



2014 ANNUAL REPORT

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN



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MESSAGE FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

In 2014, the Office of the Ombudsman at 407 ETR continued to help customers navigate the dispute resolution process and find resolution to the issues that were presented.

The number of customer contacts with the Ombudsman's Office remained approximately the same in 2014 as they did in 2013. This is reflective of a mature dispute resolution process that works to provide options for customers to resolve disputes in their early stages, prior to seeking the engagement of the Ombudsman's Office. While we noted an increase in contacts with our office for matters that reside outside of our mandate, we were confident about directing customer's to the responsible areas within the organization to have their issues reviewed and addressed, all the while monitoring these outcomes.

We continue to commit to providing an objective, professional, transparent and consistent experience to those customers who appeal to our office. It is through these customer engagements that we are able to ensure equal and fair application of 407 ETR policies and also make recommendations to the organization for change. In 2014, the Office of the Ombudsman made a total of 28 recommendations to various stakeholders within the organization. Close to 40% of these recommendations were implemented, resulting in an improved customer experience.

The implementation of these recommendations would not be possible if not for customers bringing their concerns forward and 407 ETR stakeholders being open and collaborative in wanting to affect such changes within the organization. To both I would like to extend my deepest gratitude for all of the work and efforts that have transpired over the past year.

Denise Peltier
February, 2015

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OMBUDSMAN MANDATE

The Office of the Ombudsman exists to listen to customers issues in an impartial unbiased manner. We will gather the facts regarding a customer's complaint and conduct an investigation if it falls within the mandate of the Office. The Ombudsman is neither an advocate for 407 ETR nor the customer. In the event that an issue is based on verbal accounts that are not easily verifiable, the Ombudsman's Office limits the investigation to the confirmable facts.

As a corporate Ombudsman's Office, we have no legislative power and therefore cannot make recommendations to change or amend the Highway 407 Act, influence matters involving legislation or regulations including pricing or administrative fees. It is outside of the mandate of our Office to review matters that are before the courts or have a legal ruling, damage claims, highway structure and design, policing and enforcement. The office does not engage in financial settlements on customer accounts or award punitive damages.

For a fair and reasonable resolution the office collaborates with other stakeholders and based on the nature of the issue we can focus on providing an early resolution.

WHAT WE DO

LISTEN

In order to understand the issue, we listen to both sides of the dispute.

GATHER

We review all cases that are received by our office. We will request from the customer and the company all pertinent information before considering a final resolution.

RECOMMEND

We will provide a resolution/recommendation ensuring the procedure is fair and reasonable to both parties.

407 ETR'S 3-STEP DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

STEP ONE – CONTACT CUSTOMER SERVICE

407 ETR's Customer Service Department is the first point of contact when addressing a service matter. Customer Service Representatives are well equipped with the tools, support and training to resolve most complaints and issues. Customer Service Representatives are available Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and may be reached by:

🌐: www.407etr.com

☎: 1.888.407.0407

📍: 6300 Steeles Avenue West
Woodbridge, ON L4H 1J1

STEP TWO – ESCALATE TO THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

If a customer is not satisfied with the outcome or resolution provided by the Customer Service Representative the call may be escalated to the Office of the President. The Office of the President has a well-defined dispute handling process and will review the complaint and the resolution provided by the Customer Service Representative. In order for the Advocate to review a complaint, we recommend that the customer state why they are not satisfied with the resolution provided by the Customer Service Representative.

407 ETR'S THREE STEP DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

STEP THREE – CONTACT THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

After a complaint is reviewed by the Office of the President, and a complaint remains unresolved, a customer may contact the Office of the Ombudsman for an impartial review of a case.

In order to ensure a fair and reasonable recommendation, all documentation must be forwarded with the complaint, in writing.

Once the Office has received a complaint, an Ombudsman Advisor will conduct an assessment to ensure that the issue (s) falls within the mandate of the Office.

In the event that the issue is not within the mandate, the matter will be referred to the appropriate department. If the issue falls within the mandate it will be reviewed by an Advisor and we endeavor to provide a resolution or recommendation within 10 business days after the initial review.

