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Annual Ombud Report
2025 to 2026

Office of the Well-being Ombud and Inspector General



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A message from the Ombud

I often say how lucky I feel to have this role that gives me the opportunity to speak with so many of you at Headquarters (HQ), in regional offices and at missions abroad. I know you reach out sometimes on your toughest days and that our conversations aren't always easy. So why do I feel lucky? Because I regularly get to witness your courage when facing a difficult working relationship, your hope that a situation can get better and, ultimately, your deeply felt commitment to doing your best for Canada and Canadians.

Our team sat together to think about what we could best reflect back to you in this annual report. We talked a lot about the impacts of the significant changes in 2025–2026 that so many of you spoke to us about in the quiet, confidential spaces our office provides. These changes included everything from a new government with new priorities, organizational changes that resulted in new teams and roles, as well as the effects of geopolitical crises on our personal and professional lives. The themes of uncertainty, pressure, trust and change emerged again and again. We know that many of these changes were not a matter of choice and often felt beyond your control.

As we reflected on the experiences you shared with us, this report came to focus on what those experiences reveal about our organization—how change is lived, how trust is built and sustained, how workplace conditions influence well-being and how individuals and teams continue to adapt while remaining committed to a shared purpose. We saw how robust teams and supportive leadership strengthen the social fabric and connective tissue that help us to perform under high pressure. We also saw how systemic challenges can make those pressures harder to manage. This report invites us to reflect on our own experiences and leadership opportunities while also asking where system-level adjustments might help create healthier and more sustainable conditions for our shared success as teams and as a department.

With so much uncertainty, pressure and change, it is perhaps not surprising that a lot more of you reached out to us this year than in previous years. More of you reaching out is, yes, a sign that things have been hard but also, I hope, a sign that you were able to ask for help when you needed it and that you trusted us to be your sounding board as you thought through how to meet this moment.

I recognize that the Comprehensive Expenditure Review continues to impact not just our work and workplace but our professional and personal relationships and identities too. It has been a season of tough goodbyes across HQ and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) . Our own team has also felt the many mixed emotions, including grief and gratitude, that come along with a moment like this one. Like many of you, we have taken time to celebrate and thank our colleagues. I would like to extend that same thanks to all of you. I recognize and deeply appreciate all you have done for Canada and for Canadians. And to those of you who are starting a new chapter, my team and I are grateful to have spent time with so many of you , and we wish you the very best.

I know that challenges persist for many of you. I hope that, despite these, you have been able to find—and will continue to find—in your daily work tiny joys, unexpected opportunities and examples that illustrate the power of connected and compassionate leadership, which allows us all to do our best work.



Ayesha Rekhi (she, her)
Well-being Ombud

About this report

This is our third annual report, and it is a bit different from our previous ones. While activities, services delivered and trends in casework remain central to this report, this year, we are also reflecting on what the experiences, concerns and conversations brought to our office's attention may reveal about the current workplace environment across GAC as a whole.

This report does not seek to measure organizational well-being through a single lens or represent everyone's experience in our organization. Instead, it offers an evidence-informed perspective on what we heard, observed and learned during a particularly consequential year. Along with sharing our data and the issues raised with us, in this report we also ask:

- What workplace conditions shaped your experiences?
- Which themes emerged consistently across different sources of data?
- What do those patterns suggest about the health of our organization?

To explore these questions, we draw on the range of information available to our office, including:

- confidential consultations with the Ombud or with the Employee Assistance Program
- informal conflict management services
- prevention and outreach activities
- findings from the Check-in survey, mission inspections and e-Inspections
- aggregated organizational observations

While each data source offers a different perspective, together they provide a comprehensive picture of the workplace experiences brought to our attention throughout the year.

Because the people who turn to our office are often navigating difficult situations, periods of uncertainty, workplace challenges or significant transitions, this report is grounded in the experiences and stories they chose to share with us. As a result, you may find the tone more conversational and reflective than that of a traditional annual report. That is intentional. Above all, this report reflects the trust you placed in us by sharing your experiences, and we hope to honour those conversations by identifying insights, patterns and opportunities that may help strengthen our workplace for everyone.

Global land acknowledgment

Global Affairs Canada is global—we work across Canada and around the world. We therefore have a unique opportunity to acknowledge the original caretakers of the land on which we each work, wherever we are in the world. Our office in Canada stands on the unceded traditional territories of the Anishinabe Algonquin people, and we acknowledge with deep respect that they have cared for these lands since time immemorial. This acknowledgment is a commitment to listen, learn and respect the histories and voices of the peoples on whose lands we find ourselves, whether here in Canada or anywhere in the world. The lessons we learn from Indigenous Peoples—about respect, humility and courage—are the same values we carry into our global work. We honour the past, we recognize the present, and we look toward a future shaped by understanding, inclusion and shared responsibility for the lands and people who sustain us all.

Part 1 - The year in context at Global Affairs Canada: uncertainty, pressure, trust and change

Working through uncertainty

What we heard this year, and what we observed across our casework, is that uncertainty was not caused by a single moment of disruption and that, for many of you, it became, and remains, a constant feature of your work environment.

Organizational change, including through the Comprehensive Expenditure Review (CER), evolving priorities, leadership transitions and shifting global realities, created a backdrop against which each of us was asked to adapt and deliver. These changes did not affect everyone in the same way, but they were felt widely enough to influence how work was experienced across the organization.

Many of you told us that the challenge was not simply the fact that change was occurring. Rather, it was understanding what those changes meant, in real time, for your work, your team and your future.

Questions about priorities, organizational direction, staffing decisions, timelines and future expectations arose repeatedly in our conversations.

When we compared what you were telling us with findings from mission inspections and Check-in surveys, a consistent picture emerged. Uncertainty was often shaped not only by a change itself, but also by how this change was communicated, understood and experienced in day-to-day work.

What we heard

Uncertainty is experienced as something ongoing, something that influenced how you planned, communicated and made decisions about your work and about your future at GAC.

Snapshot of our services: Supporting employees through the Comprehensive Expenditure Review and workforce adjustment

The Comprehensive Expenditure Review (CER) was one of the most significant organizational developments of the year.

In response, our office adopted an enhanced support posture. From January 19 to March 6, 2026, our team delivered more than 1,200 activities—including workshops, listening circles and one-on-one conversations—to offer support during this time.

Many of you reached out not only with questions about staffing decisions, but also with concerns about what those decisions might mean for your teams, workloads, careers, families and futures. You also expressed concerns about potential differential impacts on employee equity groups, including with regard to GAC's future capacity. You described prolonged uncertainty, concern for colleagues, increased pressure within teams and the emotional impact of navigating change while continuing to deliver on GAC's mandate.

The experiences shared during this period reflected many of the broader themes discussed throughout this report: uncertainty, pressure, trust, communication, change and the importance of support during periods of transition.

The CER showed us that organizational change is ultimately experienced by people. Employees experience change through its effect on their teams, relationships, workloads, career aspirations and sense of belonging. How people are supported through those experiences matters both for individual well-being and organizational effectiveness. We shared this message in our regular reporting to senior management to help build their understanding how employees are experiencing the CER rollout.

A workforce under sustained pressure

Alongside uncertainty, many of you spoke of sustained and sometimes relentless pressure.

You described demanding workloads, growing responsibilities, staffing constraints and juggling competing priorities. Many of you spoke about smaller teams taking on more responsibilities while continuing to respond to an evolving operational environment with new demands.

