The Benefits of an Impartial Third party

*This is the fourth in a series of articles AUMA and the Alberta Ombudsman are producing to provide information on the relationship between the Ombudsman and Municipalities. To read the full series visit AUMA’s* [MGA Change Management page](https://auma.ca/advocacy-services/programs-initiatives/mga-change-management-resources).

The [Alberta Ombudsman’s](https://www.ombudsman.ab.ca/) office works to promote fair decisions and fair decision-making processes in the administration of Alberta’s public services. The Ombudsman is neither a substitute decision-maker nor will she act as an advocate for the complainant or the municipality. As an impartial third party, the Ombudsman will determine:

* Whether a public agency in question acted fairly and reasonably.
* Whether actions and decisions were consistent with relevant legislation, policies and procedures.

Once a formal investigation is concluded, the Ombudsman will communicate findings and/or recommendations oriented toward improving processes:

* A matter for further consideration
* An omission should be rectified
* A decision should be cancelled or varied
* A practice should be altered
* Amendments to legislation (rare occurrence)
* Reasons be provided for a decision
* A matter should be reheard or reconsidered
* Other steps that would resolve the problem

If there are no problems identified, the Ombudsman will indicate this to both the municipality and the complainant.

There is no need to wait for an investigation to seek the advice of the Ombudsman and their staff. Education and awareness resources are available that describe the Ombudsman’s role as well as ways municipalities can enhance administrative fairness.

**Some of what is offered includes:**

* Brochures
* [Administrative Fairness Guidelines booklets](https://www.ombudsman.ab.ca/determining-fairness/administrative-fairness-guidelines/)
* Posters
* Presentations/Education Sessions:
  + Principles of Administrative Fairness
  + Fundamentals of an Internal Complaint Mechanism
  + Elements of a Good Decision

Ombudsman staff are knowledgeable, and their education services are free. To get in touch, please contact the Ombudsman’s office:

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