



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN



ANNUAL REPORT 2020



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Public Workers Union Building, Tanteen, St. George's, Grenada

17th June, 2021

H.E. Dame Cecile La Grenade GCMG, OBE, PhD
Governor-General
Office of the Governor-General
P.O. Box 369
Point Salines
St. George's

Your Excellency,

Annual Report – Office of the Ombudsman

I have the honour to submit to you the eleventh Annual Report of the activities of the Office of the Ombudsman, for the period 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020.

This Report is made pursuant to Section 32(3) of the Ombudsman Act 24 of 2007.

Yours respectfully,

Mr. Ronnie Marryshow
OMBUDSMAN (Ag.)



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Public Workers Union Building, Tanteen, St. George's, Grenada

17th June, 2021

Hon. Michael Pierre
Speaker
House of Representatives
Parliament Building
Mt. Wheldale
St. George's

Dear Mr. Speaker,

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Mr. Ronnie Marryshow
OMBUDSMAN (Ag.)



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Public Workers Union Building, Tanteen, St. George's, Grenada

17th June, 2021

Senator the Hon. Chester Humphrey
President of the Senate
Parliament Building
Mt. Wheldale
St. George's

Dear Mr. President

Annual Report – Office of the Ombudsman

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OFFICE LOCATION



Office of the Ombudsman
Public Workers Union Building
Tanteen, St. George's, Grenada.

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FOREWORD 2020 REPORT



I am honoured to be writing the Foreword to the 11th Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman for 2020. I am also fully conscious that this is being done at an unprecedented time for us in Grenada, the Caribbean, and the entire world. 2020 must be recorded as the year in which lives and livelihoods were wholly impacted by COVID-19. We survived the year but continue to be challenged further by this pandemic in 2021.

During the first three (3) months of 2020, the Office of the Ombudsman worked fervently on its stated “Key Focus Areas”, namely: 1) the expansion of our public awareness campaign on its role and function; 2) achieving greater impact on Public Service delivery from more timely and improved investigations and recommendations; and 3) ever striving to be more efficient in the use of our resources. Preparations to conduct two (2) surveys in collaboration with the Central Statistical Office were at an advanced stage. Then COVID-19, the unwelcome guest, came to our shores leaving us with no choice but to put much of that on hold. The postponement of Outreach Services to Carriacou and other parishes throughout Grenada was also inevitable. The Office of the Ombudsman, and the rest of Grenada itself, was in the throes of a *National Lockdown* for about two (2) months.

When we were able to reopen, personal face-to-face interactions with potential complainants were inevitably reduced

due to the small physical space of the Office. We adhered strictly as required to all the Protocols and Guidelines enforced. A “Drop-Box” system was instituted just outside the Office door for persons to deliver complaints aimed at minimizing the number of persons inside the Office at any one time. Staff was rotated to no more than three (3) per shift in order to maintain social distancing. Hours of operations were also adjusted and readjusted.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, the number of total complaints recorded for 2020 was only 29, the lowest annual figure so far. As was the case in 2019, the bulk of the complaints were against Private Entities and the Ministry of Labour, nine (9) and six (6) respectively, representing a little more than 50%. Outstanding complaints remain against a few Ministries, most notably again, the Ministry of Labour which numbered ten (10). There is much-needed collaborative work to be done between that Ministry and the Office of the Ombudsman; but continuous work is required with other Ministries and Departments as well.

The journey continues and we accept the challenge to fulfill our mission and legal mandate, purposefully and steadfastly. The work of the Office of the Ombudsman remains essential especially at this time. Persons who are victims of maladministration and/or discrimination, whether liked or disliked, patient or impatient, need and should have a reasonable expectation that they would be listened to, advocated for, and represented at the Public Service decision-making table. And every effort should be made not to prolong the process unnecessarily!

In ending, I would like to pay tribute to all front line workers, especially health personnel and police officers, who performed creditably and provided yeoman service to the Nation in the face of the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19. I also make a plea at the

same time to all citizens and visitors to take personal responsibility for your health and the health of others.

As 2020 ended, the Office of the Ombudsman said farewell to Mrs. Allison Miller who proceeded on pre-resignation leave towards the end of December. I wish to thank her publicly for the resolute, inspirational service she rendered to Grenada as Ombudsman for more than three (3) years.

My sincere thanks to my colleagues in the Ombudsman's Office, Permanent Secretaries and Departmental Heads, and all others who contributed to the production of this 2020 Report.

Mr. Ronnie Marryshow
OMBUDSMAN (Ag.)



MISSION STATEMENT

To provide effective service through complaints handling procedures that are timely, while ensuring that the highest levels of confidentiality and impartiality are always maintained.

VISION

The furthering of good governance by protecting the individual from injustice and unfairness.

CORE VALUES

Independence

The Office operates with autonomy and the absence of control from Government, political or other parties.

Confidentiality

The Office believes in ensuring that its business is conducted in the most professional and confidential manner and without any possibility of compromise.

Impartiality

The Office shall always hold true to the practice of neutrality and objectivity to arrive at the truth and thus not seek to take sides in any investigation being undertaken.

Integrity

The Office seeks to ensure that all its activities are carried out in ways that bespeak high levels of professionalism, trust, honesty and in an atmosphere of concern for the rights and feelings of all.

In consideration of all the above the Office of the Ombudsman pledges always to carry out its activities with **accountability** and **transparency**.

