





Office of the Ombudsman

2013 Annual Report

	A Message from the Ombudsman.....2
-	Ombudsman Mandate
-	407 ETR's 3-step Dispute Resolution Process
	The Ombudsman in Action.....6
-	4 Types of Contact
-	Method and Reason for Contact
-	Top Issues Reviewed in 2013
-	Exceptional Hardship Cases
	Ombudsman's Process.....10
	Helping Customers.....11

A Message from the Ombudsman

407 ETR, much like other private organizations, has a corporate Ombudsman Office who investigates complaints against the organization in an objective and impartial manner.

Since the office was established in May 2006, we have collaborated with 407 ETR in developing a thorough dispute resolution process in an effort to assist in the early resolution of issues and provide ongoing identification of issues, complaints and recommendations to ensure equal, consistent and fair application of all 407 ETR policies.

While the primary role of our office is to assist customers with unresolved issues, we also work to help raise awareness among customers of the dispute resolution process in an effort to assist the customer with achieving an early resolution. Throughout the past seven years, we have seen a decrease in the disputes coming to the Office of the Ombudsman, with 2013 being no exception. In 2013, our office experienced a 3% decrease in the number of customer disputes compared to 2012. Ultimately, our goal is for customers to be aware of all the options available to them for assistance so they can obtain a simple resolution prior to engaging our office.

In early 2013, the company sent all one million customers, via the invoice, a detailed outline of the Dispute Resolution Process and how to access services. In addition, the company has placed brochures in Service Ontario Offices to assist customers with questions related to 407 ETR.

Since 2006, the Office has supported the company's focus on achieving 'First Call Resolution' for customers. To this end, 407 ETR has worked to enhance customer touch points with a redesigned website and IVR to facilitate ease of use for customer's to manage their accounts with convenience. The company has also introduced more flexible payment options for customers who have demonstrated financial difficulties through the Financial Hardship Payment Program and settlements. While these are some of the accomplishments over the past seven years, there remains more work to be done.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the 407 ETR Stakeholders and customers for their cooperation and engagement in working with our Office over the past year, to affect change within the organization to better serve customers.

Our commitment is to maintain objectivity, professionalism, and fairness to those customers who appeal to our office for assistance.

Denise Peltier
February 2014

Ombudsman Mandate

The Office of the Ombudsman is in place to listen to customers complaints in an impartial unbiased manner. We will gather the facts regarding a customers 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 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.

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 will collaborate with other stakeholders and based on the nature of the dispute we can focus on providing an early resolution.

What we do

Listen

In order to understand the dispute, 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.

Note: The Office of the Ombudsman will make recommendations to 407 ETR if the dispute falls within the mandate of the office and if there is evidence of misapplication of their policy, process, or practices.

407 ETR's 3-step Dispute Resolution Process



Step 1
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:

Phone

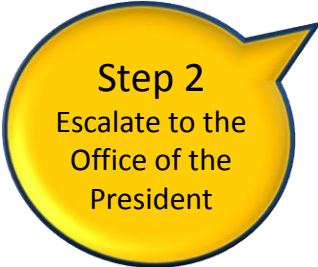
☎: 1-888-407-0407

Email

✉: www.407etr.com

Mail, or in person

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

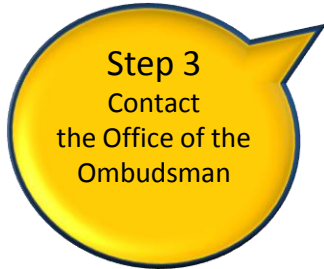


Step 2
Escalate to the
Office of the
President

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 3-step Dispute Resolution Process



Step 3
Contact
the Office of the
Ombudsman

Tip: throughout the dispute resolution process we recommend that customers note names, dates, times, and documents related to your dispute as this will assist with the thoroughness of the investigation.

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) fall 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 endeavour 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.

The Ombudsman in Action

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.