The challenge was not only the volume of work. Staffing processes, approvals, administrative requirements and system inefficiencies were frequently described as consuming time and energy. In some situations, these pressures became stressors in their own right, making already demanding work more difficult to accomplish. You also shared that workplace tensions emerged when difficult conversations were delayed and that misunderstandings became harder to resolve as you focused on managing competing demands.

Many of you also described fatigue. Not fatigue associated with a single difficult period, but fatigue that had accumulated gradually through successive periods of uncertainty, adjustment and change. Some spoke about how difficult it is to disconnect from work and get rest—whether that means a good night's sleep or a period of leave during which you could truly unplug from work and its demands. Others described balancing professional expectations with caregiving responsibilities, family obligations, health concerns or the realities of supporting loved ones through uncertain times.

At the same time, in the face of pressure, your commitment was just as clear. Even while describing significant pressures, ~~many of~~ you spoke with pride about your work and contribution to GAC's mandate. You continued to support colleagues, adapted to changing circumstances and delivered results in increasingly complex environments.

What we heard

In your interactions with us, you often described an environment where expectations remain high, the cadence of work is accelerating and priorities seem to be multiplying, even as resources are constrained. You described a constant sense of urgency within your teams.

You spoke about your commitment to delivering results while also expressing a need for clearer priorities, more efficient processes and realistic approaches to managing workload and change.

Psychological safety, trust and leadership

One of the clearest messages we heard this year was that your day-to-day experience was often influenced less by broad GAC-wide initiatives than by your immediate workplace environment. Managers, colleagues, team culture, communication practices and governance at the branch, bureau or mission level all played an important role in determining whether workplace pressures felt manageable or overwhelming.

Many of you described leaders who created stability during uncertainty, communicated openly, supported their teams and helped make difficult situations easier to navigate. Others described experiencing inconsistency in management practices, limited communication or difficulty understanding how and why certain decisions were made.

Across our conversations, experiences related to trust in leadership emerged in many forms. They came up in conversations about fairness, transparency, communication and accountability. They also appeared in discussions about the ability to speak up, including whether concerns could be raised safely, whether feedback would be welcomed and whether different perspectives would be heard.

You consistently raised the topic of feedback with us—as something that can be difficult to give, difficult to receive and difficult to discuss openly. Managers also described how they themselves often had to juggle operational pressures , organizational change, employee well-being and their own workload demands, all while trying to give regular feedback. In these circumstances, meaningful and productive dialogue can be harder to have and harder to sustain. Ultimately, these conversations highlighted the importance of psychological safety and how it is built on trust—trust that concerns can be raised respectfully, trust that feedback can be exchanged constructively and trust that differing perspectives can be shared without fear of negative consequences.

What we heard

In many of your conversations with us, you carefully weighed when and how to raise your concerns with your managers and colleagues.

Change, loss and organizational grief

This year, many of you also spoke about loss. For some, this was about colleagues leaving your teams. For others, it involved changes to roles, reporting relationships, responsibilities or expected career paths. For many, it reflected a sense that familiar aspects of our organization were changing in ways that felt difficult to fully understand or influence.

Throughout the year, we observed signs of organizational grief: disappointment, frustration, uncertainty, fatigue and a sense of disconnection. Many of you spoke about losing trusted colleagues, established teams or a sense of continuity that had previously provided stability. At the same time, others described how change can create opportunities for innovation, renewal and new ways of working.

These perspectives are not contradictory. It is possible to recognize opportunities created by change while also acknowledging the impact of what has been lost.

Many of these experiences extended beyond the workplace itself.

Some of you described having difficult conversations with spouses and partners about career uncertainty, workforce adjustment, relocation or future plans. Others spoke about balancing caregiving responsibilities with navigating organizational change. These conversations reminded us that significant workplace change is rarely experienced by employees in isolation.

What we heard

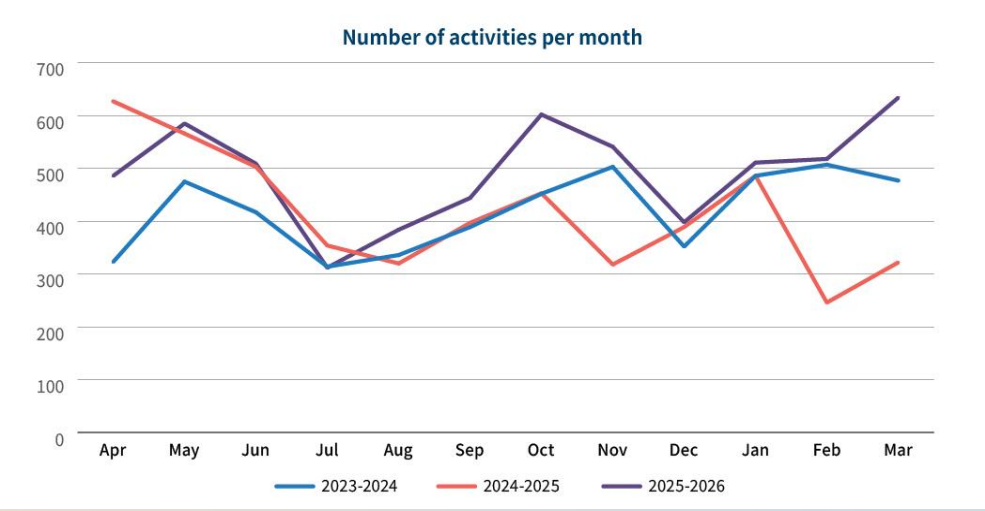
You have described your experience of change not only in terms of what is new, but also in terms of what has been lost—colleagues, stability and a sense of continuity. Check-in survey trends reinforce the importance of paying attention to employee well-being during periods of ongoing transition and transformation.

Individuals and a system under strain and in transition

When we look at these themes—uncertainty, pressure, trust and change—one of the clearest lessons from this year is that organizational pressures are not experienced equally. The quality of communication, clarity of roles and priorities, effectiveness of local mission governance, support available from colleagues and managers and practical realities of how work is organized all influence how pressure is experienced. Strong teams and supportive leadership can help absorb strain. Systemic challenges can make that strain harder to bear, inviting each of us to ask where systemic adjustments might help create healthier and more sustainable conditions for our shared success as teams and as a department. You continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to GAC's mandate. You continue to support one another, adapt to changing circumstances and deliver in increasingly complex environments. And your immediate environment really matters.

Part 2 – Ombud office data

Throughout the year, the Office of the Well-being Ombud and Inspector General had access to information about your experiences at GAC through a variety of sources, including consultations with and stakeholder engagement by the Ombud, employee assistance services, conflict management interventions, prevention activities, mission inspections and Check-in surveys. The information presented in this section does not tell GAC's whole story. Not every employee reaches out to our office, participates in a survey or shares their experiences during an inspection. However, looking across multiple sources helps us better understand what many of you were experiencing throughout the year.



What the data suggest

When viewed separately, findings from consultations, inspections, surveys and outreach activities each tell a different story. When viewed together, several observations stand out:

- More employees engaged with our services this year than at any point in the past three years
- Demand increased during periods of significant organizational and operational change
- Employees increasingly sought support before concerns became crises
- Managers made greater use of consultation and prevention services
- Similar themes appeared across consultations, inspections, surveys and outreach activities

The significance of these observations lies not only in the numbers themselves but also in the patterns they reveal.

A year of increased engagement

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, the ombud's office delivered 5,924 activities, representing a 19% increase over the previous fiscal year. Each interaction we have with you on a case—whether one-on-one or in a group—is counted as an activity.