In efforts to assist customers, an Ombudsman's Contact form was designed to assist in outlining a dispute. In addition, a customer may contact the Office directly for general information by calling 905-264-4485 or toll-free at 1-866-675-4457.

THE OMBUDSMAN IN ACTION

FOUR TYPES OF CONTACT

The Office of the Ombudsman classifies customer contacts into the following four categories:

Informational: enquiries that do not involve complaints or concerns. They are requests for general information.

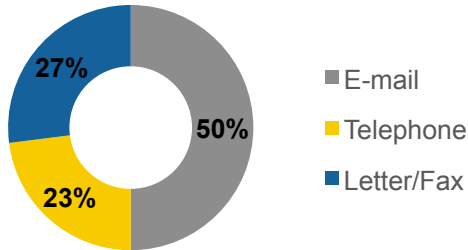
Advice: complaints or concerns that have not been through Step 1 or Step 2 of the Dispute Resolution Process. The issue is generally forwarded to the appropriate business unit for an investigation or resolution, prior to proceeding to the Ombudsman's office.

Informal Intervention: complaints or concerns that have been responded to at Step 2 of the Dispute Resolution Process, but do not require a full investigation as the information provided to the Office of the Ombudsman does not contravene the resolution previously provided by the organization.

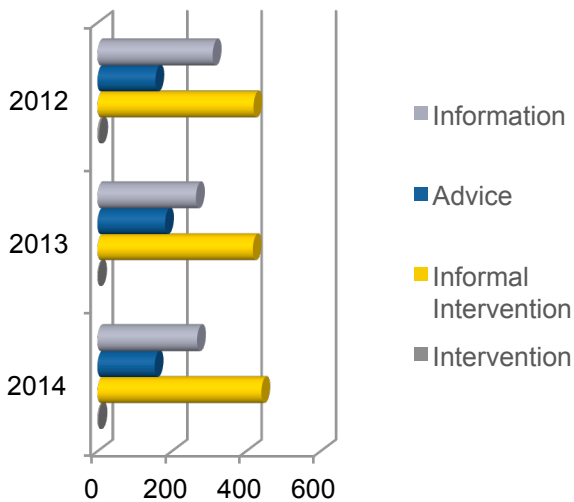
Intervention: complaints or concerns that have been reviewed in Step 2 of the Dispute Resolution Process whereby the Complainant provides compelling information warranting a full investigation by the Ombudsman's office.

THE OMBUDSMAN IN ACTION

Method of Contact

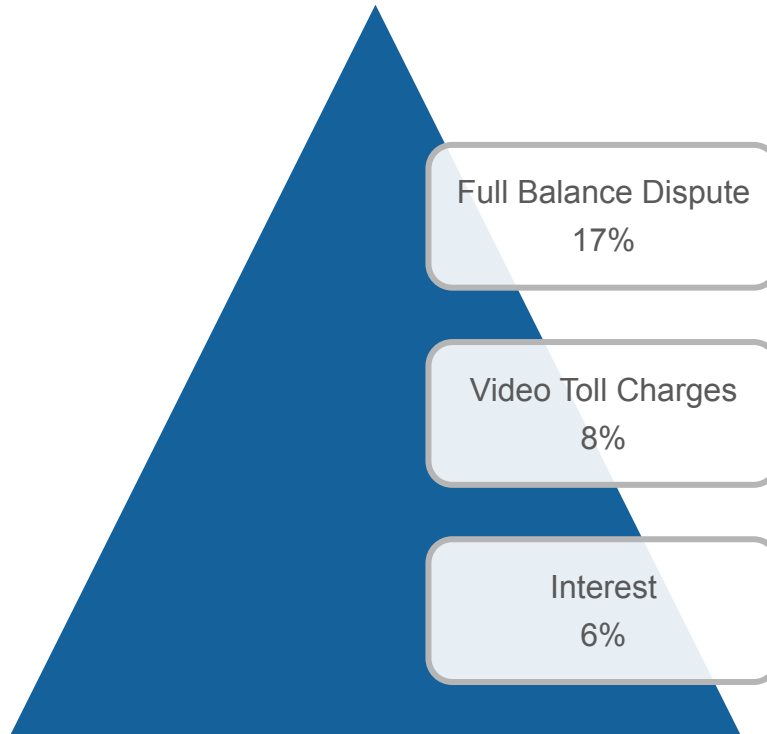


In 2014, 866 contacts were received in the Office of the Ombudsman; equal to the number received in 2013. 407 ETR received 624,057 calls to Customer Service in 2014 and sent out 16.8 million paper and electronic invoices resulting in less than .2 of 1% dispute rate (calls) to the Office of the Ombudsman.



