

PRESS RELEASE no. 1

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THE 2012-2013 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE QUÉBEC OMBUDSMAN

Widening gap between stated services and those actually available

Québec City, September 25, 2013 – The Québec Ombudsman's 2012-2013 annual report was tabled in the National Assembly today. While recognizing the close cooperation offered by public services to correct the shortcomings and mistakes that the institution found during the course of the year, the Québec Ombudsman notes that the gap between stated services and those actually available is still widening because of budget constraints, which are being felt more keenly. "Each time a budget constraint is announced, one hears the hallowed phrase saying that direct services will not be affected. But that is not true anymore." says Raymonde Saint-Germain.

To cope with this lack of resources - and faced with increasing demands - public services are doing their best to find alternative solutions. For example they are referring more and more citizens to community organizations and private companies with whom they sign service agreements. Although she has no reservations about these agreements in principle, the Ombudsperson has voiced her concern about a lack of quality control. "What I find deplorable is the lack of accountability we have observed concerning actual outcomes for citizens. Many of these citizens are vulnerable, and should not be abandoned to their fate," said Ms. Saint-Germain.

This year, the Québec Ombudsman noticed:

- The lack of monitoring and quality control of care and services in some private residences to which the public network sent seniors with a loss of autonomy, pending the availability of spaces in public residential and long-term care centres. (Pages 78 to 81)
- Shortcomings in the living environment, the food, and monitoring in some intermediate or family-type resources housing people with physical and intellectual

disabilities, which are contracted to the public network. The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux did not carry out any assessment visits to these types of resource in 2012-2013. (Pages 75 and 76)

- The need to tighten the Ministère de la Famille's supervision of daycare centres and coordinating offices for family daycare, to ensure educational quality and consistent application of standards. (Page 48)

Another sign of the gap between stated services and those actually available are the long wait times for citizens needing a public service, and problems accessing it. These were the cause of 37% of substantiated complaints lodged with regard to departments and agencies, and 44% of complaints and reports lodged with regard to health and social services institutions.

In conclusion, the Ombudsperson called for increased vigilance and transparency, given the context. Vigilance to ensure that protection of persons and respect for their rights are prioritized by both public organizations and external service providers given responsibilities that nonetheless remain in the public interest. Transparency, because citizens are entitled to know which services are really available and under which conditions they can be accessed, anywhere in Québec.

The Québec Ombudsman's annual report is posted on its website at www.protecteurducitoyen.qc.ca/en/annualreport.

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