Staff of the Office of the Ombudsman in 2020



Mr. Marlhon Benjamin – Investigations Officer



Ms. Allison Gay – Office Assistant/Data Entry Clerk



Mr. Ronnie Marryshow – Acting Ombudsman



Ms. Beverly Baptiste - Executive Secretary



Mrs. Allison Audain-Miller – Outgoing Ombudsman

SAMPLE COMPLAINTS



Sample of Complaints

SAMPLE COMPLAINT #1

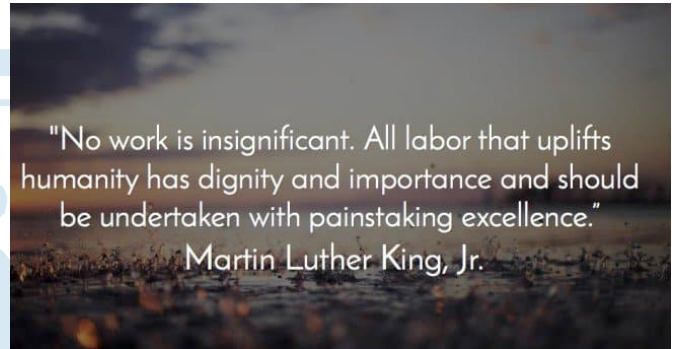
A complainant worked at St. George's University for five and a half years as a Faculty Demonstrator. During this time she filed her annual taxes as stipulated by law. In July 2017, the law abiding complainant was informed by one of the tax officers at the Ministry of Finance that more monies were collected from her than was required and thus she had to be refunded. Since then the complainant has been following up with the Inland Revenue Department to determine when the refund will be paid. After numerous trips and telephone calls to the Department yielded nothing, she concluded she was just being given the around. As a result a visit was made to the Ombudsman's Office. The Office intervened and the matter was resolved within a reasonable period. **Resolved**



Sample Complaint #2

This complainant was employed for nine (9) and half years as a cook at a given institution without receiving any vacation leave. According to her, the work hours were extremely long and frequently extended from 8am to until 9pm without payment of overtime. She eventually resigned from the position and sought the assistance of the Ministry of Labour, through the Labour Commissioner. He facilitated a meeting with her former employer and herself on January 2nd, 2020. Proceeding from this meeting it was determined that her former employer had to pay her for twenty nine (29) weeks of holiday vacation

leave, which amounted to \$4,350.00. It was agreed that half of this money was to be paid in the first instance and the difference paid at a later date, which was not settled upon.



The Complainant then sought the assistance of the Ombudsman who intervened. She was later given two installments and is awaiting the final installment to complete the payment. **Unresolved**

Sample Complaint # 3

A complainant complained about the visitation rights granted to her child's father who took their child on the 26th July, 2018 and never returned. The child was residing with her father and his partner in St. George's before he travelled to his homeland Trinidad to attend to family matters. In the interim, the mother was granted a period of visitation by the Child Protection Authority. During that time the child had been living with her mother in Gouyave, allegedly under unsafe conditions, as persons who were previously convicted of child molestation were known to frequent the residence. The child is currently residing with her father in St. George's, but she attends school in Gouyave.

#childrenslivesmatter

Deal with it.

Resolved

ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS



The Process of
Complaint
Investigations

Ombudsman
Complaints
Analysis



GENERAL OVERVIEW

2020 was indeed a most unusual year for Grenada, the Caribbean and the rest of the world. It definitely was not a case of business as usual as everyone, everywhere, was impacted by circumstances which were entirely beyond our control. COVID 19 has given another meaning to the saying, “we’re all in the same boat”.

The work of the Ombudsman’s Office was, inevitably, also greatly affected due to the presence of COVID 19 among us. The small number of complaints received this year – twenty-nine (29), bears testimony to that. While it can, with some justification, be explained as the work of COVID, it had been observed that the number of complaints was generally on a downward trend over the past few years. What is responsible for this? And what could be done to possibly reverse that trend?

A decrease in the number of complaints may be seen as a positive development by some who, in turn, may prefer the interpretation that a growing number of “would be complainants” are satisfied with the service rendered by the Public Authorities and Statutory Bodies. That aside, the two previous questions as well as these need answering: What is the public’s perception of the Office of the Ombudsman? Is it as high as it should/could be? If not, why not? We agree that we should always be striving to do more; to sensitize our people more about our existence and mandate. It is a work in progress that requires imagination, perseverance and financial resources. Understandably, the latter is very limited these days, but we are committed to doing the best we can with what we have.

As was mentioned in the Foreword of this Report, the Ombudsman’s Office was in the advanced stages of preparations

for conducting two (2) surveys aimed at determining what the general public knows or thinks about the Office. One of the expected outcomes was to get feedback from respondents on what they feel should be done, and the most cost-effective ways to share correct information with as many people as possible. COVID 19’s challenge for the foreseeable future is for our Office to make maximum use of the various social media platforms to ensure that accurate information about us is readily available. Surveys can wait, but our PR work must go on. Access to information and good communication is important to the public. This Office continued its Outreach campaign in one of the most far reaching and cost effective medium via radio and TV interviews whenever the opportunities arose.

We have heard and are concerned by the views of some who say that the Office of the Ombudsman is a lame Institution which has little impact on the lives of citizens and visitors alike. It must always be borne in mind that the operations of this still relatively young Office are governed by law, most specifically Act 24 of 2007 and subsequent amendments. Additional legislation is being considered for the future. Meanwhile, is justice served when the resolution of many complaints lodged with the Ombudsman’s Office is taking “too long”? There are procedures in the Public Service which must be followed and reasonable time is required for this to happen. However, it does appear to us that priority is not given to a number of complaints by some senior public officers, resulting in delayed resolution and, with justification, disgruntled complainants. There are, in general, too many rollover complaints from year to year which could be resolved with a little more effort on the part of key officers in the relevant Ministries.

Many “Private” complaints, which are beyond the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction, reach the desk of the Complaints Officer regarding the services provided by some attorneys to the public. Most common among them are those by persons who claim they often pay for services which they never receive, are dissatisfied with, and are often never refunded. This we see as quite unfortunate, which could only seriously reduce the public’s image and trust in the judiciary in general.