Fiscal Year	Total activities	Monthly average
2023-2024	5,031	419
2024-2025	4,981	415
2025-2026	5,924	494

This increase occurred during a year characterized by CER discussions, workforce adjustment activities, organizational restructuring, geopolitical crises and ongoing uncertainty about priorities and future directions. At the same time, more of you choosing to reach out may also reflect greater awareness of available supports and growing confidence in the confidentiality and usefulness of our services.

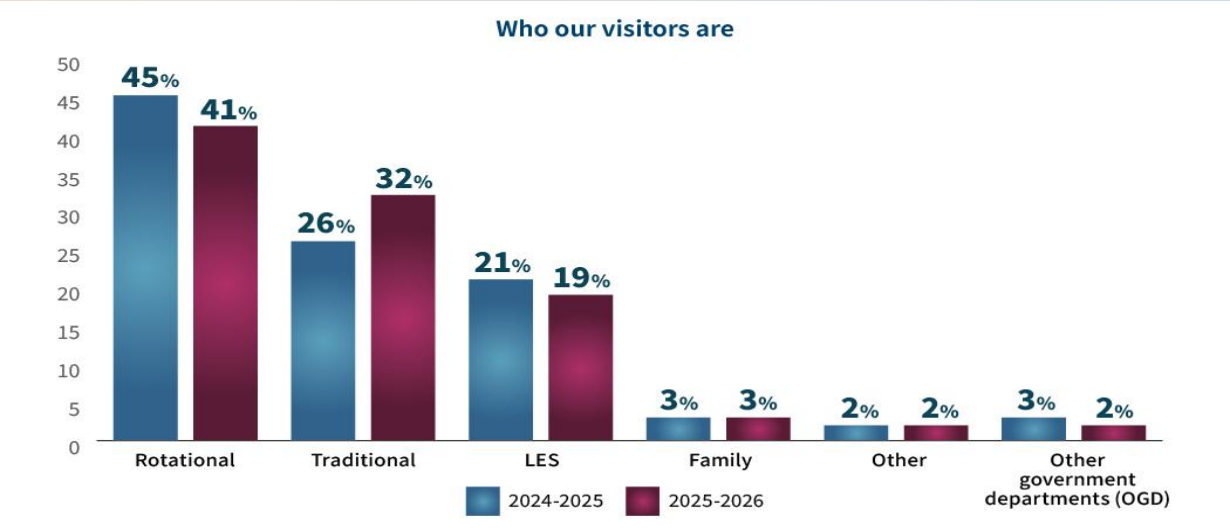
Activity patterns reflect organizational life at GAC

Activity levels continue to follow a relatively consistent annual pattern. Demand tends to decrease during the summer months, when many employees are on leave, completing rotations or working at a reduced operational tempo. Activity then rises steadily through the fall and winter before reaching peak levels toward the end of the fiscal year. What changed this year was not the pattern itself, but its intensity.

Peaks are becoming higher

Annual peaks have increased over time: The data remind us that workplace well-being is not static. It responds to organizational realities, operational demands and broader events that influence how work is experienced.

Fiscal year	Highest month	Activities
2023–2024	February	507
2024–2025	April	627
2025–2026	March	634



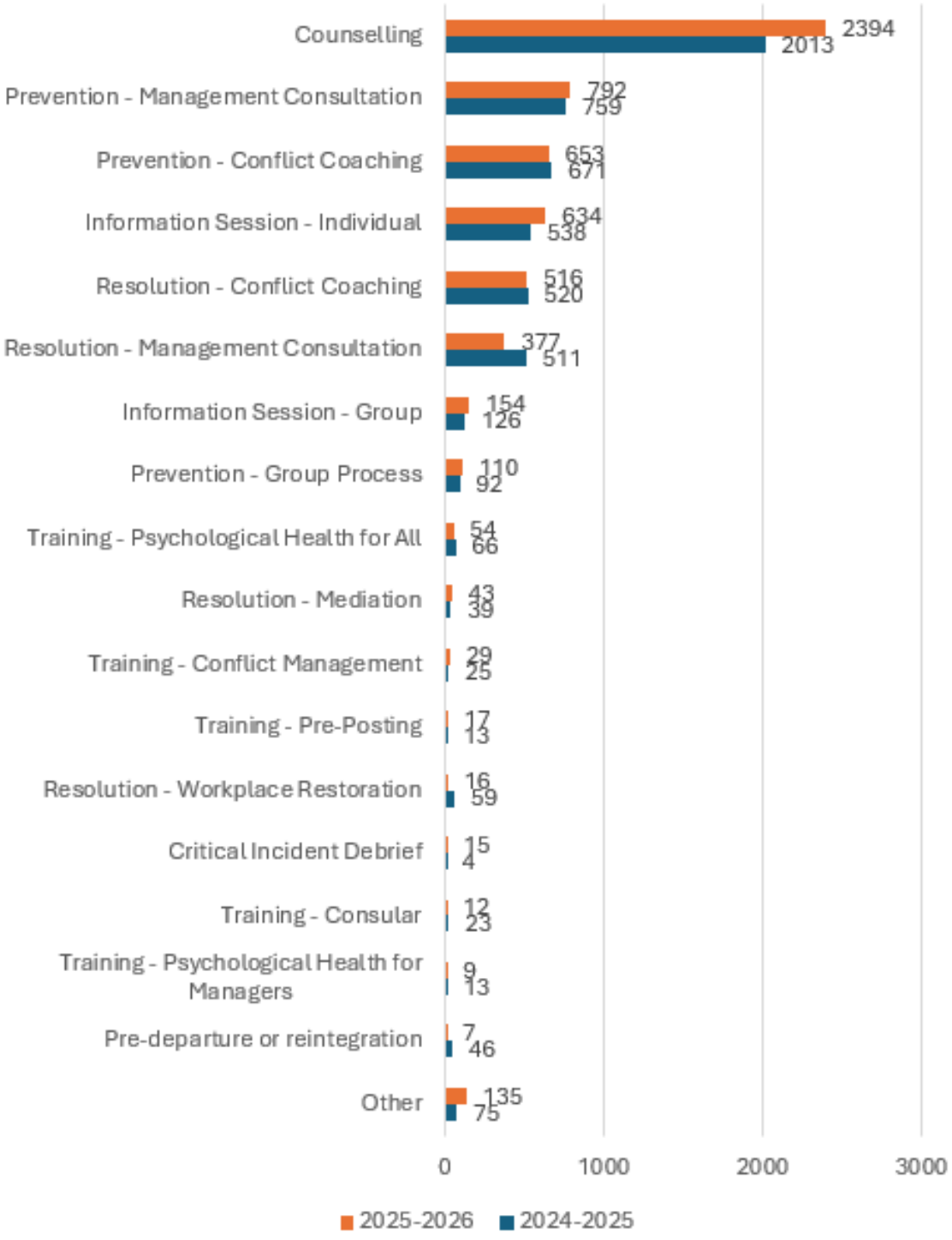
Note that the percentage of cases does not add up to 100% as some cases are not assigned a geographic location if the cases involve a large number of participants across missions or regions.

Hidden work and the hidden workforce: families, spouses and caregiving

Many of you reminded us this year that work is only one part of your reality. Some of you are caring for children, supporting aging parents, managing health challenges or balancing professional demands with other responsibilities. Those serving abroad must make significant adjustments, including enduring family separation and navigating the uncertainty and repercussions of global events. The families of those serving at HQ also bear burdens related to long hours and the impacts of our work, including crisis response, on our mental health.

