

UNION OF TAXATION EMPLOYEES

PSAC

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Septembre 19, 2024

M^e François Boileau
Taxpayers' Ombudsperson
1000-171 Slater Street
Ottawa, Ontario
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Dear Mr. Ombudsperson,

I write to you today as the National President of the Union of Taxation Employees (UTE), which represents over 36,000 members working at the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), and as a concerned Canadian citizen and taxpayer about the current situation in Contact Centres across the country. CRA employees who work in its Contact Centres and respond to service inquiries from Canadian taxpayers and businesses are members of our union and are committed to providing quality service.

First of all, I would like to thank you for the work your office is doing with the Canada Revenue Agency to improve the service the Agency provides by reviewing taxpayers' service complaints and proposing concrete solutions to the CRA to ensure that problems are addressed and remedied.

As a matter of fact, I want to congratulate you on obtaining, following a request filed in March 2024 by your office, that the Canada Revenue Agency make changes to improve service by extending the hours for its individual and business tax inquiries lines and telephone lines dedicated to residents of the Territories to provide taxpayers with equal access during its hours of service, regardless of the caller's area code, as long as an agent is available.

One of the effects of this change, announced about a month ago, has been the hiring (or re-hiring) by CRA of some three hundred (300) new employees in its Contact Centres. This is good news. However, it is far from sufficient to remedy the long delays that taxpayers face when they call the Agency.

In your News release dated August 20, 2024, you implicitly acknowledge this fact.

I quote: "That said, we are aware that these contact centres are experiencing a high number of calls and have been unable to meet call demand. The CRA has assured us that it is taking steps to address this issue; we will keep a close eye on the situation to see if there are more opportunities for improvement."

Mr. Ombudsperson, I can confirm to you today that the situation is still very difficult in the Canada Revenue Agency's Contact Centres, and that there is still a severe shortage of agents in order to be able to meet the demand and offer the best possible service and respond to calls in a timely manner.

But this is not surprising at all. Let me remind you that the Agency decided in May 2024 not to renew the contracts of over 2,000 of its contact center agents. As we predicted, the result is that taxpayers have been waiting an average of over three (3) hours since the start of the summer to get answers to their questions. And that's if they don't simply lose patience and abandon the call altogether.

This is in direct contradiction with the statement made in the latest budget tabled last spring by the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, which claims that the government is providing sufficient funding to the CRA to not only maintain the level of service offered to Canadians by its Contact Centres but to improve the service.

This is not the case.

The wait times at CRA Contact Centres are simply unacceptable. I know that you are aware of this situation and that you share this point of view.

Our union and its members understand the frustration expressed by taxpayers, and we share many of the concerns they have raised with your office.

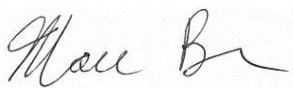
The situation faced by our members is distressing. Employees working in Contact Centres are exhausted, and the Agency's refusal to fill more permanent positions in this type of work, as well as the stressful and highly supervised work environment compared to other positions within the CRA, place them in precarious employment situations.

Mr. Ombudsperson, I am asking you to continue to apply pressure on the Canada Revenue Agency to hire far more agents in its Contact Centres to really improve the situation for both taxpayers and businesses, and for our hard-working members who face very difficult working conditions.

The excellent work of our members is the cornerstone of service to Canadians and their ability to comply with Canadian tax regulations. I am convinced that you share our goal of restoring public confidence in the CRA's ability to respond quickly and adequately to the inquiries of Canadian taxpayers.

I offer you my full cooperation and I will make myself available to discuss with your office to find together concrete solutions to improve the service offered by the Canada Revenue Agency's Contact Centres and to reduce the number of complaints received by the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsperson.

Please accept, Mr. Ombudsperson, the expression of my highest regards.



Marc Brière
National President
Union of Taxation Employees