becoming homeless and that the release was not justified, the member contacted the Ombudsman's Office. Due to the compelling nature of the member's situation, the file was assigned to an investigator.

After speaking with medical personnel, including a nurse practitioner, the Base Surgeon, and the member's Chain of Command, the investigator found that the information made available to the Chain of Command appeared incomplete and there was no evidence to support the claims that led to the recommendation for release. Given the new information, the decision to release was reconsidered and the member was allowed to remain in the Forces.

A former Reserve Force member became concerned when severance pay was not received as planned and suspected a Post Living Differential was unfairly recovered. As the member did not receive any form of communication about the recovery action, the member believed there must have been an error related to a move prior to the member's release. After an unsuccessful attempt to resolve the issue personally, the former Reservist contacted the Ombudsman's Office.

An Ombudsman investigator reviewed the member's documents related to the move and spoke with staff at Director Military Pay and Allowance Processing/Released Personnel Pay Office, as well as Director Military Career Administration.

Following a review of the file by the release section of the member's former unit, a clerical error was identified as the cause. The member's release section notified Director Military Pay and Allowance Processing and took steps to correct the error. The funds wrongfully recovered were returned to the member.

As an added measure, recommendations were made to ensure that Military Pay Administrative Instruction 1025-9 – *Prevention and Detection of Overpayments – Recoveries from Pay and Extension Requests* is put into practice.

The Ombudsman's Office recommended that the instruction be amended to include recovery notification for members of the Regular and Reserve Force, serving or released. These recommendations were accepted by Director Military Pay and Allowance Processing and forwarded for action.

QUOTES

OUTREACH VISIT

"The visit was important in keeping service providers on the front lines feeling connected and heard. Your commitment to facilitating the best possible working and living environment for civilian and military staff and families is commendable."

POSITIVE CHANGE

Mental Health / Santé mentale

"Canada's family physicians are stepping in to help the families of Canadian military personnel arrange primary care when they move to new bases, but the Canadian Forces (CF) says more are needed. While many Canadians have a hard time finding a family doctor, the military says the families of CF personnel face a unique problem because of the nomadic nature of military careers. In 2013, then-CF ombudsman Pierre Daigle reported that military families are far less likely to have a family physician (FP) than other Canadians because they move three times more often. The ombudsman noted that some families simply "bounce" from one physician waiting list to another because of their postings, "rarely making it to the top" before it's time to move again. The military has responded by encouraging family physicians – via organizations such as the CMA – to consider opening their practices to these families. More than 50 FPs in four provinces have responded so far since 2012. - FPs sought to help nomadic military families get medical care, by Patrick Sullivan, *Canadian Medical Association News*."

WEBSITE/VIDEOS

Just saw the new video posted about what do to do if unhappy with the internal mechanism...I am SOOOO happy... I really feel like it's really answering questions and bringing clarity about what is already there...The visual effect and impact is exactly what it should be.

PEOPLE WHO CARE

"I knew that the Ombudsman's Office was there to assist members who had issues, but I had no idea of the impact the Office could make in solving those problems."

"You assigned Mr. X to my file and I have to say I don't know where we would be without him. He has proven on numerous occasions to be invaluable. With his knowledge, contacts and professional approach he has helped solve many – in my opinion – unsolvable problems. He advised me on countless occasions on what to do and who to contact, and his positive attitude and timely sound advice were extremely re-assuring. When times were difficult and no solution could be seen, his knowledge and overall positive attitude changed our way of looking at the problems, and looking back on it he was right. On many occasions when frustration would be the norm I could always count on Mr. X who would steer me in the right direction with positive results."

TWITTER

The best way to contact us on Dec 25/26 and Jan 1 is our secure online complaint form or by email. An intake officer will respond as soon as they can. bit.ly/11MAQ7I #DND #CAF#MilitaryFamilies

“@DND_CF_Ombudsman yes they do & r fantastic. Thanks 4 all u do!!”