We heard a lot about the important role spouses and family members play in supporting GAC's work. While they are often invisible in organizational conversations, their experiences can have a profound impact on employee well-being and effectiveness and, particularly, on the success of assignments abroad. Across our casework, it became clear that many workplace challenges cannot be fully understood without considering the broader context in which employees live and work.

Number of activities per service



Seeking support earlier

One of the most notable changes observed over the past several years has been the increasing use of services for prevention and early intervention.

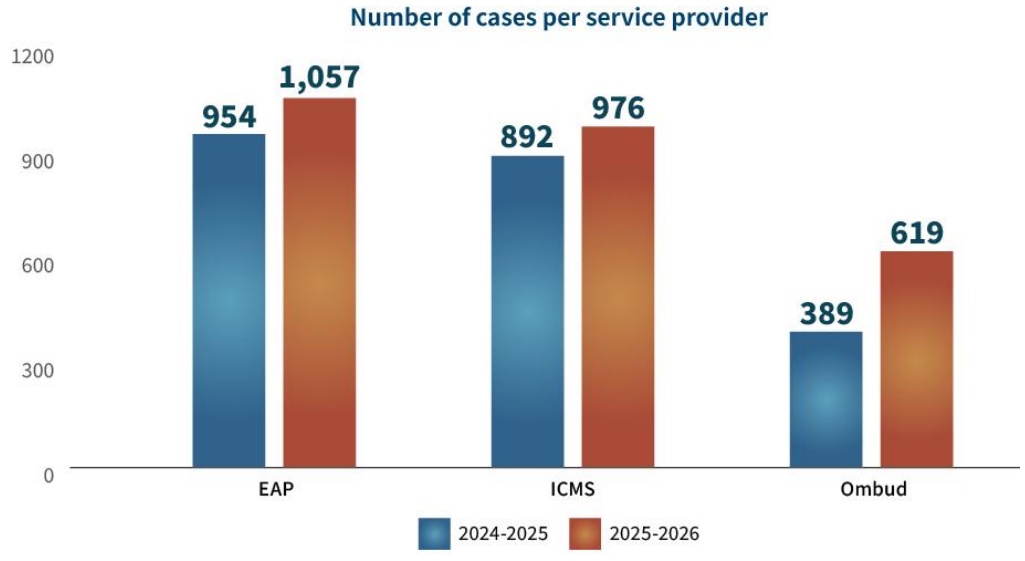
Historically, many employees tended to seek support once relationships had deteriorated, formal complaints had been initiated or workplace situations had become difficult to manage.

This year, we observed more employees reaching out earlier. Employees increasingly sought guidance while concerns were still emerging. Managers requested support before difficult conversations took place. Teams asked for assistance before tensions became entrenched.

While every situation is different, this pattern suggests a growing willingness to use workplace support services proactively rather than as a last resort.

Managers reach out too

Managers increasingly used confidential consultations across our services to think through challenging workplace situations, understand how to support the mental health of their employees, prepare for difficult conversations, explore options and understand possible consequences before acting. Many of the situations managers discussed involved competing priorities, communication challenges, workload pressures or interpersonal dynamics rather than misconduct or formal disputes.



Other sources of data

While individual ombud, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Informal Conflict Management Services (ICMS) consultations remain central to our work, they are only one source of information. Throughout the year, our office gathered organizational insights through multiple channels, described below.

Mission inspections

Mission inspections provide a structured view of workplace conditions, leadership practices, governance, communication and organizational culture within missions. During the reporting period, the inspection team completed 15 mission management-focused inspections through on-site, hybrid and virtual approaches. These inspections resulted in:

- more than 100 recommendations related to mission management
- approximately 25 issues identified as areas to monitor
- more than 50 positive practices
- discussions with over 580 mission employees, in addition to consultations with headquarters and mission leadership

Mission e-Inspections

Mission e-Inspections complement traditional inspections by providing a broad view of employee perceptions and experiences across the mission network. During the reporting period, 73 missions participated in e-Inspections, representing approximately 40% of GAC's mission network. These e-inspections included:

- conducting 69 debriefs with heads of mission and engaging with HQ senior management
- gathering 1,956 employee responses and more than 3,700 comments
- identifying mission network trends related to leadership effectiveness, governance, trust, communication and workplace well-being

GAC Check-in survey

The GAC Check-in survey, which takes place three times a year, provides another perspective on employee experiences. The Check-in survey was launched in 2024 for all employees to provide ongoing, real-time insights into workplace well-being, leadership strengths and areas for improvement. During the reporting period, Office of the Well-being Ombud and Inspector General (ZID) led two rounds of the Check-in survey (October 2025 and February 2026). You can track survey results on the ZID Sphere community site. Unlike individual consultations, survey data help identify trends over time across larger groups of employees and allows us to compare experiences across the department, locations and employee groups.

Reaching employees across the network

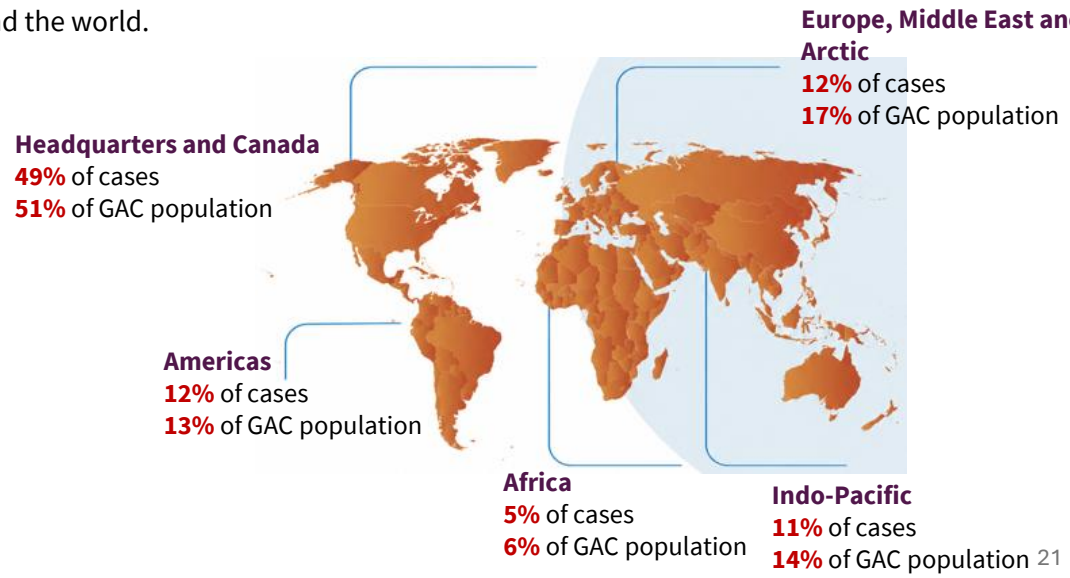
Our activities included direct engagement with employees across HQ, regional offices and missions abroad. The geographic distribution of consultations remained broadly consistent with GAC's overall workforce distribution:

- HQ and Canada: 49% of cases, representing approximately 51% of the workforce
- Americas (excluding Canada): 12% of cases, representing approximately 13% of the workforce
- Europe, the Middle East and the Arctic: 12% of cases, representing approximately 17% of the workforce
- Africa: 5% of cases, representing approximately 6% of the workforce

	% of cases	% of GAC Population
HQ and Canada	49%	51%
Americas	12%	13%
Europe, Middle East, Arctic	12%	17%
Africa	5%	6%
Indo-Pacific	11%	14%

Note: The percentage of cases does not add up to 100% as some cases are not assigned a geographic location if they involve participants across missions or regions, including employees and family members of Canada-based staff (CBS) reaching out for services.

