



# THE QUÉBEC OMBUDSMAN

## Its status, mission, and mandate

The Québec Ombudsman is an institution independent of the Québec government. The institution has been under Raymonde Saint-Germain's leadership since April 2006. Ms. Saint-Germain was appointed by the National Assembly and is accountable to it.

The institution's mission is to ensure that the rights of individuals, businesses, and associations are respected in their relations with the public service. The Québec Ombudsman takes action every day to prevent and correct abuse, errors, negligence, disregard for rights, and inaction by public services.

The Québec Ombudsman has had the authority to intervene with government departments and most public agencies since the *Public Protector Act* was adopted in 1969 and has been responsible for implementing the *Act respecting the Health and Social Services Ombudsman* since April 2006. It generally acts as a second level of recourse in response to citizens' complaints. It may take direct action further to reports of errors or injustices and may also intervene of its own initiative with the health and social services institutions under its jurisdiction.

The Québec Ombudsman's mandate allows it to help improve the quality of services provided by these government departments, public agencies, or institutions. It also assists Members of the National Assembly in their role with the public.

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## Its action

The Québec Ombudsman has the power of recommendation. Its capacity to effect change is essentially based on its ability to influence and persuade. If, after making a recommendation, the Québec Ombudsman sees that appropriate corrective measures have not been taken in a timely fashion, it may notify the government. If it sees fit, it may also publicize the case in a special report or in its annual report to the National Assembly.

The Québec Ombudsman's actions have a collective impact when it intervenes in response to complaints or reports and corrects the problem for everyone concerned. Such actions are a true reflection of its motto, *Remedy for one citizen—remedy for all citizens*. It may also conduct systemic investigations into public service governance issues on its own initiative.

The Québec Ombudsman also takes preventive action. To correct detrimental situations and prevent them from recurring, it may call the attention of the National Assembly, government departments, public agencies, or health and social services institutions to the need for legislative, regulatory, or administrative reforms that it believes to be in the public interest. When it deems it appropriate, it proposes amendments in order to improve bills and draft regulations.

These actions are made possible through the delegation of certain of the Québec Ombudsperson's powers to staff members, who are then granted the title of "Québec Ombudsman delegates."

The Québec Ombudsman's action differs from—yet complements—that of the courts and frequently helps individuals avoid judicial or administrative redress procedures that are often long and onerous.

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## Its values

The Québec Ombudsman's exercise of these functions and its role as mediator are based on the values of justice, fairness, respect, impartiality, and transparency. Its actions are guided by these values, and its employees are required to demonstrate integrity, rigour, and empathy.



The Québec Ombudsman's logo symbolizes the search for balance between competing rights. It is a variation on the classic scales of justice. The scales on the left-hand side of the logo evoke justice, while the "P" (for "Protecteur du citoyen") that replaces the right-hand scales refers to fairness.