Notwithstanding all of this, we wish to thank most sincerely all those senior Public Officers who are always willing and continue to go the extra mile to ensure complainants are not forgotten or made to feel ignored.

To all our complainants: known or prospective, please know you are important and have rights which must not be trampled upon. Remember likewise, that you also have responsibilities and must always do what is just and fair and honest. We appeal to everyone to actively engage in eradicating wastage, and strive to be more productive, especially in the workplace. Let us also never forget to “do unto others as we would like them to do unto us”. For our part, we renew our commitment to steadfastly serve you with integrity, justice and fairness.



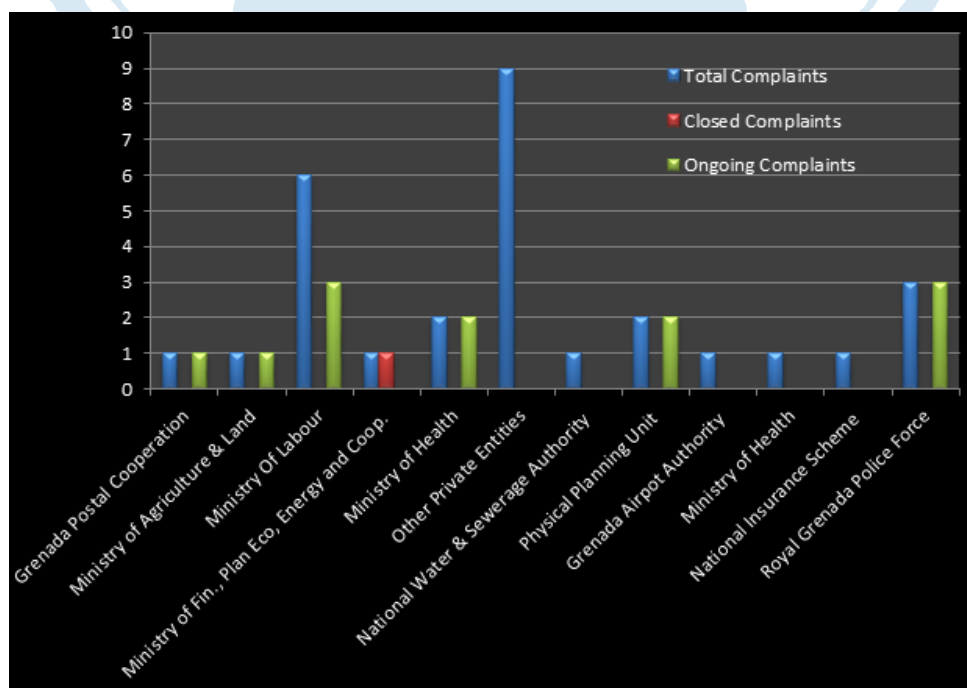
Analysis of Complaints

Table 1: Status of complaints made against the various Public Authorities in 2020

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	STATUS OF COMPLAINTS MADE					
	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Advice/ Referrals	Discontinued	Beyond Jurisdiction
Grenada Postal Cooperation	1		1			
Ministry of Agriculture & Lands	1		1			
Ministry Of Labour	6		3	2		1
Ministry of Finance, Planning Economy, Energy and Cooperatives	1	1				
Ministry of Health	2		2			
Other Private Entities	9			3		6
National Water & Sewerage Authority	1					1
Physical Planning Unit	2		2			
Grenada Airport Authority	1			1		
Ministry of Health	1					1
National Insurance Scheme	1			1		
Royal Grenada Police Force	3		3			
TOTAL	29	1	12	7	0	9

As evidenced from the **Table 1** which showed a total of 29 complaints for 2020, nine (9) were from Private Entities and (6) from the Ministry of Labour. The next highest, three (3) were made against the RGPF. One (1) being against the Ministry of Finance, was closed; twelve (12) ongoing; advice /referral was given to seven (7); and nine (9) were beyond the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