In addition to consultations, our team conducted outreach visits in all geographic regions and continued to provide services to employees in Canada and around the world.



Serving abroad in a changing world

Throughout the year, we heard from employees serving in missions who were navigating increasingly complex operating environments.

Many of you worked in locations affected by political instability, security concerns, armed conflict, evacuations, crisis response activities or prolonged uncertainty. These realities often created challenges that extended beyond operational demands.

For employees abroad, professional responsibilities frequently intersected with concerns for personal safety, family well-being and the broader impact of global events.

At the same time, we witnessed extraordinary professionalism, adaptability and dedication as you continued supporting Canadians, advancing Canada's interests and assisting colleagues under difficult circumstances.

These conversations reinforced an important lesson: Supporting employees in complex operating environments requires more than responding when crises occur. It requires ongoing attention to preparedness, psychological health, recovery and the conditions that sustain people through prolonged periods of challenge.

Strong leadership, effective governance and supportive teams often provided important sources of stability, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Snapshot of our services: supporting employees in the Middle East

This year, employees across several missions in the Middle East faced extraordinary professional and personal challenges as regional tensions escalating, contributing to a rapidly evolving security environment, including regional conflict. Evacuations, changing security conditions, increased operational demands and concerns for colleagues, family members and personal safety created sustained pressures for many serving in the region.

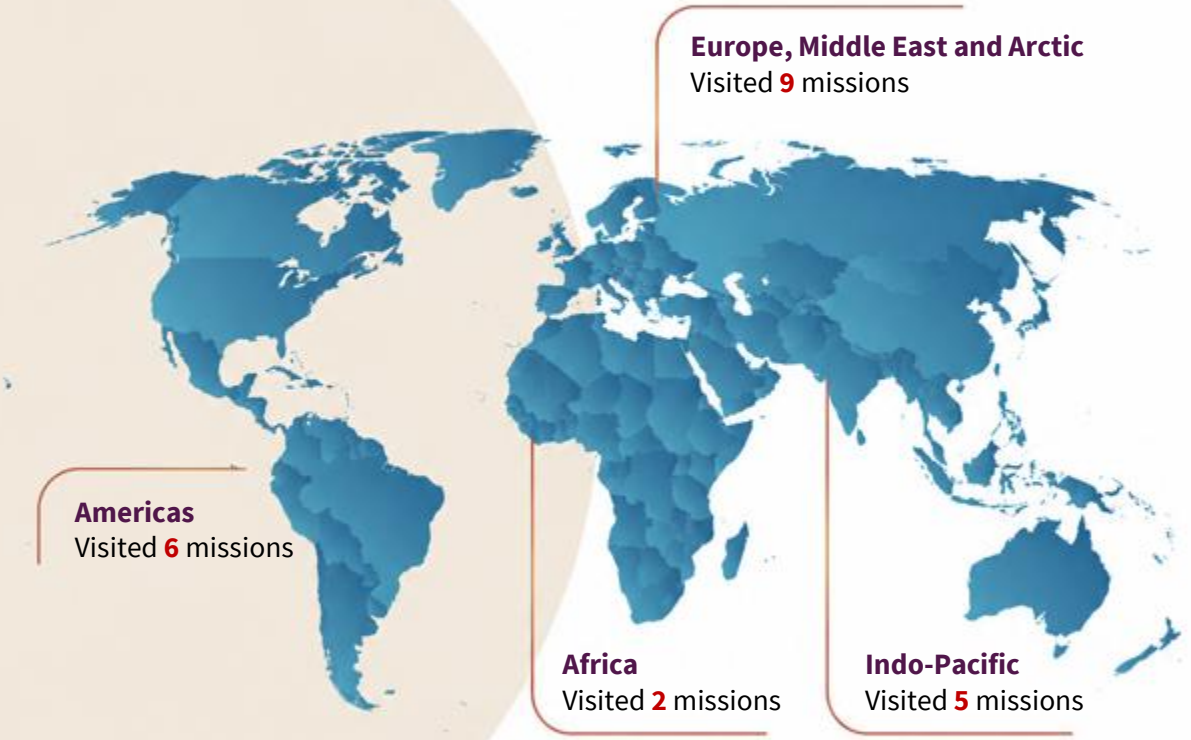
The EAP provided targeted psychosocial support in **nine affected missions**, including for evacuated personnel, members of skeleton teams who remained at post and surge staff supporting crisis response operations. Support included:

- individual and management consultations and wellness check-ins following particularly stressful events
- timely interventions to help employees manage uncertainty and maintain psychological well-being
- **eleven workshops** for CBS, locally engaged staff (LES) and family members focused on resilience, stress management, coping strategies and well-being during periods of instability
- **three dedicated workshops** for surge personnel operating in demanding emergency response roles

As the situation evolved, the focus shifted toward recovery through:

- recovery and safe-return workshops
- ongoing well-being monitoring to identify the cumulative effects of sustained operational stress
- follow-up support for employees transitioning out of crisis-response roles and returning to regular duties

An important lesson from our work this year is that supporting employees in crisis-affected environments requires attention not only during emergencies but also throughout the recovery and reintegration process



Where and how we work

Activities with visitors and teams also take place during visits to our missions. The Ombud also offers office hours when leading inspections (confidential conversations that are separate from the inspection process). During the past fiscal year, our team members conducted several ombud, EAP and ICMS visits across the world, including:

- six to the Americas
- nine to Europe, the Middle East and the Arctic
- five to the Indo-Pacific region
- two to Africa

Part 3 - What we learned this year

One of the unique contributions of an ombud office is the ability to identify recurring themes while preserving the confidentiality of the individuals who shared their experiences. The observations that follow emerged repeatedly across our work throughout the year and represent the patterns that were most visible as we listened to you, supported you and observed the department through a period of significant change.

Throughout this report, we have drawn on the experiences you shared through ombud consultations, EAP services, conflict management interventions, prevention activities, outreach sessions, mission inspections and Check-in surveys. Each source provides a different perspective. A consultation reflects an individual experience. A survey can identify broader trends. An inspection provides insight into local workplace realities. Taken together, we found the data often pointed in the same direction in terms of your experiences at work in this moment.

Insight 1 - Uncertainty fuels anxiety and ambiguity hinders adaptation

One of the most prominent observations to emerge this year was that uncertainty was rarely caused by change alone. Many of you understood that organizational priorities evolve, structures change, teams adapt and resources fluctuate. What often proved more challenging was understanding what those changes meant for your work, your team, your workload and your future.

Questions about priorities, staffing decisions, organizational direction, implementation timelines and future expectations appeared repeatedly. While the specific concerns varied, they often reflected a common need for clarity.

We observed that people can adapt to difficult circumstances remarkably well when they understand what is happening, why it is happening and how it affects them. The challenge becomes greater when information is incomplete, difficult to interpret, delayed or constantly evolving.

A recurring message this year was that, while organizations cannot eliminate uncertainty, they can influence how it is experienced. Clarity, transparency, communication and opportunities for dialogue help people navigate change with greater confidence, even when the answers themselves are difficult.

Insight 2 - Local conditions shape workplace experience

A second observation emerged consistently across our work.

