



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

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TO: Chairpersons & Directors of Education

FROM: Patrick Daly, President

SUBJECT: Highlights of the Ontario Ombudsman Annual Report

Introduction:

The following presents highlights from the Ontario Ombudsman's Annual Report from 2016 to 2017. The Ombudsman's new oversight of school boards took effect on September 1, 2015. The volume of complaints about school boards has increased during this time.

- **945** cases in fiscal 2016-2017
- **398** in the seven-month period of 2015-2016
- **64** complaints about specific school boards (54 complaints were received in 2015-16)

Further breakdown of the cases in 2016-2017:

- **583** English public boards
- **268** English Catholic boards
- **13** French public boards
- **20** French Catholic boards
- **61** Board or school not specified

The main topics of complaint are:

- **Transportation** (school buses)—192 cases
- **Special education services**—123 cases
- **Student safety:** 92 cases
- **School closures/Pupil Accommodation Reviews:** 90 cases
- **School Trustee complaints:** 42 cases (these range about trustees and concerns about codes of conduct from trustee's themselves)

According to the Annual Report, all complaints were resolved informally without need for a formal investigation.¹ In most cases, the Office of the Ombudsman made informal inquiries with supervisory officers at boards to understand their responses to complaints and, where possible, to suggest improvements to their processes and increase transparency. For example, the Ombudsman's office has suggested to a number of school boards that they develop specific policies with respect to student exclusions since they occur outside the typical suspension and expulsion processes. As the Annual Report states:

Our Office encourages school boards to develop policies and procedures to ensure the process leading to an exclusion is fair and transparent, and that those affected by exclusions are made aware of their appeal rights.

In summary, it appears that the Office of the Ombudsman is starting to take a more active role in advising school boards on their policies and procedures with respect to various matters impacting school boards.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Stephen Andrews at sandrews@ocsta.on.ca.

¹ All save Toronto CDSB and Toronto DPSB which are part of an on-going investigation regarding student transportation issues.