Of the 866 contacts to the Ombudsman's Office, only three required Ombudsman intervention. The remaining contacts were comprised of 30% (268) informational; 17% (154) advice referrals and 50% (441) informal interventions.

TOP ISSUES REVIEWED 2014



For 2014, The Ombudsman was required to engage in 3 investigations. Of the resolutions provided, agreement was reached in 2 of the files. The top 3 issues outlined for 2014 are reflective of *informal interventions*. 75% of customers were satisfied with the resolutions provided in these cases.

OUTSIDE OF MANDATE



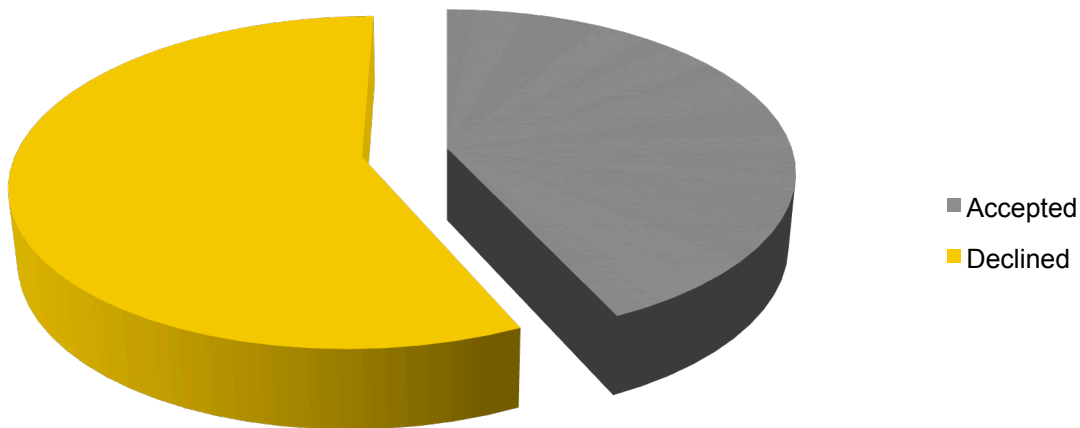
8% of contacts to the Ombudsman's Office fell outside of our mandate in 2014.