Many of you described largely similar organizational realities: uncertainty, workload pressures, changing priorities, workforce adjustment and increasing operational complexity. Yet your experiences of these pressures often differed significantly.

The factors that most shaped your experiences were often found in the immediate work environment.

Managers, colleagues, communication practices, local mission governance, workload management, team culture and leadership behaviours all influenced whether challenges felt manageable or overwhelming. Strong teams and supportive, inclusive leaders often acted as protective factors during periods of uncertainty. Where communication was limited, expectations were unclear or trust was strained, those same pressures often felt heavier.

We also observed that workplace concerns rarely existed in isolation.

Conflict often emerged in already strained environments. Questions about fairness frequently intersected with concerns about transparency, communication or decision making. Hesitation to raise concerns was often linked to trust and psychological safety. Misunderstandings frequently developed when people were operating under pressure, navigating competing priorities or had limited opportunities for meaningful dialogue. While large organizational initiatives set the context, local workplace conditions and team dynamics often determine how that context is lived.

Insight 3 - Commitment is strong but capacity is at its limit

Across consultations, counselling services, inspections, surveys and outreach activities, we heard about fatigue, uncertainty, change exhaustion, increasing demands and concerns about sustainability. At the same time, we witnessed extraordinary professionalism, adaptability, compassion and dedication.

You continued supporting Canadians through crises. You kept helping colleagues navigate difficult transitions. You adapted to changing expectations, evolving priorities and complex operating environments while continuing to deliver results.

At the same time, deep commitment does not mean unlimited capacity.

Throughout the year, many of you described sustaining performance through personal effort, flexibility and perseverance. These qualities are valuable and often necessary during periods of disruption. However, they are most sustainable when supported by healthy workplace conditions, realistic expectations, efficient processes, effective leadership and adequate resources. Resilience can help people navigate difficult circumstances. But individual effort alone is not the solution to managing or absorbing intense organizational pressures.

Insight 4 - Early signals matter

This year we saw an increasing use of support services before workplace concerns became crises. More employees sought guidance while situations were still developing. More managers requested support before difficult conversations took place. More teams engaged in prevention activities, workshops, facilitated discussions, coaching and conflict management services.

This trend matters because many workplace issues begin long before they become significant conflicts, formal complaints, grievances, or investigations. They often begin as uncertainty, misunderstandings, communication challenges, unresolved tensions, perceptions of fairness, workload pressures or concerns that feel difficult to raise.

For individuals, early support can reduce stress, improve understanding and create additional options for resolution. For teams and organizations, these early signals can help identify emerging pressures, strengthen relationships and create opportunities to address concerns before they become more disruptive.

Successful prevention often goes unseen. It is reflected in the difficult conversation that happens early, the misunderstanding that is clarified, the team that receives support before relationships deteriorate or the employee who seeks help before reaching a breaking point. These outcomes may not appear in organizational metrics, but they are among the most important contributions that we, in the ombud office, make with you to support healthy workplaces.

Part 4 - Reflections and implications

Taken together, these observations point clearly to the fact that: healthy workplace conditions and organizational effectiveness are deeply connected. As GAC continues to adapt to a rapidly changing environment, uncertainty and complexity will likely persist in the workplace. The challenge is not necessarily to eliminate these pressures but to create the conditions that help people and teams navigate them successfully. Clear priorities, effective communication, supportive leadership, psychological safety and opportunities for early dialogue can all help make complex environments more manageable. As GAC navigates uncertainty and changing operational realities, it is clear that workplace conditions and organizational effectiveness deeply connected and that several areas deserve continued attention.

Provide clarity during change

Help employees understand not only what is changing, but also what those changes mean in practice for roles, priorities, teams and workloads.

Reduce sources of friction

Simplify processes, clarify responsibilities and address barriers that add unnecessary complexity to daily work.

Support managers

Continue investing in leadership capacity, support and development to strengthen teams across the organization; managers are one of the strongest influences on workplace experience.

Build trust and psychological safety

Create environments where concerns can be raised respectfully, feedback can be shared constructively, and different perspectives can be discussed openly.

Focus on prevention and early intervention

Continue investing in supports that help individuals and teams address challenges early, before they become crises.



Looking ahead

As we look ahead, we remain mindful of how the state of the world, economic pressures, growing climate-related concerns among other issues are factors that can shape our workplace experiences in significant ways. The CER will continue to shape employee experiences at GAC as teams adapt to workforce reductions, reorganizations and changing responsibilities. The focus of our work in this context has shifted to helping teams and leaders rebuild trust, strengthen collaboration and navigate ongoing transition. Through workshops, coaching circles and leadership support, we will continue to assist employees, managers and heads of mission and their teams as they adapt to new organizational realities.

We are also paying close attention to the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on employee experiences, another key feature of changes at work. AI offers opportunities to improve efficiency and reduce administrative burden and, at the same time, raises important questions about workload, changing skill requirements, professional identity, trust and job security. As with other forms of organizational change, our interest is not in the technology itself, but rather in supporting employees as they adapt to these changes, particularly with regard to the impact of AI on their work, well-being, psychological safety and sense of connection to their teams and organization. How technological change is communicated, implemented and supported may ultimately be just as important as the technology itself.

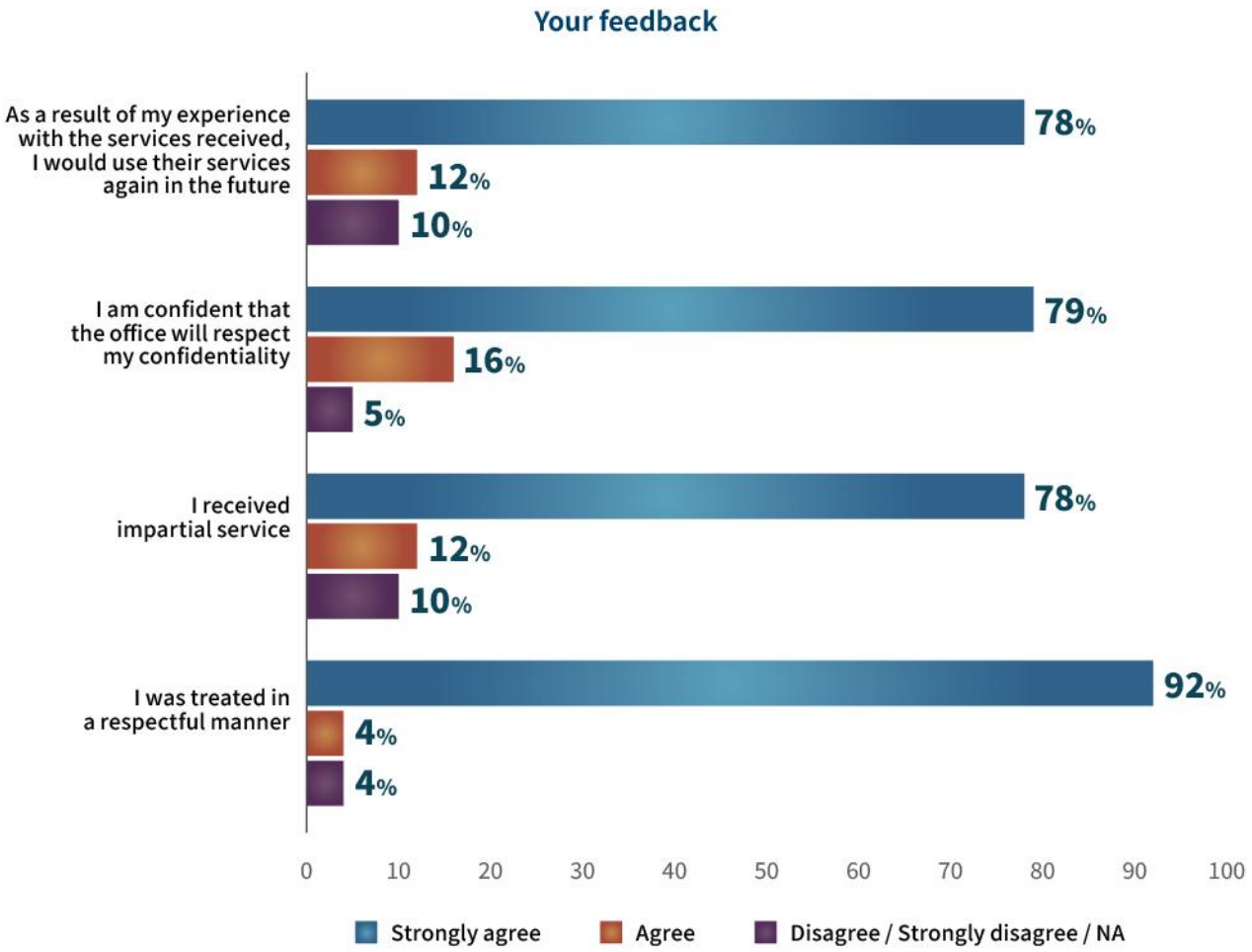
We are also expanding our work in prevention. New initiatives with consular operations and the Peace and Security Programs Bureau will focus on identifying and mitigating specific psychological risks associated with work that involves exposure to potentially traumatic material, vicarious trauma, fatigue and burnout. The goal is to provide employees and managers with practical tools to manage known risks before they become serious concerns.

