

## **Ombud investigation into the use of restraints in adult psychiatric facilities calls for system-wide changes**

September 23, 2025

FREDERICTON – New Brunswick’s Ombud, Marie-France Pelletier, released a special investigation report today on the use of restraints in psychiatric facilities in New Brunswick, calling for changes to address systemic issues in psychiatric and mental health care in the province.

The investigation was initiated following complaints about the use of seclusion rooms and physical restraints at the Restigouche Hospital Centre. The Ombud further expanded the scope of the investigation to review the use of restraints in all adult psychiatric facilities and units across the province, and to explore other challenges such as the reintegration of patients into the community.

“I have been personally troubled and saddened by the treatment and living conditions that some of these patients suffered through. These situations were the result of an entire system that is under pressure.” said Pelletier.

The investigation found many areas of concern including patients spending extended lengths of time in restraints, a lack of guidance on the removal of restraints, insufficient patient assessment and monitoring while in restraints, insufficient documentation of restraint orders, improper use of force techniques, and inadequate use of de-escalation techniques.

The use of seclusion rooms also raised concerns, notably related to unsanitary conditions, the inability of patients to communicate with staff, and lack of basic equipment such as clocks, recreational items and other sanitary tools.

The investigation found additional system-wide challenges such as the recruitment and retention of specialized staff, and insufficient opportunities for community reintegration of long-term patients, leaving no choice but for them to remain in hospital care.

The Ombud is making 21 recommendations in a wide range of areas related to law reform, policy reform, care practices, monitoring and compliance, training, infrastructure, and system-wide collaboration.

“My recommendations serve as a path to achieve the lasting changes the psychiatric and mental health system needs. I have been encouraged by the level of cooperation public authorities have demonstrated throughout this investigation and their commitment to date on the implementation of my recommendations.”

The Ombud indicated in her report that she will be monitoring progress on the recommendations.

**Media Contact:**

Jo Roy

Director, Public Affairs

Ombud NB

506-259-1934

[Media.ombud@ombudnb.ca](mailto:Media.ombud@ombudnb.ca)