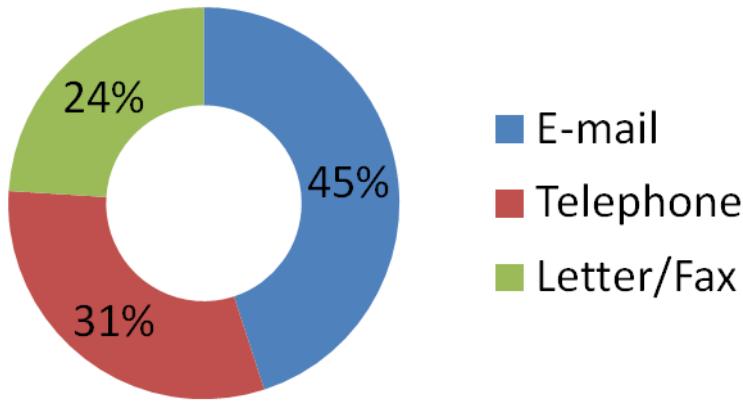
Informal Intervention: complaints or concerns that have been responded to at Step 2 of the Dispute Resolution Process, but do not require a full investigation as the information provided to the Office of the Ombudsman does not contravene the resolution previously provided by the organization.



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.

The Ombudsman in Action

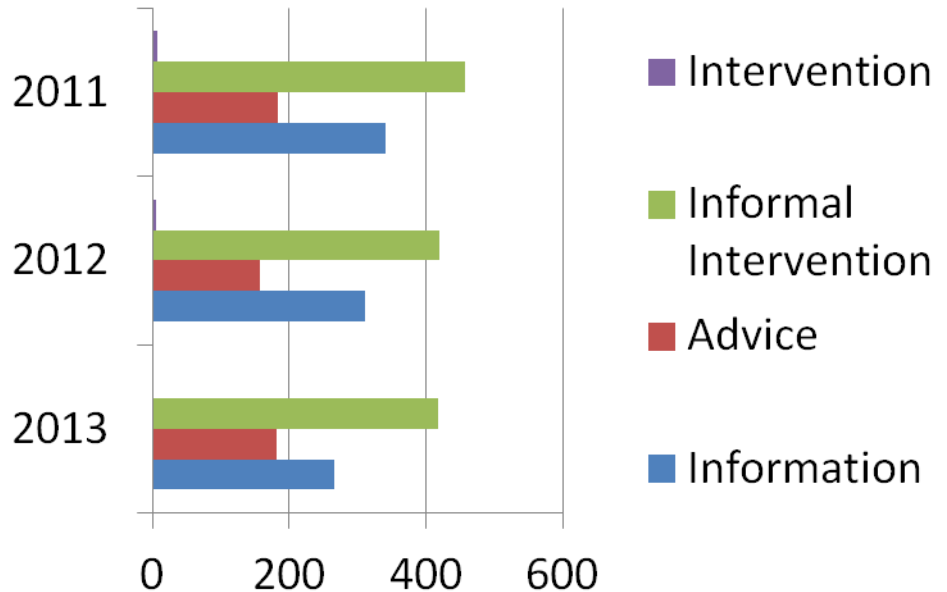
Method of Contact



In 2013, 867 contacts were received in the Office of the Ombudsman; a 3% decrease from 2012. 407 ETR received 640,599 calls to Customer Service in 2013 and sent out 17.8 million paper and electronic invoices resulting in less than a 1% dispute rate to the Ombudsman's Office.

Reason for Contact

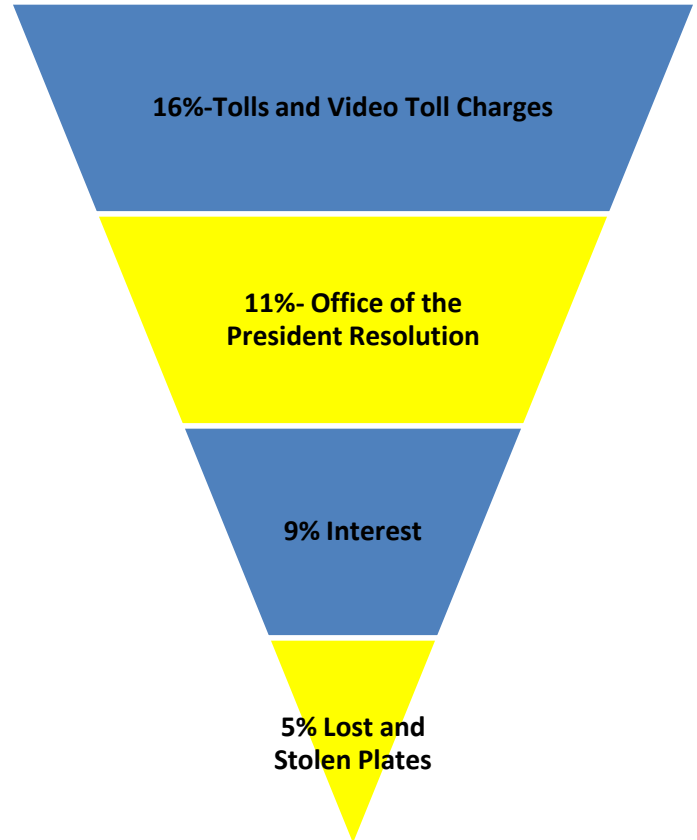
Of the 867 contacts to the Ombudsman's Office, only two required Ombudsman intervention. The remaining contacts were comprised of 31% (265) informational; 21% (182) advice referrals and 48% (418) informal interventions.



