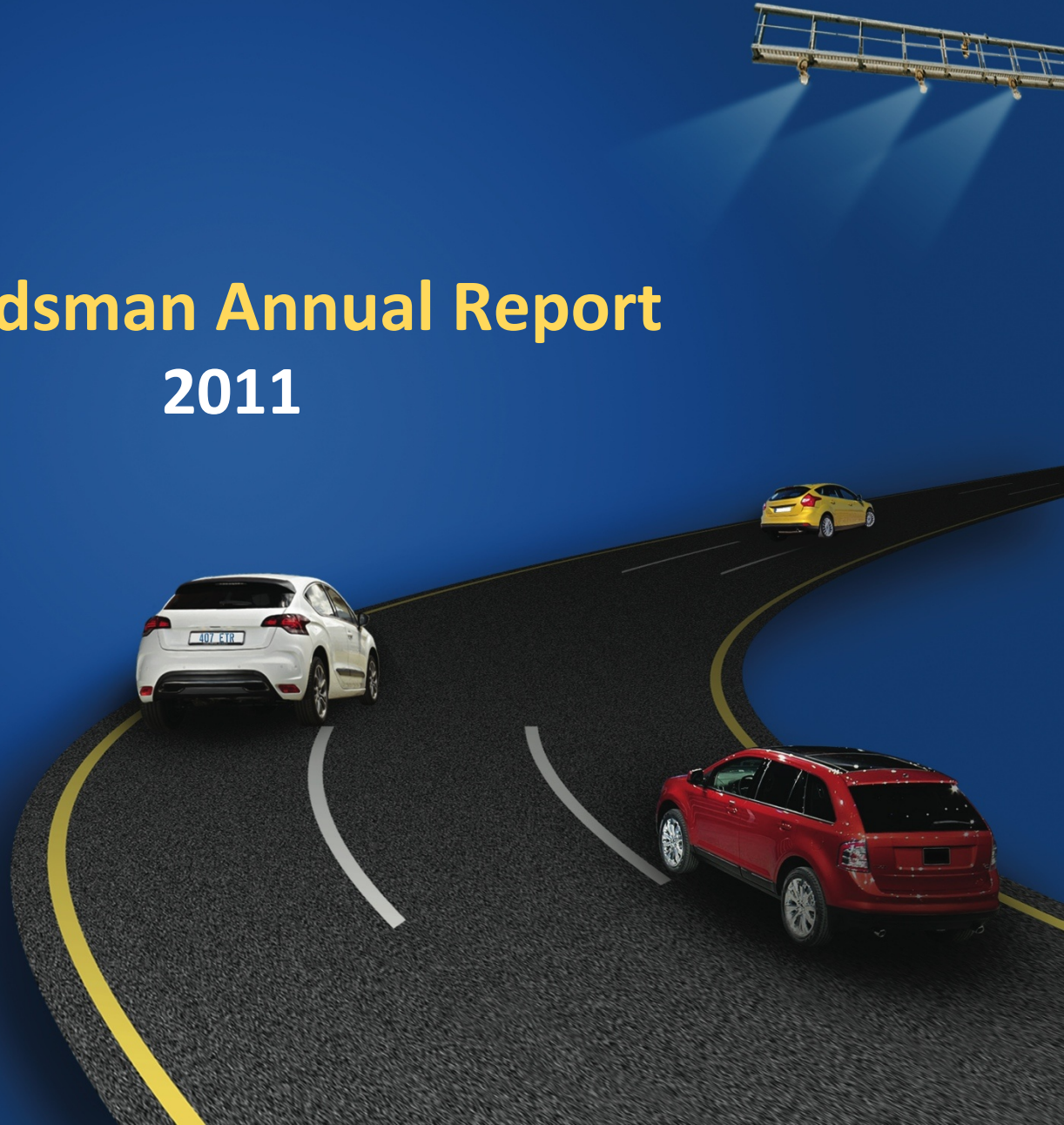


# Ombudsman Annual Report 2011



*The mandate of the Ombudsman is to act as an advocate for fairness and to address customers' unresolved issues or concerns related to customer service matters. The Ombudsman reviews and investigates a customer's concern in an unbiased and impartial manner, ensuring the procedure is fair and reasonable to both the customer and 407 ETR, and that 407 ETR's policies are applied on a fair basis. The Ombudsman makes recommendations based on fairness and good business practices. The Ombudsman reports directly to the President and CEO of 407 ETR.*

The 407 ETR Office of the Ombudsman represents the final step of the dispute resolution process for the organization. While the primary role of the Office of the Ombudsman is to assist with unresolved issues, the Office also guides customers through the dispute resolution process. Our goal is for customers to be aware of the options available to them for assistance so they can obtain resolution prior to engaging the Office of the Ombudsman.

