



# Cobourg Taxpayers Association

*Making Local Government Accountable*

Good evening Mayor Brocanier, Councillors, members of the media, and the public.

Most people know me but for the record, my name is Dennis Nabieszko and I live at 800 Hudson Street in Cobourg and I am a director of the Cobourg Taxpayers Association.

I am here tonight to make a simple request.

We are asking you to eliminate the \$25 fee that is being charged citizens to submit a complaint to the Town's Ombudsman.

We want to remind you of what an ombudsman stands for.

An easy to understand definition of an ombudsman is:

"An official charged with representing the interests of the public by investigating and addressing complaints of inefficient or dishonest administration, mismanagement, or a violation of rights."

Does it seem right to you to charge citizens a fee for this?

When citizens have exhausted all other means, the ombudsman's office is their last resort to resolve their issue. They are now being asked to pay a fee, when they are most vulnerable.

Even if they win, they still lose.

We know that you looked for a standard fee for an ombudsman's request but could not find one; and you will not find one because no other organization charges a fee to have an ombudsman investigate a citizen's complaint.

The following quote is from the Ontario Ombudsman's web site:

"...there is no fee charged by the Ombudsman to either the municipality or the person bringing the complaint to our Office. In keeping with the tradition of Ombudsman offices around the world, the Ombudsman's services are free of charge in order to ensure they are fully accessible to everyone."

Why is Cobourg the only organization in the world denying full access to an ombudsman and deterring citizens from coming forward?

Other municipalities in Ontario that have appointed an ombudsman, include the City of Toronto, the Regional Municipality of Durham, Whitby, Burlington, and several others; they do not charge a fee to submit a complaint to their ombudsman.

95% of the other municipalities in Ontario, including many of the larger cities, that have not appointed an ombudsman, defer to the Ontario Ombudsman for their citizens to submit complaints without charge.

Our request is for our Council to put forward a motion immediately to rescind any fee for submitting a complaint to the Town's Ombudsman.

For a town with the slogan being the "Feel Good Town", I am not feeling so good about this.

Please do the right thing here and rescind the \$25 fee.

Thank you

Dennis Nabieszko, Secretary,  
Cobourg Taxpayers Association  
cta@cobourgtaxpayers.ca

Ontario municipalities that have appointed an ombudsman:

1. City of Toronto
2. Regional Municipality of York
3. Town of East Gwillimbury
4. Township of King
5. Regional Municipality of Halton
6. City of Burlington
7. Town of Milton
8. Town of Oakville
9. Regional Municipality of Durham
10. Municipality of Clarington
11. Town of Whitby
12. Township of Brock
13. Township of Uxbridge
14. Region of Waterloo
15. City of Waterloo
16. City of Cambridge
17. Township of Wellesley
18. Township of Wilmot
19. Woolwich Township
20. Town of Cobourg\*

\* The Town of Cobourg is the only municipality charging a fee to submit a complaint to their appointed ombudsman.

There is no centralized list of municipalities that have appointed ombudsmen. This represents our best research compiling this list.

- 20 out of 444 Ontario municipalities (4.5%) have appointed an ombudsman or
- 95.5% of Ontario municipalities do not have an ombudsman and default to the Ontario Ombudsman whose services are free to the municipality.