

Ombudsman Saskatchewan promotes and protects fairness and integrity in the design and delivery of government services. But what does that mean? What is fairness anyway?

What is fairness? Fairness is not always simple and it does not always mean that everyone gets the exact same thing. There are many situations, relationships and events that come into play. Sometimes generally accepted principles of fairness will apply; sometimes the law will apply. Although there is no single answer, there are some basic principles and practices that can help to describe fairness.

Three Aspects of Fairness: The Fairness Triangle¹



Substantive

What was decided?

- Did government have the legal authority to make the decision?
- Was the decision based on relevant information?
- Was the decision oppressive or unjust?
- Was the decision wrong in fact or law?

Procedural

How was it decided?

- Was the person given sufficient information to know what was required?
- Was the person given an appropriate forum to present his or her views?
- Did government take the time to listen?
- Did government provide reasons for its decisions?
- Was the decision delivered within a reasonable time?
- Was the decision-maker unbiased?

Relational

How was I treated?

- Was government approachable?
- Was confidentiality respected?
- Was the government agency honest and forthright?
- Was an apology offered if a mistake was made?

1. Developed from the concept of the satisfaction triangle, in: Moore, Christopher (2003). *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers

How does the Ombudsman promote and protect fairness?

One way is by taking complaints about unfair service in provincial and municipal government organizations. Ombudsman Saskatchewan also offers fair practices workshops to government employees and can also meet with government entities to provide a fairness perspective (also called the “fairness lens”).

Do you have a complaint?

If you think you have been treated unfairly by a provincial or municipal entity, contact them and try to work it out. Try any appeals that are available. If that doesn't work, call us. We may be able to help. We are impartial and independent from government.

What can Ombudsman Saskatchewan do?

- We can take complaints from people who feel they have been treated unfairly by provincial or municipal government organizations. This includes:
 - provincial government ministries and agencies
 - Crown corporations, including public utilities
 - regional health authorities and many other publicly-funded health entities
 - cities, towns, villages, resort villages, rural municipalities and northern municipalities
- We will first try to resolve the matter informally by working directly with you and the government organization.
- If the matter cannot be resolved informally, we may investigate, issue a report, and when appropriate, make recommendations to resolve the complaint or prevent the same problem from happening again.

What can't Ombudsman Saskatchewan do?

- We can't review complaints about the federal government, courts, decisions of Cabinet, school boards, band councils, private companies or individuals.
- We can't force government to follow our recommendations (but they usually do).

How to Reach Us

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