In 2011 we saw a marginal increase in contacts to our office. This was most pronounced in the 'informal intervention' category. As a more streamlined dispute process was introduced, customers approached the Ombudsman's Office more quickly, in part, due to real time resolutions being provided at the second level of the dispute process.

We encourage customers to review their invoices monthly, and contact the organization immediately with any questions or issues they may discover. It is also important for customers to be aware of what they are responsible for as part of using the service. This will assist with finding resolutions to issues in the early stages of the dispute resolution process.

# A Message from the Ombudsman

## Office of the Ombudsman

Denise Peltier, Ombudsman

Maria Boscariol, Advisor

Roswitha England, Advisor

Karin Rose, Advisor

## What the Ombudsman Can Do For You

- ❖ Listen to your complaint in an impartial unbiased manner
- ❖ Gather the facts regarding your complaint and conduct an investigation if it falls within the mandate of the Ombudsman's Office
- ❖ Make recommendations to 407 ETR if the complaint is justified regarding your specific case or broader policy and procedure changes
- ❖ The Ombudsman is neither an advocate for 407 ETR nor the client. In the event that a complaint is based on verbal accounts that are not easily verifiable, the Ombudsman's Office limits the investigation to the confirmable facts

## What the Ombudsman Does Not Do

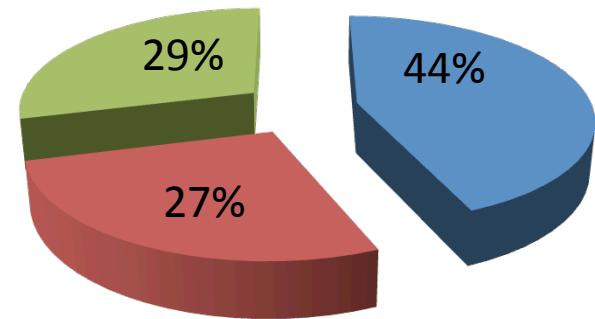
- ❖ The Ombudsman's Office does not intervene in matters that are before the courts or have a legal ruling
- ❖ The Ombudsman has no legislative power and therefore cannot make recommendations to change or amend the Highway 407 Act, 1998
- ❖ The Ombudsman cannot make recommendations to 407 ETR regarding toll rates or other administrative fees
- ❖ The Ombudsman does not make financial settlements on customers' accounts or award punitive damages or reimbursement for stress and inconvenience

In 2011, the Ombudsman's Office received a total of 987 contacts ( 0.00006%) out of 16.9 million bills mailed and electronically sent from January to December. This also represents only 0.001% of the 684,290 calls taken by the Call Center for the same period. In comparison with 2010, the Ombudsman's Office received 57 more contacts or an increase of 0.06%. The increased contacts are reflected in the informal intervention category. This is attributed to the new, streamlined Dispute Resolution Process introduced by 407 ETR in January 2011 whereby after real time resolutions are provided by The Office of the President, the final step of the dispute process is to contact the Ombudsman's Office. A customer can contact the Ombudsman via e-mail utilizing our online form, telephone call, letter or fax. The customers preferred method of contact is e-mail (45%) followed by mail/fax .

Of the 987 contacts to the Ombudsman's Office, only 1% (6) required Ombudsman intervention, a decrease from 2010. The remaining contacts were comprised of 34% (340) informational; 19% (184) advice referrals and 46% (457) informal interventions.