The graph below is a representation of the status of complaints in Table 1 above



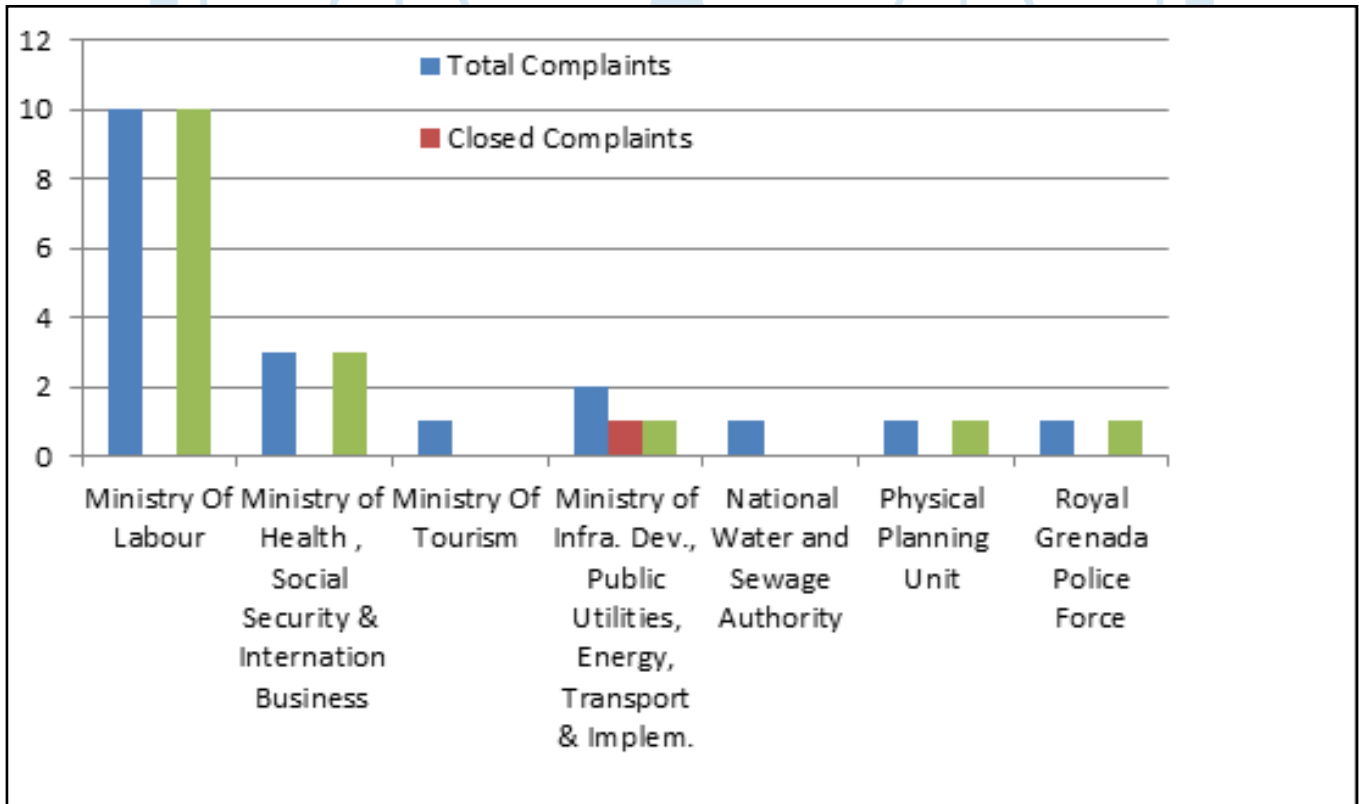
Analysis of Complaints

Table 2: Status of roll over from 2019 to 2020

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	Status of complaints					
	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Advice/ Referrals	Dis-con- tinued	Beyond Jurisdiction
Ministry Of Labour	10		10			
Ministry Of Tourism	1			1		
Ministry of Infrastructure Development, Public Utilities, Energy, Transport & Implementation	2	1	1			
National Water and Sewage Authority	1				1	
Physical Planning Unit	1		1			
Royal Grenada Police Force	1		1			
TOTAL	16	1	13	1	1	0

Of some significance is the fact that of the 16 rollover complaints from 2019, ten (10) were from the Ministry of Labour, all of which are ongoing. There were two (2) complaints lodged against the Ministry of Infrastructure, of which one (1) was closed, and one (1) each from four other Public Authorities. Thirteen (13) complaints remained ongoing.

The graph below is a representation of the status of complaints in Table 2 above



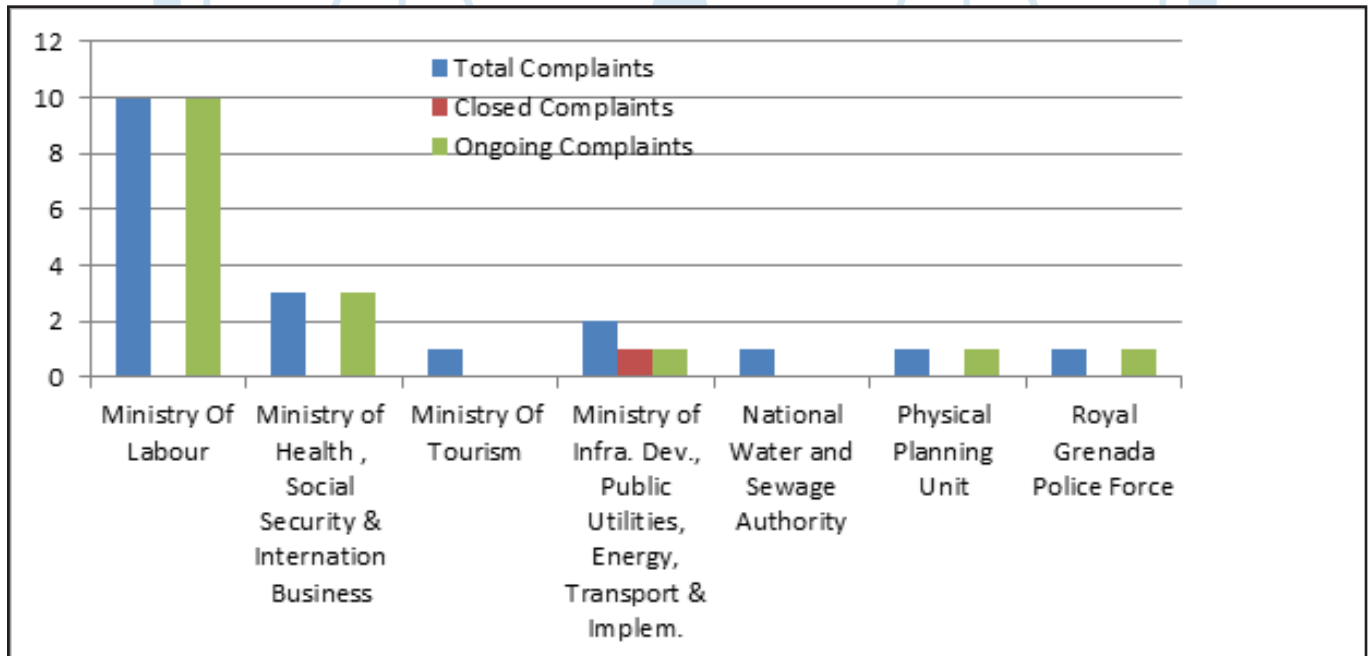
Analysis of Complaints

The graph below is a representation of the status of complaints in Table 2 above

Table 3: Status of Rollovers 2018 to 2020

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	Status Of Complaints					
	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Advice/Referrals	Dis-continued	Beyond Jurisdiction
Child Protection Authority	2	1	1			
Ministry of Agriculture & Lands	4		4			
Ministry of Education, Human Resource & Religious Affairs	1	1				
Ministry of Health, Social Security & International Business	1			1		
Ministry Of Labour	1		1			
Royal Grenada Police Force	2		2			
TOTAL	11	2	8	1	0	0

