



# Office of the Ombudsman

## 2015 Annual Report

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# A Message from the Ombudsman



I am pleased to present the 2015 Annual Ombudsman Report for 407 ETR. The number of customer contacts with the Ombudsman’s Office decreased significantly within 2015. This downward trend remains consistent with an overall decrease in contacts to 407 ETR’s Customer Service for the same period.

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 2015, the Office of the Ombudsman made a total of 9 recommendations to various stakeholders within the organization. Close to 45% 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, 2016

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.

## 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:

 1-888-407-0407

 [www.407etr.com](http://www.407etr.com)

 6300 Steeles Avenue West  
Woodbridge, ON L4H 1J1

## 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.

## 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.

## 4 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.



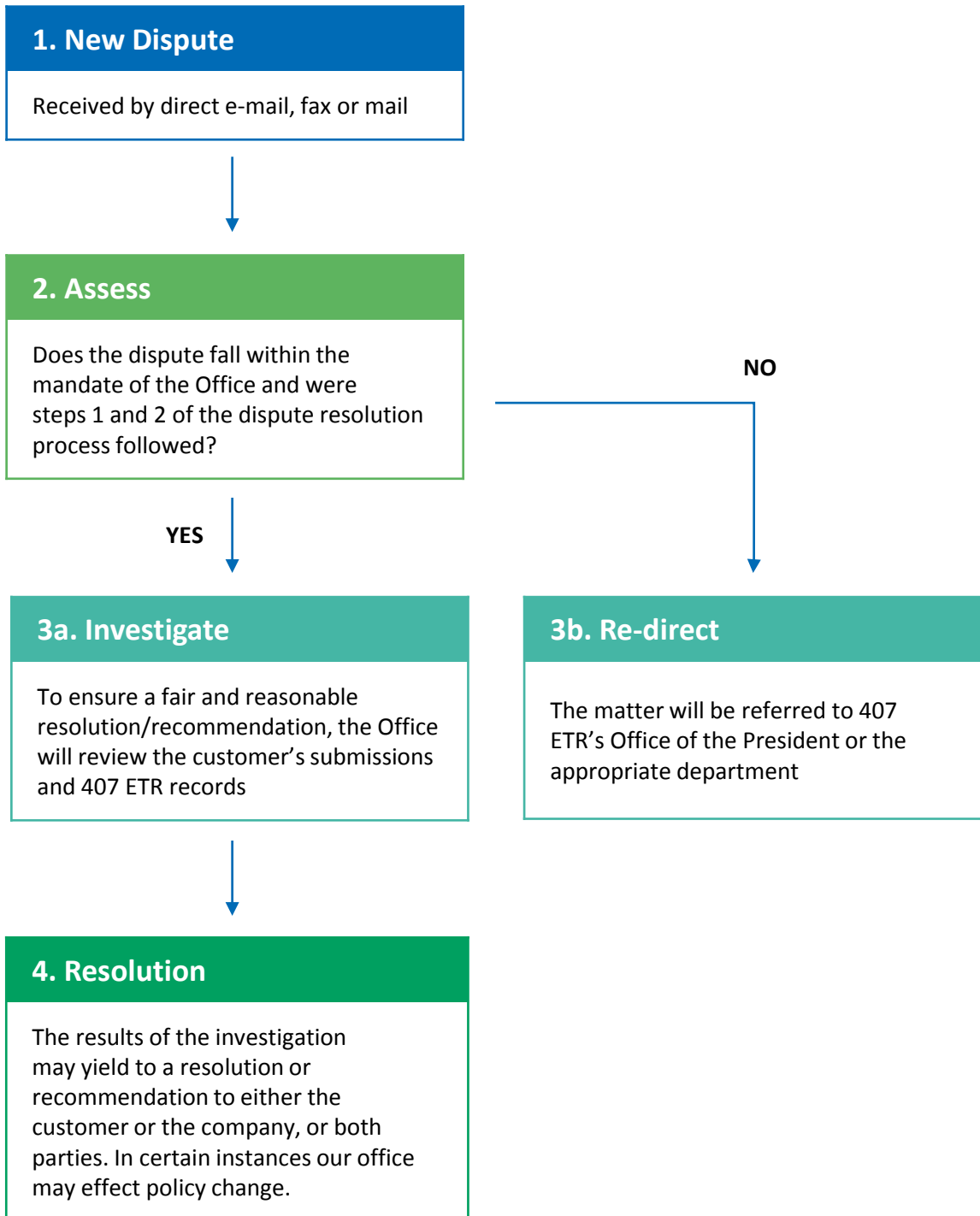
### Informal Intervention

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.

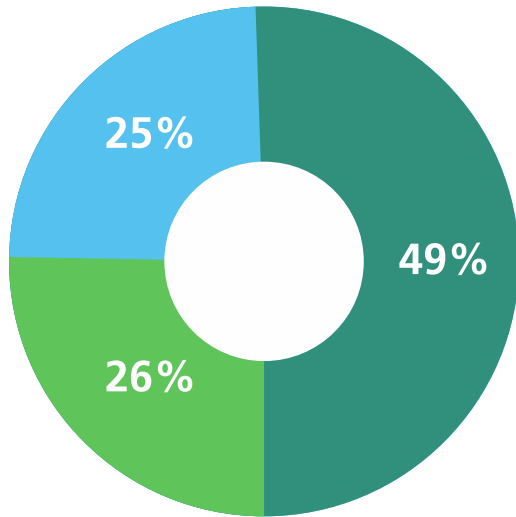


### Intervention

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.