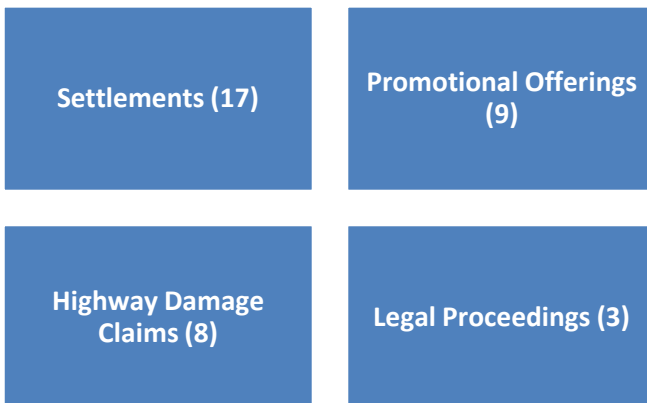
Top Issues Reviewed 2013

For 2013, the Ombudsman was required to engage in only 2 investigations. Of the resolutions provided, full agreement was reached in 1 of the files. The top issues outlined for 2013 are reflective of informal interventions which comprise the majority of the case work done within the Office of the Ombudsman. Greater than 90% of customers were satisfied with the resolutions provided in these cases.

Top Issues



Outside of Mandate

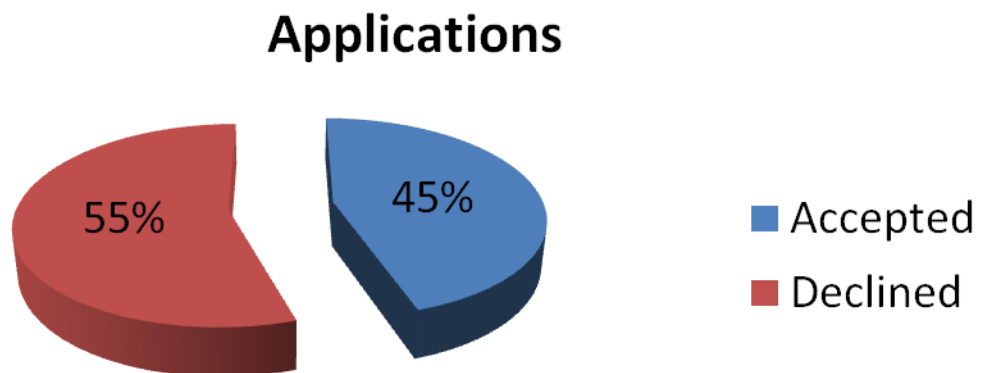


Only 4% of contacts to the Ombudsman's Office fell outside of our mandate in 2013.