The Ministry of Agriculture accounted for four (4) of the eleven (11) rollover complaints from 2018; and all of them are ongoing. In total, eight (8) of the eleven (11) complaints are ongoing according to this Table. Two (2) were closed, one (1) each against the Child Protection Authority and the Ministry of Education



Analysis of Complaints

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	Status of Complaints						
	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Advice Given	Dis-continued	Advice / Referrals	Beyond Jurisdiction
Ministry of Agriculture & Lands	2	2					
Ministry of Infra.,Dev., Public Utilities, Energy, Transport & Imple.	2		2				
Ministry of Labour	4		4				
Royal Grenada Police Force	1		1				
TOTAL	9	2	7	0	0	0	0

Table 4: Status of Rollovers 2017 to 2020

Table 4 shows that both rollover complaints against the Ministry of Agriculture from 2017 were closed in 2020. On the contrary, all four (4) rollover complaints made in 2017 against the Ministry of Labour remain unresolved.

The graph below is a representation of the status of complaints in Table 4 above

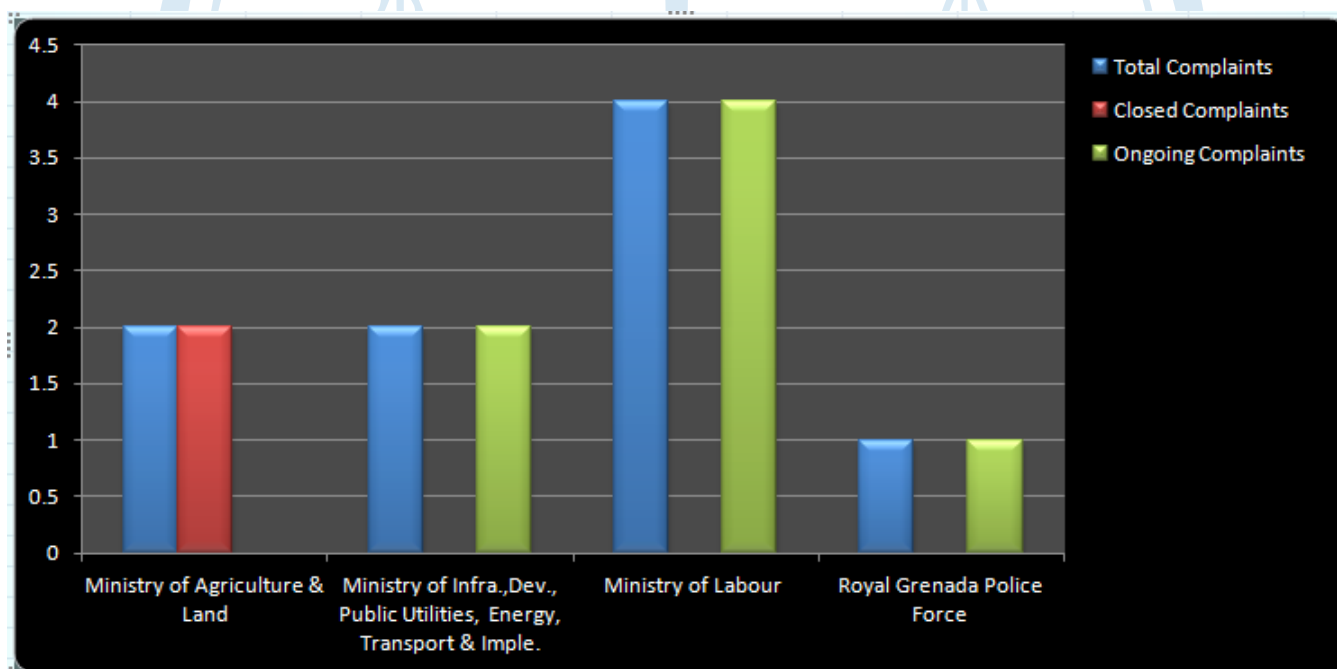


Table 5: Status of Rollovers from 2016 to 2020

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	Status of Complaints						
	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Advice Given	Dis-continued	Advice / Referrals	Beyond Jurisdiction
Ministry of Labour	2		2				
TOTAL	2		2	0	0	0	0

There were only two (2) rollover cases from 2016; both were against the Ministry of Labour, and both were unresolved at the end of 2020

Analysis of Complaints

Table 6: Shows the Status of Complaints of Rollovers from 2015 to 2020

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	Status of complaints					
	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Dis-continued	Advice/ Referrals	Beyond Jurisdiction
Min. of Com. Works, Physical Dev., Public Utilities, ICT & Com. Dev.	3		3			
Ministry of Labour	1		1			
Min. of Health and Social Security	1		1			
Min. of Finance and Energy	1		1			
TOTAL	6	0	6	0	0	0

This Table shows that none of the six (6) rollovers from 2015 were closed in 2020. The Ministry of Works, now Infrastructure, tops the list with three (3), while the Ministries of Finance, Health & Social Security, and Labour have one (1) each.

The graph below is a representation of the status of complaints in Table 4 above

Table 7: Rollovers from 2014 into 2020

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	status of complaints					
	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Dis-continued	Advice / Referrals	Beyond Jurisdiction
Physical Planning Unit	1	1				
Ministry of Labour	1		1			
TOTAL	2	1	1	0	0	0

Of the two (2) rollover complaints from 2014, one (1) was closed while the other, against the Ministry of Labour, remains ongoing.