We are continuing to pay close attention to the employee experience of formal recourse processes, including investigations and other formal complaint mechanisms. Timely, transparent and high-quality processes are essential for accountability, reducing unnecessary stress and maintaining trust.

Finally, we will continue to observe what our data and conversations tells us about the experiences of equity seeking groups in our department. Across all our work, including these areas of focus, a consistent theme is helping people navigate change in ways that support both organizational effectiveness and psychological well-being.

Your feedback

Your feedback is valuable because it comes directly from you, the people we support. We are not looking for perfect scores. Whether your experience was excellent, average or frustrating, your perspective helps us make informed decisions about our processes, communication and the way we support visitors every day. Every response contributes to building a better visitor experience.



Meet the ombud office team

The following team members served in the ombud office during the 2025–2026 reporting period, including those who have now moved on. We have chosen to include the whole ombud team in recognition of their contributions and as a heartfelt thank you for their service, dedication and friendship. We would also like to express a special thank you to the inspections team, including our colleagues who work on the GAC Check-in survey.



Ayesha Rekhi
Well-being Ombud
and
Inspector General



Tejumo Ogouma
Acting Deputy
Ombud



Joanna Ignaszewska
Acting Deputy Director
Employee Assistance
Program



Ariana Tamas
Employee Assistance
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Brigitte Cadieux
Employee Assistance
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Deborah Levans
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Program Counsellor



Kaitlin Edmonds
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Ben Gray
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Tanya Prévost
Informal Conflict Management Practitioner



Irene Abou Hamad
Adviser (LES)



Pauline Seto
Analyst



Caroline Audet
Senior Adviser



Birgit Copeland
Executive Assistant



Fatimazahra Nadi
Assistant Coordinator



Claude Lanthier
Administrative Assistant

Annex A - The four guiding principles of the ombud office

The Office of the Well-being Ombud and Inspector General exists to provide employees with a safe, trusted and impartial place to discuss workplace concerns, explore options and seek support. Our work is guided by the International Ombuds Association's four core principles—independence, impartiality, confidentiality and informality—which shape our office's daily operations.

Why these principles matter

Together, these four principles can help to create conditions that allow employees to speak openly about difficult issues, seek help early and explore options before concerns escalate. The result is a space of trust where individuals can discuss workplace challenges, test ideas, gain perspective and consider possible paths forward.

These principles also enable the ombud office to identify recurring themes, emerging concerns and systemic pressures while protecting the confidentiality of the individuals who share their experiences. By helping people address concerns early and providing leadership with anonymized observations about workplace trends, the ombud office supports both individual well-being and organizational learning.

Trust in these principles is the foundation of our work. It allows employees to use our services with confidence and enables the ombud office to contribute to healthier workplaces, stronger working relationships and a more effective organization.

Independence

The ombud office operates independently from management structures and formal decision-making processes. While we work collaboratively with partners across the department, we are not part of the chain of command and do not make operational, staffing, labour relations or disciplinary decisions. This independence allows us to hear concerns objectively, identify emerging trends and raise systemic issues without being influenced by organizational interests or individual outcomes.

Impartiality

We do not take sides.

Our role is not to advocate for any individual, group, manager or organizational interest. Instead, we strive to understand concerns from all perspectives, promote fair processes and help individuals explore options for addressing their situations. Impartiality allows us to create a space where employees, managers, executives and teams can engage openly and constructively, knowing that our focus is on fairness and resolution rather than on specific outcomes.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is fundamental to the trust employees place in our office.

Information shared with us is kept confidential, except in certain exceptional circumstances where there is a risk of serious harm or when required by law. We do not disclose the identity of individuals who contact us without their permission, nor do we share information that could reasonably identify them. Confidentiality allows employees to discuss concerns, test ideas and explore options in a psychologically safe environment without fear of triggering a formal process.

Informality

The ombud office is an informal resource.

We do not conduct investigations, make decisions, determine facts or participate in formal grievance, complaint or disciplinary processes. Instead, we help employees understand options, facilitate communication, support conflict resolution and navigate available resources. Employees choose whether and how to use our services, and discussions with our office do not constitute formal notice to the organization. Informality creates an important space between remaining silent and initiating a formal process.

Annex B – Our on-demand services

Your gateway to support from our office is an email to ombud@international.gc.ca. Our services are offered to all CBS and their dependents and LES. We also offer certain services to employees of other government departments working at our missions.

Ombud services

Confidential conversations with the ombud or deputy ombud are your starting point to help you address your situation and navigate the system.

What are ombud services?

The ombud office offers a safe environment where you can discuss your concerns or issues by exploring your options with you. An adviser is available to deal specifically with LES issues.

How do ombud services work?

When you have a confidential conversation with the ombud, deputy ombud or staff, we listen to understand issues from your point of view, reframe them to develop potential options for resolution and guide you in dealing directly with other people. We can also help you improve your skills in addressing concerns, including by making referrals to other services.

What else can ombud services do?

We bring issues to the surface and identify opportunities for systemic change within the organization.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Confidential conversations with our counsellors can help you address various life and work-related issues.

What is the EAP?

The EAP is a voluntary, confidential and short-term counselling service that supports individuals in overcoming personal and professional challenges.

How does the EAP work?

We help people better understand their personal and professional situations. We help address life and work-related concerns and promote mental well-being by empowering employees and connecting them with resources.

What else can the EAP do?

We provide managers with guidance on how to handle difficult situations related to employee mental health. We also provide training to all staff on issues related to psychological health, as well as support individual and teams dealing with potentially traumatic situation related to critical incidents.

Informal Conflict Management Services (ICMS)

Confidential conversations with our practitioners can help manage conflicts and promote positive interactions.