EXCEPTIONAL HARDSHIP CASES

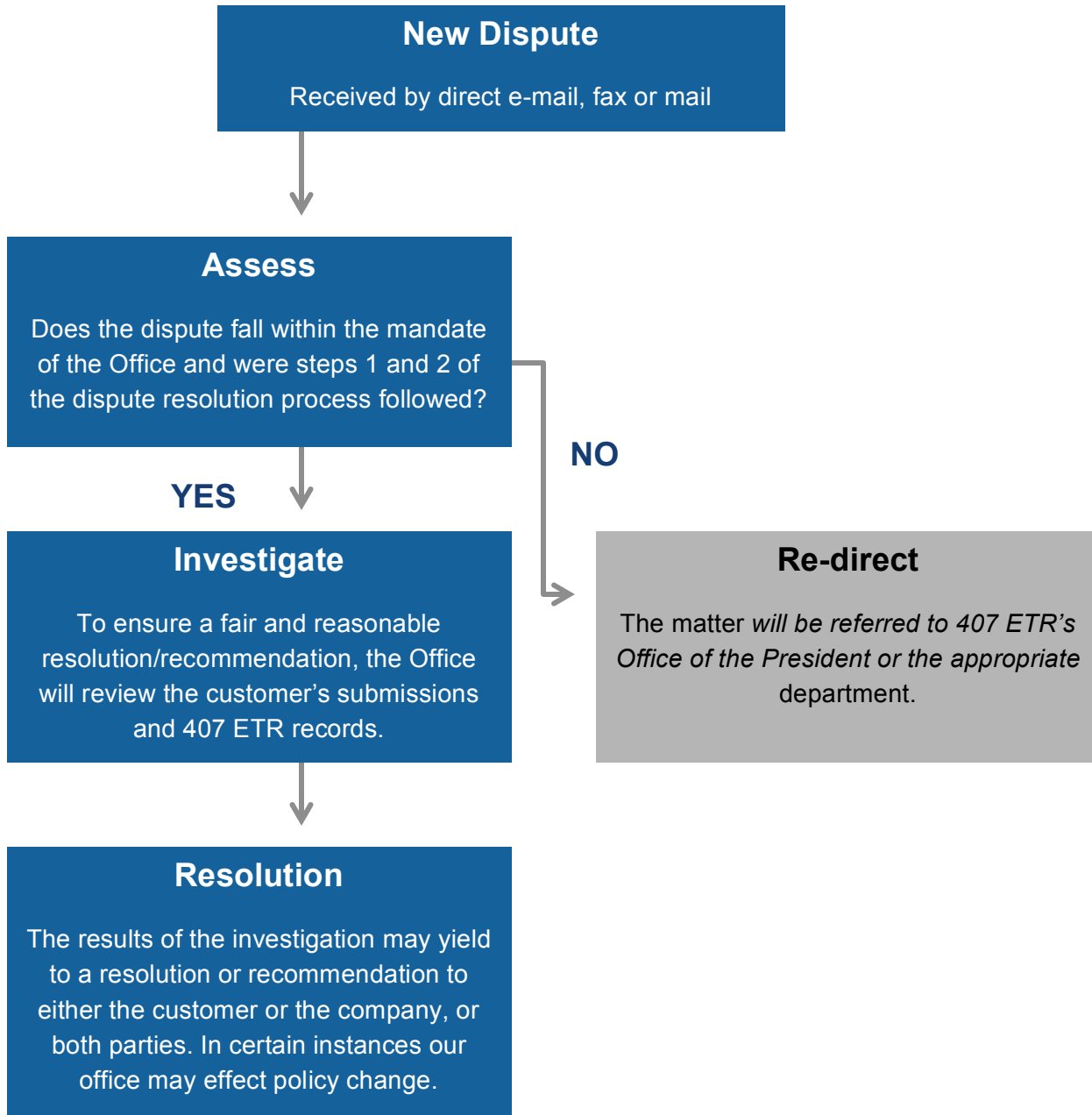
407 ETR offers an Exceptional Hardship Payment Plan, in an effort to assist those customers who have accumulated significant debt with 407 ETR, and would suffer an exceptional hardship through the denial of their vehicle licence plate permit. The review of these applications remains part of the responsibility of the Ombudsman's Office. For details regarding the plan, please visit www.407etr.com.

In 2014, The Ombudsman's office received a total of 71 applications. This is a 7% decrease from 2013. Of those applications received, 43% were accepted into the program versus 57% that were declined. Those customers that were declined for the Exceptional Hardship Payment were alternatively referred to 407 ETR's Financial Hardship Plan or settlement.

Applications Received in 2014



OMBUDSMAN'S PROCESS



HELPING CUSTOMERS

THE LEGISLATIVE DISPUTE PROCESS

Although 407 ETR has a thorough dispute resolution process for customers to dispute service related issues, there is also a legislative dispute process under Highway 407 Act, 1998, and is separate from 407 ETR's dispute resolution process.

Under section 16 of the Act, 407 ETR may send a Notice of Failure to Pay to a customer whose account is 37 days past due.

If you received a Notice of Failure to Pay, under section 17 of the Act, you may dispute under the four stipulated grounds.

Once the dispute is received by 407 ETR's Dispute Administrator, they will review the dispute to ensure that the dispute has been received within the allowed time and that all supporting documentation is provided by the disputant. The Dispute Administrator has 30 days to review, investigate and respond to your dispute.

If your dispute is found to be unsuccessful, you may appeal the decision to an independent arbitrator as outlined under section 19 of the Act.

The independent arbitrator is appointed by the Ontario Government.

There are critical timelines to adhere to when you appeal the decision of 407 ETR's Dispute Administrator. Therefore it is incumbent on the applicant to be aware of the requirements in order for the appeal to be heard.