Table 8: Rollovers from 2013 to 2020

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	Status of complaints					
	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Dis-continued	Advice / Referrals	Beyond Jurisdiction
Min. of Infrastructure Development, Public Utilities, Energy, Transport & Implementation	3		3			
TOTAL	3		3		0	0

According to this Table, the three (3) rollover cases from 2013 made against the Ministry of Works/Infrastructure remained unresolved in 2020. These can be classified as complaints of a systemic nature and, as such, are proving harder to resolve.

Analysis of Complaints

Table 9: Rollovers from 2012 into 2020

Public Authorities	Status of complaints					
	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Dis-continued	Advice / Referrals	Beyond Jurisdiction
Royal Grenada Police Force	1	1				
Ministry of Infrastructure Development, Public Utilities, Energy, Transport & Implementation	2		2			
TOTAL	3		3	0	0	0

Two (2) unresolved complaints are rolled over from 2012, of which another was from the Ministry of Works/Infrastructure. The other one from the RGPF was eventually closed.

Table 10: Rollovers from 2010 into 2019

STATUS OF COMPLAINTS MADE						
PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Discontinued	Beyond Jurisdiction	Advice Given
Ministry of Agriculture & Lands	1	1				
Ministry of Infrastructure Development, Public Utilities, Energy, Transport & Implementation	1	1				
TOTAL	2	1		0	0	0

As shown in Table 10, one (1) of the two cases from the Ministry of Works/Infrastructure in 2011 is still unresolved in 2020. Table 11, on the other hand, shows that both cases from the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Works/Infrastructure respectively, were finally closed.

Table 11: Rollovers from 2011 into 2020

STATUS OF COMPLAINTS MADE						
PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Dis-Continued	Beyond Jurisdiction	Advice Given
Royal Grenada Police Force	1		0	1		
Ministry of Infrastructure Development, Public Utilities, Energy, Transport & Implementation	1		1	0		
TOTAL	2	0	1	1	0	0

According to Table 12 there were a total of twenty-nine (29) new complaints in 2020 compared to fifty-nine (59) in 2019. Nine (9) from each year were outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman. A greater percentage (25%) was referred in 2019, compared to that in 2020 (7%). And six (6) complaints were closed in 2019 versus one (1) in 2020. Finally, nineteen (19) were ongoing in 2019, and twelve (12) in 2020.

Analysis of Complaints

Table 12: Comparison of status of complaints: 2019 vs. 2020

Year	Total	Closed	Ongoing	Advice/ Referral	Discontinued	Beyond Jurisdiction
2020	29	1	12	7	0	9
2019	59	6	19	25	0	9

Table 13: Distribution of Complaints per month 2020

MONTHS	2020
January	5
February	6
March	1
April	0
May	1
June	4
July	1
Aug	3
September	3
October	3
Nov	2
Dec	0
Total	29

A relatively small number, six (6) complaints, were received during the month of February. This is followed by five (5) in January; four (4) in June; and three (3) each in August, September and October. Noticeably too, is the fact that there were two (2) months with no complaints at all and three (3) months in which only one (1) formal complaint was received.

The line graph below is a representation of the status of complaints in Table 13 above

Table 14: Residence of Complainants per parish 2020

MONTHS	2020	2019
Jan	5	12
Feb	6	4
March	1	3
April	0	1
May	1	6
June	4	6
July	1	5
Aug	3	7
Sept	3	5
October	3	1
Nov	2	5
Dec	0	4
Total	29	59

Analysis of Complaints

There are low figures in the second quarter of both 2019 and 2020, but the figure is clearly lower in 2020 “due to COVID” perhaps.

The line graph below is a representation of the status of complaints in Table 13 above

Table 15: Residence of Complainants per parish 2020

PARISH	2020	2019
St. George	15	31
St. David	3	7
St. Andrew	6	10
St. Mark	0	1
St. Patrick	2	4
Out of State	0	1
Carriacou & Petite Martinique	0	0
St. John	0	3
Address Not Defined	3	2
TOTAL	29	59

As has been the norm, St. George is the parish where the majority of complainants reside. The distribution of the residence of complainants from the other parishes remained generally unchanged.

Table 16: Forms of Initial Contact in 2020

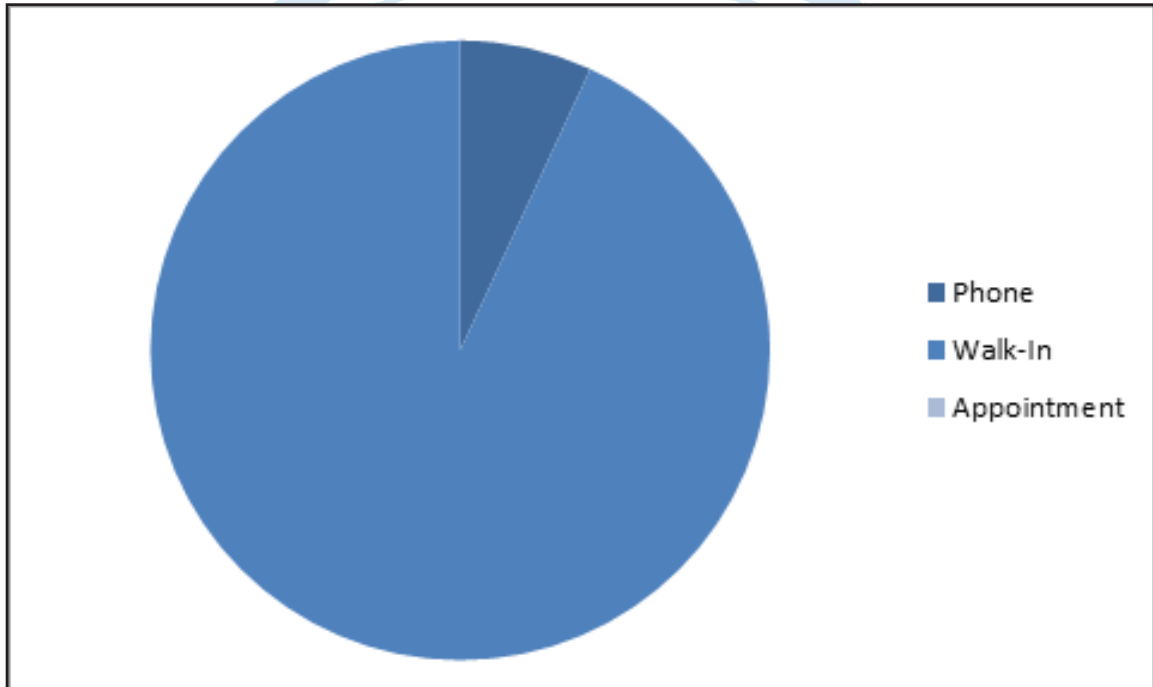
Phone	Walk-In	Appointment	TOTAL
2	27	0	29