What is ICMS?

ICMS is a voluntary, diligent and informal approach to managing and resolving conflicts in the workplace. We assist employees, managers and teams in overcoming workplace issues and challenges.

How does ICMS work?

ICMS provides:

- individual conflict management coaching sessions that support reflection and help explore ways to handle conflict situations
- facilitated discussions and mediations with the goal of improving communication and understanding
- customized group interventions with a focus on improving team dynamics and creating a psychologically healthy and safe workplace
- advice to managers on how to handle challenging workplace situations
- services and training to all staff on issues related to team dynamics and a healthy workplace

Annex C

Inquiry handling process: Overview

1



Receiving the request

Your message arrives in the ombud@international.gc.ca email inbox, where it's carefully reviewed by the intake officer

2



Sorting the inquiry by service

Your request is thoughtfully categorized to ensure it reaches the right support stream. It may fall into one of the following areas:

- ombud or deputy ombud
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Informal Conflict Management Services (ICMS)
- LES matters
- General inquiries

3



Working with a specialist

Once your request is sorted and forwarded:

- it's logged in our secure tracking system for transparency and follow-up
- the ombud, the deputy ombud or a specialist from EAP, ICMS or LES matters will reach out to you directly
- if you sent a general inquiry, we may contact you to better understand your needs

4



Taking action

Depending on your situation, support may include either in person or by videoconference:

- One-on-one discussions
- Facilitated conversations with others
- Group sessions involving you and others

5



Closing the loop

To protect your privacy, your case information is updated in our tracking system, and any related emails or documents are securely deleted after 30 days

6



Identifying systemic issues

We regularly review trends in our tracking system. Specialists also share monthly insights based on what they hear. If a recurring issue is identified, the ombud may raise it with senior management to help drive positive change

Annex D - Resources and recourse mechanisms

Resources, support services and recourse mechanisms for Canada-based employees

For most issues, your management team should be your first point of contact.

The Office of the Well-Being Ombud and Inspector General (ZID) is also always available to help you navigate the system and explore your options in a confidential manner.

		Collective agreement dispute or work-related issue	Interpersonal dispute or disagreement	Discrimination	Workplace harassment and violence	Conflict of interest	Values and Ethics Code Misconduct	Wrongdoing	Financial misconduct	Personnel security	Network Acceptable Use Policy	Refusal to work	Compensation Claim
Information and guidance					Prevention of Workplace Harassment and Prevention Unit (HWPH)	Values and Ethics Unit (HWPE)	Values and Ethics Unit (HWPE)	Special Investigations and Internal Disclosure Division (VBZ)		Personnel Security Services (CSCP)	Corporate IT Security Unit (CSCI)	Occupational Health and Safety Team (OHS Team)	Occupational Health and Safety Team (OHS Team)
		Other advisers (e.g., mentor, manager, or employee networks)					Other advisers (e.g., mentor, manager, or employee networks)	Other advisers (e.g., mentor, manager, or employee networks)					
		Union representatives											
Formal mechanism or investigation	**Mechanism**	CBS: Grievance			Investigation	Conflict of interest report	Report on misconduct - Investigation	Disclosure of wrongdoing - Investigation	Investigation	Security investigation		Official refusal to work for dangerous work	Submit a claim for compensation
				Discrimination complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission	Notice of occurrence of harassment and violence			Senior officer for internal disclosure, VBZ	Director, Special Investigations and Internal Disclosure Division	Personnel Security Services (CSCP)	Corporate IT Security Unit (CSCI)	Management team	Management team
	Contact	Union representatives			Prevention of Workplace Harassment and Prevention Unit (HWPH)	Values and Ethics Unit (HWPE)	Values and Ethics Unit (HWPE)					OHS Team	OHS Team
		Management team					Union representatives						
							Management team (with HWL Support)	Public Sector Integrity Commissioner				OHS Committee	
	Possible outcome	Corrective measures at an individual level	Requested corrective measures or other measures deemed appropriate	Damages and/or disciplinary process, as appropriate		Measures to mitigate the conflict of interest	Corrective measures at an individual level	Administrative measure and/or disciplinary process, as appropriate		Revocation of reliability status or security clearance	Administrative measure and/or disciplinary process, as appropriate	Correction to the exposure to dangerous work	Compensation board accepts or refuses the claim
		Requested corrective measures or other measures deemed appropriate		Corrective measures at an individual level	Corrective measures at an organizational level			Corrective measures at an individual and/or organizational level	Recommendations to management at an organizational level			Involvement of OHS Federal Regulator (ESDC Labour) for their intervention	Employee or employer proceed to appeals process of the compensation board decision

Resources, support services and recourse mechanisms for locally engaged staff

For most issues, your management team should be your first point of contact.

The Office of the Well-Being Ombud and Inspector General (ZID) is also always available to help you navigate the system and explore your options in a confidential manner.

		Terms and conditions of employment or work-related issue	Interpersonal dispute or disagreement	Discrimination	Workplace harassment and violence	Conflict of interest	Breach of the code of conduct misconduct	Breach of the Code of Conduct Wrongdoing	Financial misconduct	Personnel security	Network acceptable use Policy	Refusal to work	Compensation claim
Information and Guidance					Prevention of Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Unit (HWPH)	Values and Ethics Unit (HWPE)		Special Investigations and Internal Disclosure (VBZ)		Readiness Program Manager (RPM) Readiness Manager (RM)	Person at the mission responsible for IT	Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Team	LES pensions and Insurance (HLDP)
		Other advisers (e.g., mentor, manager, HR section, LES committee member, LES private Teams channels, LES WhatsApp group, employee networks)					Other advisers (e.g., mentor, manager, HR section, LES committee member, LES private Teams channels, LES What's up group, employee networks)						
		LES communication and engagement officer (HLDS)											
Formal Mechanism or Investigation	**Mechanism**	LES Grievances				Investigation	Conflict of interest report	Report of misconduct-Investigation	Disclosing a wrongdoing-Investigation	Investigation	Report to supervisor or RPM/RM	Report to person at the mission responsible for IT	Official Refusal to work for dangerous work	Contact HLDP to learn about the compensation methods available to LES
				Canadian Human Rights Commission (Canadian citizens or permanent residents)		Notice of occurrence of harassment and violence							
	Contact	Supervisor/ Manager / Head of Mission			Prevention of Workplace Harassment and Prevention Unit (HWPH)	Values and Ethics Unit (HWPE)			Senior Officer for Internal Disclosure (VBZ)	Director, Special Investigations and Internal Disclosure Division (VBZ)	Management team	Person at the mission responsible for IT	Management team OHS Team	Management team
		Management team							Public Sector Integrity Commissioner		Readiness & Program Manager (RPM) Readiness Manager (RM)		OHS Committee	HLDP
	Possible outcome	Corrective measures at an individual level	Interpersonal or relational change	Damages and/or disciplinary process, as appropriate		Remedies for the conflict of interest	Corrective measures at an individual and/or organizational level		Administrative and/or disciplinary process, as appropriate		Revocation of reliability status or security clearance	Administrative and/or disciplinary process, as appropriate	Correction to the exposure to dangerous work	
		Requested corrective measures or other measures deemed appropriate		Corrective measures at an individual level	Corrective measures at an organizational level				Corrective measures at an individual and/ or organizational level	Recommendations to Management at an organizational level			Involvement of OHS Federal Regulator (ESDC Labour) for their intervention	Employee or employer proceed to appeals process of the compensation board decision