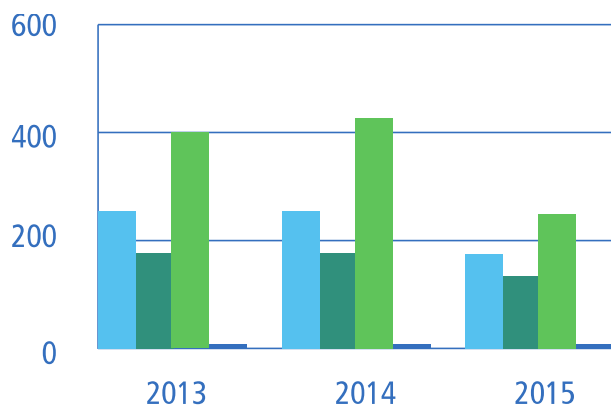
## Method of Contact



- E-mail
- Telephone
- Letter / fax

In 2015, 556 contacts were received in the Office of the Ombudsman; a 39% decrease from 2014. 407 ETR received 604,386 calls to Customer Service in 2015 and sent out 19.7 million paper and electronic invoices resulting in less than 0.2 of 1% dispute rate (calls) to the Office of the Ombudsman.

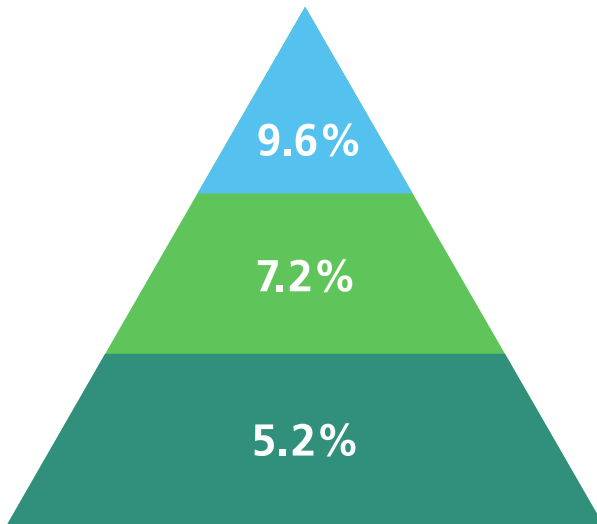
Of the 556 contacts to the Ombudsman’s Office, only one required Ombudsman intervention. The remaining contacts were comprised of 32% (175) informational; 23% (128) advice referrals and 45% (250) informal interventions.



- Information
- Advice
- Informal Intervention
- Intervention



# Top Issues Reviewed 2015



- Full Balance Dispute
- Camera Charge Dispute
- Interest

For 2015, The Ombudsman was required to engage in 1 investigation. Full agreement was reached with the parties. The top 3 issues outlined for 2015 are reflective of informal interventions. 92% of customers were satisfied with the resolutions provided in these cases.

## Outside of Mandate

14% of contacts to the Ombudsman’s Office fell outside of our mandate in 2015.



# Exceptional Hardship Plans

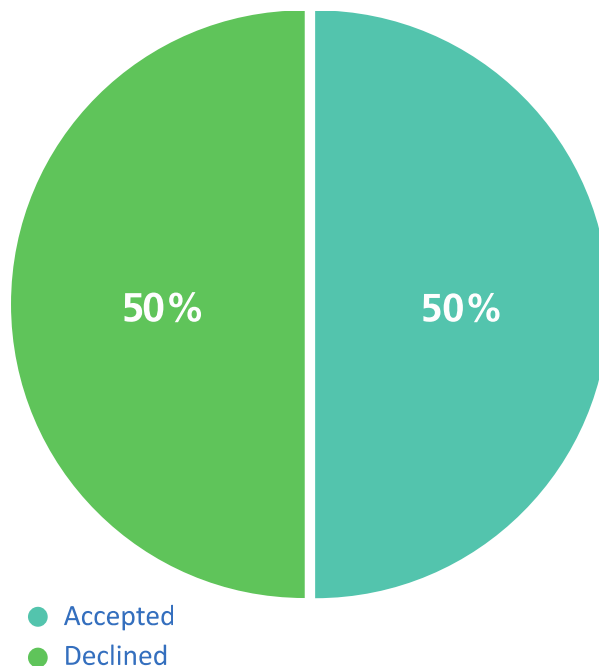
407 ETR offers an Exceptional Hardship Payment Plan, in an effort to assist those customers who have accumulated significant debt with 407 ETR, and would suffer an exceptional hardship through the denial of their vehicle licence plate permit. The review of these applications remains part of the responsibility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

In 2015, The Ombudsman’s office received a total of 49 applications. This is a 31% decrease from 2014. Of those applications received, 50% were accepted into the program versus 50% that were declined.

Customers declined for the Exceptional Hardship Payment Plan were alternatively referred to 407 ETR’s Financial Hardship Plan or settlement.

## Applications

### *Exceptional Hardship Payment Plan*



## Disputes under the Highway 407 Act

Although 407 ETR has a thorough dispute resolution process for customers to dispute service related issues, there is also a legislative dispute process under the Highway 407 Act, and is separate from 407 ETR's 3-step 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 a customer receives a Notice of Failure to Pay under section 17 of the Act, the notice may be disputed on one or more of the four grounds contained in the law, and such a dispute must be filed within 30 days of the date of the Notice.

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 the dispute.

If a customer's dispute is unsuccessful, an appeal of the decision may be made 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 filing an appeal of the decision of 407 ETR's Dispute Administrator. Therefore, it is incumbent on the appellant to be aware of the requirements in order for the appeal to be heard.