As usual, the Office is readily available to the general public. Contact can be made via Email, Walk-in, Telephone, Appointment and Letter. The table below summarizes the sources through which initial contact was made in 2020.

Analysis of Complaints

Each complainant is treated equally, irrespective of the means of initial contact. All complainants are interviewed by the Complaints Officer. They must complete a Complaints Form following which the Ombudsman may make a preliminary enquiry or commence an investigation.

The pie chart below is a pictorial representation of the information shown in the table above



Ombudsmen in times of crises or under threat - Ombudsman under threat: Caribbean situation

Introduction

Good governance is a requirement for all governments and a right of all people, which includes fundamental human rights. Ombudsmen are the watchdogs charged to protect those basic rights and pinpoint maladministration. We may not execute our tasks with a tunnel vision, but should be aware of the cross border effects of the rule of law, which tends to become more oppressive.

The changing world we live in today brings new challenges for governments and increased roles for Ombudsman institutions, and as such are not without challenges of its own. Global acts of terrorism and migration of large groups of people with various intents and purposes require measures to be taken, while safeguarding the fundamental rights of both the nationals and migrants to the guest country. The increased tension between acts curbing freedoms and the protection of fundamental human rights has an impact on the functioning of Ombudsman institutions around the globe. Not only is the quest for new regulations and policies as a result of a changing world, but also – if not more so – changed mind sets and attitudes of administrators, are sources of threats for Ombudsmen. Lessons learned from recent history, which are at the cradle of today's imbalances in the world, should not be ignored.

One tends to evaluate actions and reactions based on what we know and/or see happening in the world today.

Threats facing the Caribbean region

Though the day-to-day issues confronting the people in relation to governments may not differ much, and are practically the same in nature in countries worldwide, the challenges and threats Ombudsmen experience as a result of the differences between developing versus developed countries, small island states and/or dependencies versus independent and self-sustaining countries are not to be underestimated in the face of globalization.

For the Latin American and Caribbean region it is rather safe to say that in some countries and territories the Ombudsman institution has been under threat even before it got the opportunity to properly develop and establish in the community. The social and political environment of Caribbean societies is often hostile to the growth and maturities of Ombudsman institutions in the region. Caribbean countries are relatively young. Self-government in various forms came only in the 1950's; and independence, except for Haiti, in the 1960's onward. Mentioned historical facts together with the heterogeneous composition of Caribbean societies due to their immigrant population, as well as the lack of a vibrant civil society such as a critical and independent media, citizens' watchdog groups and academics are serious challenges for Ombudsmen in the Caribbean. While the small size of the micro-states presents challenges to public administration in general, the web of intertwined personal relationships sometimes undermines the objectivity that underpins the rational legal framework in which the concepts of administrative justice and accountability take root and flourish.

Threats to the independence of the Institution often lay at the core of the struggle for survival of the institution in the region, due to the lack of adequate legal provisions, finances and/or a proper profile of an Ombudsman; undue influence of political considerations on the selection and appointment of the Officeholder and staff; public disparaging attacks by political members of the Governments on Ombudsman findings and recommendations rather than engaging with respect for the office and limited or no authority over resources as they are placed in some other hands, including Parliament.

The pivotal role of the Ombudsman in the checks and balances within a democracy is often ill understood, or not taken serious, resulting in undermining of the institution from within the organization of governments. Lack of action on reports presented by the Ombudsman undermines efforts for good governance at various levels. Failing to appoint vacancies and the establishment of powerless sterile entities are ways to create an illusion of proper checks and balances to handle issues of maladministration, abuse of powers, and violations of fundamental rights such as freedom of speech. Exposing maladministration as a result of nepotism and incompetency within the civil service may result in not extending or cutting short the term of an effective Ombudsman.

Requirements for expertise and adequate funding to execute the tasks of the Ombudsman heighten as international demands on governments increase to deal with 21st Century threats globally. The focus of political leadership starts drifting to meet international demands in various areas, not necessarily favorable to the people, or considering the fundamental rights of their constituencies. Compliance with international demands may even escape the checks from the Ombudsman, distorting the balance in protecting the rights of the people. The calls and need for integrity, anti-corruption, anti-terrorism and anti-human trafficking legislation bring new challenges regarding the protection of fundamental rights, transparency and proper governance at the level of compliance and implementation, as legitimate complaints of infringements get outside the reach of the authority of the Ombudsman. Ill-defined boundaries and or collaboration between newly established supervisory entities and the Ombudsman cripples transparency and actions taken by the public. Shifting the scope of authority of the Ombudsman and the protection of the rights of the people through legislation and privatization, also render the authority of the Ombudsman to investigate complaints regarding the services provided non-existent.