## Method of Contact

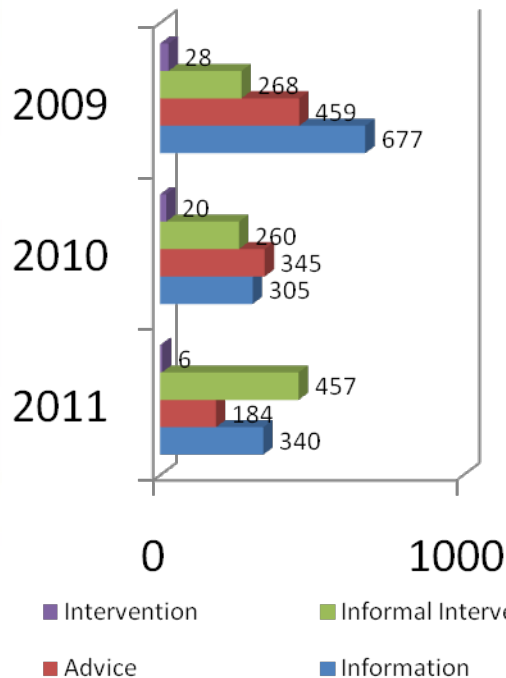
■ E-mail ■ Phone ■ Mail/Fax



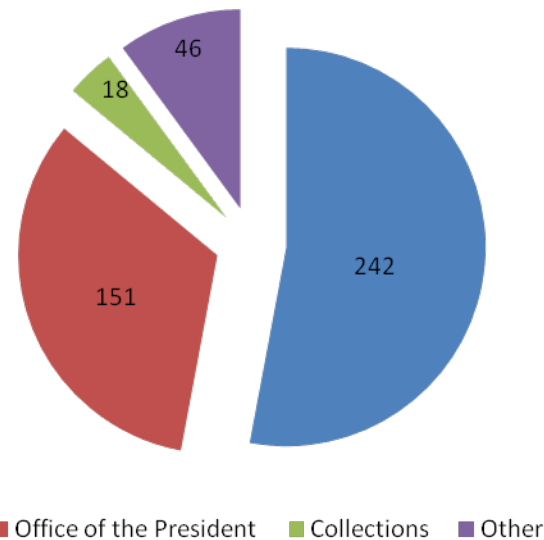
## Reasons for Contact

- ❖ **“Informational”** contacts are enquiries that do not involve complaints or concerns. They are requests for general information that are forwarded to the appropriate business unit for a direct response.
- ❖ **“Advice”** contacts are complaints or concerns that have not been through Step 1 or Step 2 of the Dispute Resolution Process. These contacts require the opening of a file within the Ombudsman’s Office and the issue is forwarded back to the appropriate business unit for an investigation and resolution.
- ❖ **“Informal Intervention”** contacts are complaints or concerns that have been reviewed at Step 2 of the Dispute Resolution Process, but do not require a full investigation as the information provided does not contravene the resolution previously provided by the organization.
- ❖ **“Intervention”** contacts are complaints or concerns that have been reviewed by Step 2 of the Dispute Resolution Process whereby the complainant provides compelling information warranting a full investigation by the Ombudsman’s Office. A written response to the customer will be provided , generally within 10 business days, depending on the complexity of the investigation.

## Reasons for Contact



## Issues Reviewed (Informal Interventions)



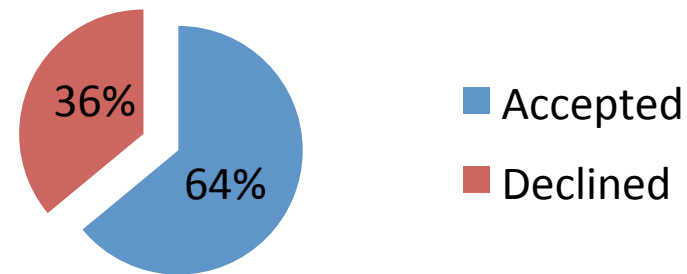
In total, the Ombudsman was engaged in 6 investigations for 2011. All cases involved balance disputes and were personal customers. Of the 6 files resolved by the Ombudsman's Office, full agreement was reached in 100% of the cases. A marked increase was observed in the informal intervention category for 2011. This is mainly attributed to the streamlined Dispute Resolution Process introduced at 407 ETR in January, 2011 whereby the Ombudsman's Office represents the third and final level of Dispute Resolution. The majority of case reviews involved billing disputes and customers disputing the decisions made by The Office of the President. In all instances, the Ombudsman's Office reviewed the decisions and provided further clarification to customers on the decisions provided by the previous levels of the dispute process.

# 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.*

The Ombudsman received 97 applications for the Exceptional Hardship Payment Plan in 2011. This represents a 32% decrease from 2010. A total of 36% of applications were declined. This is largely attributed to the offering of The Financial Hardship Program and more customers qualifying due to financial difficulties.

## Applications



# Making a Complaint

## Dispute Resolution Process

### *Step 1: Customer Service Department*

Call 1-888-407-0407 to speak with a Customer Service Representative (CSR).

### *Step 2: Office of the President*

If you are unable to resolve your dispute with a CSR, you can ask to speak with a Customer Advocate in the Office of the President.

### *Step 3: Office of the Ombudsman*

If the previous steps have been followed, and you feel that you have not received a fair resolution to your dispute, please contact the Ombudsman's Office.

## Legislative Dispute Process

Under the Highway 407 Act, 1998 a legislative dispute process is available to customers of 407 ETR that qualify. This process is separate and distinct from the dispute process outlined above. For further details regarding the legislative process, please click [here](#).

## Making a Complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman

You may refer your complaint in writing to this Office, once you have Received a final response from 407 ETR, in accordance with the Dispute Resolution Process. The Ombudsman will only review complaints that have been raised within the past 12 months, unless exceptional circumstances exist that would warrant the Ombudsman's Office to open an investigation.

In order to assist you with your complaint, we require the following information, in writing:

- Name
- Date
- Mailing Address
- Telephone Contact Number (including area code)
- The date the complaint began
- The response given by 407 ETR ( please include any responses from the organization)
- Your requested resolution
- Complaint Summary (please provide details regarding dates and names of individuals you communicated with)
- Your authorization to access your 407 ETR account information

For your convenience, please click [here](#) for the Ombudsman Contact Form which can be completed and forwarded to the Ombudsman's Office.