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Cover Stories
Policy Briefings
Letters
Classifieds
Vacation
Links
Home Page

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Login
Weekly PDFs
Archives
Surveys
Lists
FAQ

NEWS

News Stories
Heard on the Hill
Legislative Column
Hill Climbers
Civil Circles

OPINIONS

Editorial
Op-eds
Letters

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FEATURES

Policy Briefings
Spin Doctors
Parliamentary Calendar

The Hill Times, June 30th, 2008
LETTERS

Public sector integrity commissioner vows to address root causes of wrongdoing



Re: "A bad month for honest public servants," (*The Hill Times*, June 23, p. 12). As Canada's first public sector integrity commissioner, I have been charged by Parliament with the responsibility to investigate disclosures of wrongdoing in the public sector and to protect public sector employees from reprisal. These responsibilities are at the core of my mandate and I take them very seriously.

I bring to the role my extensive experience in quasi-judicial and decision-making positions, including serving as the executive director of Canada's largest administrative tribunal, the Immigration and Refugee Board.

As I said in my annual report: "It is my duty to investigate and protect. I will not shrink from pursuing the truth and following the law, whatever the consequences. In doing so, however, I will unequivocally ensure the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are respected in dealing with all persons, both those who allege wrongdoing and those affected by an allegation. I will ensure the identity of individuals is protected. And I will put forward recommendations for follow-up action where I deem a situation requires them. I will also do what I can to address the root causes of wrongdoing."

Since I became commissioner last August, my office and I have spent a great deal of time speaking to public sector employees, academics and members of the public to try to raise awareness of this new office and the protection it provides to public sector employees.

In the short time that we have been operating we have significantly increased the number of inquiries coming in to the office. Over the past year we received 206 inquiries, compared to just over 217 over the previous five years combined.

The approximately 80 disclosures of wrongdoing and complaints of reprisal were each extensively reviewed by the office. In each case, a comprehensive report was provided to the discloser. We ensure that public sector employees are dealt with fairly and that their concerns are taken seriously, whether or not the matter in question calls for a formal investigation.

We have accomplished a great deal over these past months, and will continue this work over the coming years.

I invite your readers to visit our website at www.psic-ispc.gc.ca, to read our first annual report to Parliament, and to contact us about any questions or concerns they may have.

Christiane Ouimet



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