By Dr. R.J.A. Arduin

Former President CAROA (Caribbean Ombudsman Association); Former Ombudsman Sint Maarten; IOI (international Ombudsman Institute)Director Latin America and Caribbean region



(Photo of CAROA executive at the 2019 conference in Bermuda)

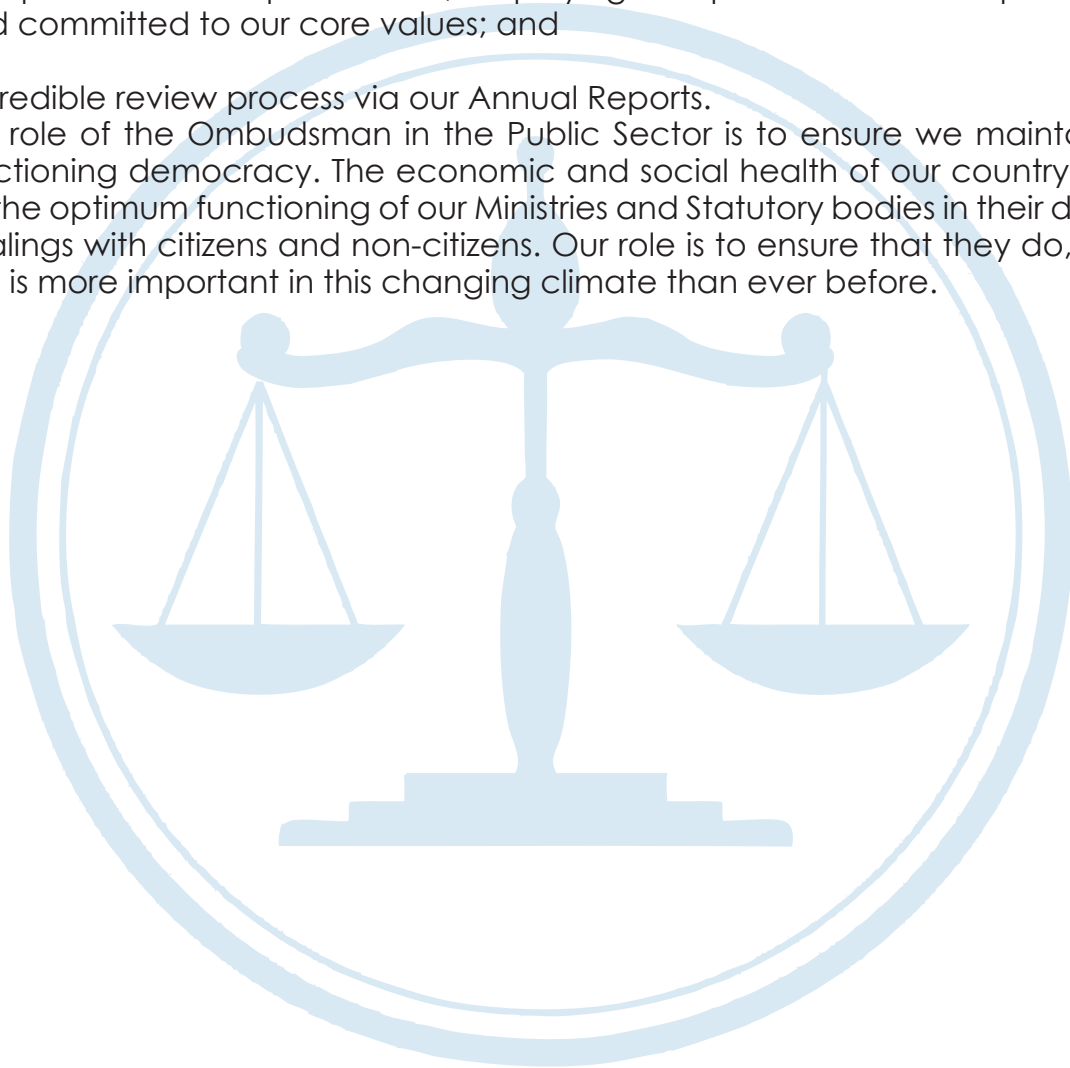
Patrick Wellington [Trinidad & Tobago], Allison Audain-Miller [Grenada], Sheila Brathwaite [British Virgin Islands], Keursly Concincion [Curaçao], Victoria Pearman [Bermuda], Raymond Mathilda [Curaçao], Marion Blair [Antigua], Randolf Duggins [Sint Maarten], and Rosemarie Husbands-Mathurin [St. Lucia]

Despite the departure of the Former Ombudsman and member of CAROA, Mrs. Allison Miller, the Office continues to maintain communication channels open with and among CAROA member states, to facilitate the exchange of expertise and knowledge within the regional Ombudsman community.

Closing remarks

Continued confidence in the Ombudsman's Office rests on having:

- 1) Clearly articulated outcomes supported by a “fit for purpose” structure;
 - 2) A demonstrably high level of trust and integrity between the Office and the general public;
 - 3) A capable and competent staff, employing transparent and robust processes and committed to our core values; and
 - 4) A credible review process via our Annual Reports.
- The role of the Ombudsman in the Public Sector is to ensure we maintain a well functioning democracy. The economic and social health of our country depends on the optimum functioning of our Ministries and Statutory bodies in their day to day dealings with citizens and non-citizens. Our role is to ensure that they do, and that role is more important in this changing climate than ever before.



Copies of the Act may be found on the websites of
The Office of the Ombudsman & the Government of Grenada
Office of the Ombudsman Website
www.Ombudsman.gd
&
Government of Grenada website
www.gov.gd