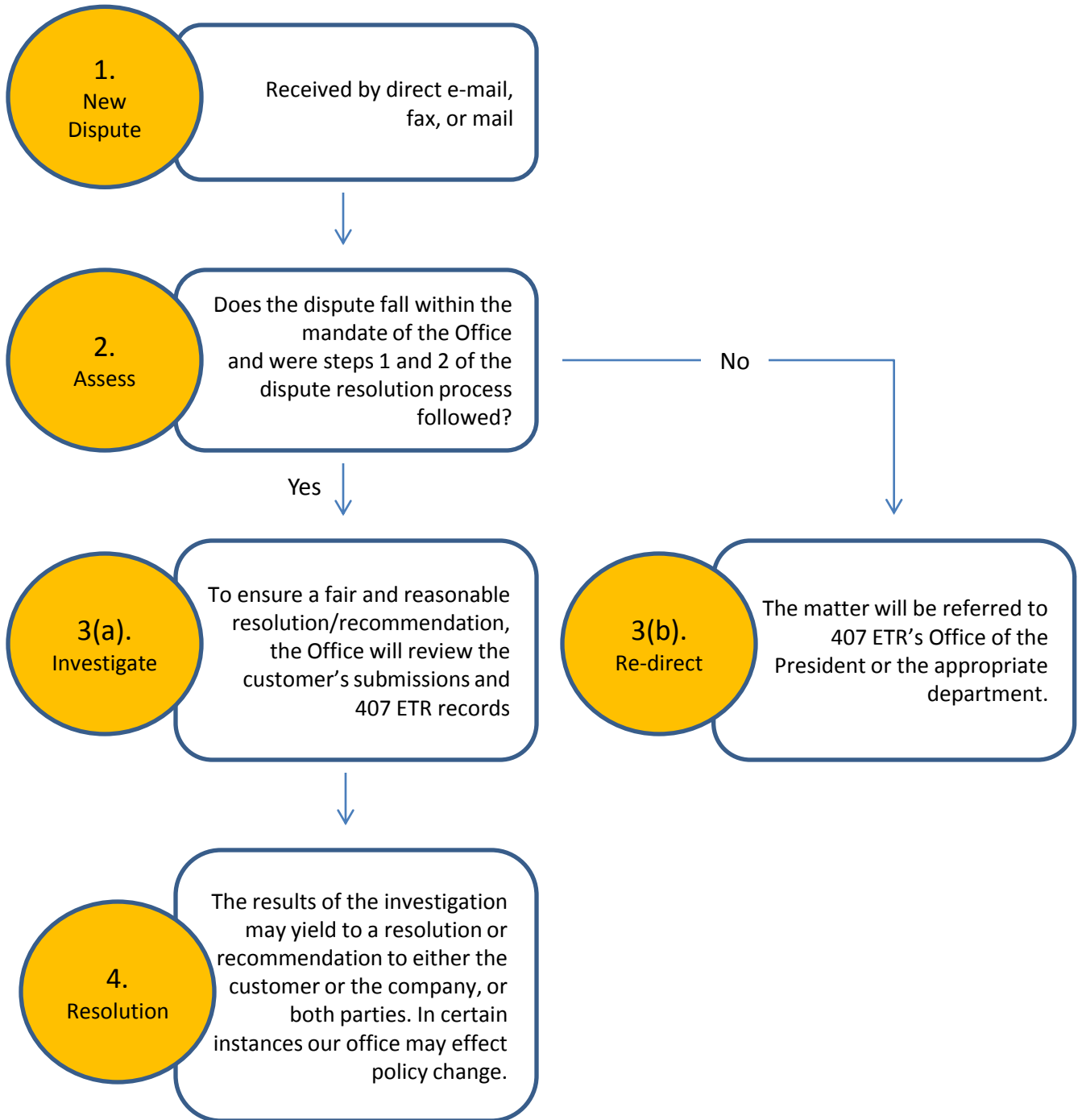
Exceptional Hardship Cases

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 2013, The Ombudsman's office received a total of 77 applications. This is a 21% decrease from 2012. Of those applications received, 45% were accepted into the program versus 55% that were declined. Those customers that were declined for the Exceptional Hardship Payment Plan were alternatively referred to 407 ETR's Financial Hardship Plan or settlement.



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 the [Highway 407 Act, 1998](#), 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 you received a Notice of Failure to Pay, under section 17 of the Act, you may dispute this Notice within 30 days of the date of the Notice, and may dispute under 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 appellant to be aware of the requirements in order for the appeal to be heard.

Helping Customers

Periodic Printing

Periodic printing of invoices will occur when an invoice is unpaid for at least six months; has a balance of more than \$5.00; and when there is no trip activity.

407 ETR will send a periodic statement to the account holder every six months as a reminder.

If you are receiving periodic statements we encourage customers to arrange for payment as interest will continue to accumulate and your account may be forwarded to the Ontario Ministry of Transportation for plate denial.

Promotional Offerings

From time to time, 407 ETR may extend promotional offerings or incentives to its customers.

The terms of the promotions are set by the company therefore if an offer has been extended to you it is important that you are aware of the terms and conditions of that offer.

If matters involving promotional offers or rewards are brought forward to our office we will provide your position to 407 ETR's Government Relations and Communications and Government Relations Department as feedback for their consideration.