

# BC OMBUDSPERSON COMPLAINT FORM ON WELFARE SERVICE DELIVERY ISSUES

## What is the Ombudsperson's Role?

The BC Ombudsperson is the provincial government's watchdog. Their role is to monitor and investigate the BC government to ensure that their actions and decisions are fair and reasonable. The Ombudsperson's office monitors and can receive complaints about the Welfare Ministry (the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation) from groups or individuals.

## What is BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre (BCPIAC)?

BCPIAC is a non-profit law office. We do not work for the government or receive any government funding. Our role is to provide legal advice and representation to groups that would not otherwise have the resources to represent themselves. We mostly work on issues that impact low income people. We have identified poor access to welfare services as a main area of focus for our work.

## Why is BCPIAC collecting individual Ombudsperson complaints about the Ministry?

Over the last five years, the Welfare Ministry has made radical changes to the way it delivers income assistance services. Services are now delivered primarily through a centralized phone line and over the internet. Wait times on the phone line are long, and when callers finally get through, the Ministry places limits on the length of the call. The initial application for income assistance is confusing and must be done online, and the Ministry does not assist applicants with its completion. While local

Ministry offices still exist, in-person, face to face services have been dramatically reduced.

In May 2015, BCPIAC filed a large complaint with the BC Ombudsperson on behalf of nine community agencies from across BC, asking the Ombudsperson to do a systemic investigation into these issues. Unfortunately, the Ombudsperson declined our request, and suggested their preference for individual complaints.

## Description and Purpose of Attached Individual Complaint Form:

We have developed the attached form to simplify the process of making an individual Ombudsperson complaint about specific service delivery issues. The main areas identified are problems with the 1-866 phone line, the online application form, and the lack of access to face to face appointments. In doing so, we hope to demonstrate that these issues are **(a)** impacting a large number of people, and **(b)** based in system design, and cannot be resolved on an individual basis

## What You Can Do:

If you experience one or more of the service delivery problems listed on the form, **please complete the form and forward it to BCPIAC in one of the following ways:**

Mail: 208 – 1090 West Pender Street  
Vancouver BC V6E 2N7  
Fax: 604-682-7896  
Email: [support@bcpiac.com](mailto:support@bcpiac.com)

If you want to make a longer complaint about problems you have had accessing welfare services, we can also assist you with that.

## We will also have drop off locations at a number of agencies across the province.

**The Kettle Society**  
1725 Venables Street  
Vancouver BC, V5L 2H3

**Together Against Poverty**  
302–895 Fort Street, Victoria  
Victoria BC, V8W 1H7

**Atira Women's Resource Society**  
(women only, trans inclusive)  
101 East Cordova St, Vancouver

**First United Church**  
320 East Hastings St Vancouver

**Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre**  
1188 Main Street, Smithers BC

More locations may be added! If your organization would like to be a drop off location, let us know.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

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## **I am a service provider and often have to wait on hold when I contact welfare. Can I make a complaint using this form?**

No. This form is designed for people who are directly affected by their own personal lack of access to welfare services. However, if your client wishes to make a complaint, the fact that you are calling the Ministry on their behalf and have to wait on hold is, of course, relevant to their complaint. Please contact us if you are a service provider and your clients are regularly experiencing the problems outlined on the form.

## **Do I have to put my name on the form?**

Yes. As this form is a complaint to the Ombudsperson's office, you have to identify yourself. If you have questions about how the information will be shared, please contact us. We can also discuss other ways to voice your concerns about welfare services without filing a complaint to the Ombudsperson office.

## **What does “to conduct a systemic review on service delivery problems” mean on the form?**

This question is asking whether you want the Ombudsperson to not only look at a solution to your individual complaint about problems accessing welfare, but rather, to do a system-wide investigation to address the barriers to welfare access. If you agree that they need a systemic investigation, you can indicate it by checking “yes” on the form. You don't need to check the “yes” box on this question to make a complaint.

## **I don't understand the question that asks about the impact the issues I have identified in the complaint have had on me?**

This question allows you provide some feedback about the barriers to welfare access you are describing in your complaint. For example, if a delay in reaching a Ministry worker or getting a decision had an impact on your ability to feed or house yourself, you could explain that here. You could also describe how the barrier made you feel.

## **I don't have a fixed address or phone – what should I include for contact information?**

If you don't have a fixed address or phone, you can write that in the “contact information” section on the form. You do not need to have either a fixed address or a phone to file a complaint. If there is a place that you can be reached (like a community agency), please put that information on the form if you feel comfortable being contacted in that way.

## **I don't speak and/or read English. Is the form available in other languages?**

Yes, the form is available in other languages. We can also arrange for an interpreter to assist you. Please contact us to arrange.

## **I need help filing out the form. Who can I contact?**

We are happy to put you in touch with someone who can help you complete the form. If you have a group of people that would like to complete forms, we can also come talk to your group about it.

## **Can I find this form to print online?**

Yes the form can be found and printed from here:  
<http://bcpiac.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Ombudsperson-Complaint-Form-FINAL.pdf>

## **Can I submit the form electronically?**

If you prefer to fill and submit the form electronically, please contact us at [support@bcpiac.ca](mailto:support@bcpiac.ca) to receive the electronic version of the form.