**The Ontario Ombudsman’s Office & Education**

**What is Bill 8?**

**Bill 8** is the *Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014*.

This legislation makes historic changes to the Ombudsman’s mandate, allowing our Office to help many more Ontarians.

It expands the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction to municipalities, universities and school boards.

The public will be able to complain to the Ontario Ombudsman about school boards as of September 1, 2015, and about municipalities and universities as of January 1, 2016.

 **What kind of school board issues will the Ombudsman be able to investigate?**

The Ombudsman will be able to investigate complaints about the administrative conduct of school boards that have not been resolved by local complaint mechanisms or appeals processes. These may include concerns about special education supports, school and school board policies, customer service provided by board staff, or other matters within the authority of individual school boards.  Constitutional rights to denominational and minority language education will be preserved with respect to any school board matters. If you don’t know if your complaint falls within the Office’s jurisdiction, please contact us and a staff member will advise you.

 **What kind of university issues will the Ombudsman be able to investigate?**

The Ombudsman will be able to investigate complaints about the administrative conduct of universities that have not been resolved by a university ombudsman or other complaint or appeal mechanism. The Ombudsman will accept complaints from students, faculty and other interested persons. Complaints may include concerns about student services, program requirements, student accommodations, admissions, policies, or student financial aid, among other things. The Ombudsman must consider the principles of academic freedom within universities when investigating a complaint. The Ombudsman already has jurisdiction over Ontario’s 24 community colleges, as well as the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

 **Does the municipality, university or school board have to cooperate with the Ombudsman’s investigation?**

Yes, all municipalities, universities and school boards will be required under the *Ombudsman Act* to co-operate fully with the Ombudsman’s office when responding to a complaint. The Ombudsman has very robust investigative powers, including the authority to issue summonses, require evidence under oath, and inspect premises. It is an offence under the *Ombudsman Act* to mislead the Ombudsman or to obstruct an Ombudsman investigation.

**Will municipalities, universities and school boards have to accept the Ombudsman's recommendations?**

The Ombudsman recommends solutions to fix problems of maladministration. He cannot overturn decisions made by municipalities, school boards or universities. Organizations don’t have to act on the Ombudsman’s recommendations, but historically, almost all of our recommendations have been accepted. We usually publish the results of major investigations and ask that the affected organization report back regularly on its progress, and monitor complaint trends closely. The Ombudsman can reopen an investigation if necessary.

<https://ombudsman.on.ca/About-Us/Who-We-Oversee/Bill-8.aspx?lang=en-CA>

[Brochure about School Boards](https://ombudsman.on.ca/Files/sitemedia/Documents/P3-1690-MUS-Brochures-S-ENG-copy.pdf)