



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn accepts the first interim report of Canada's Taxpayers' Ombudsman

Ottawa, Ontario, March 12, 2009 – Today, the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), accepted the first interim report from Mr. J. Paul Dubé, Canada's Taxpayers' Ombudsman at a morning press conference in Ottawa.

The Harper Government named Canada's first Taxpayers' Ombudsman in February, 2008 to operate independently from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) with a mandate of ensuring that the CRA is more accountable to Canadians.

"Our Government realizes the importance of having an efficient, equitable and open tax system that serves Canadians," said Minister Blackburn. "The creation of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman was an important step in advancing the Agency's accountability and service to the public and the interim report provides us with the opportunity to evaluate our current accomplishments in ensuring that all taxpayers are treated with fairness and respect."

"Since its creation one year ago, the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman has been contacted by almost 4,000 taxpayers, has opened nearly 900 files, and closed more than 800 so far," said Mr. Dubé. "For many complaints, we found that the CRA did provide exemplary service. However, in many other cases, we found lapses in CRA service or unfair treatment of taxpayers. Our intervention in these cases has resulted in a variety of corrective actions by the CRA, such as apologies, the release of seized bank accounts, the ending of collection activities against a taxpayer, and the removal of penalties and interest charges."

Minister Blackburn requested the interim report which highlights the Ombudsman's accomplishments handling complaints involving service and fairness and identifying systemic issues in the relationship between taxpayers and the CRA. The Ombudsman's first Annual Report is scheduled to be released in December 2009.

"The Ombudsman and the Taxpayer Bill of Rights are important examples of our Government's commitment to the service and accountability that Canadians have every right to expect," said Minister Blackburn. "I thank the Ombudsman for this report and look forward to reviewing it over the coming days."

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The report cites several examples of how the intervention of the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman has made a difference in the lives of Canadian taxpayers. For example, a single mother was issued a \$38,000 Canada Child Tax Benefit reimbursement, which enabled her to keep her home; the operator of a special care home for adults was able to continue to operate after the CRA ceased its collection activities and released the taxpayer's bank account; and penalties and interest were cancelled for a man suffering from a brain tumour who was unable to file his tax returns on time after he lost his documents in a house fire.

A copy of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman's Interim Report can be found at www.taxpayersrights.gc.ca.

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