

NOTE: UNDER EMBARGO to 2 p.m., November 2, 2016

Ombudsman's Remarks – Paul Dubé Annual Report 2015-2016

Good afternoon, and thank you to everyone watching, here in person and online. It's an honour for me to release this Annual Report today.

This is our first annual report since the historic expansion of our office's mandate. For the first time, we are reporting not just on the hundreds of provincial government bodies we oversee, but on the 444 municipalities, 82 school boards and school authorities, and 21 universities that are now within our jurisdiction.

This is also my first annual report as Ombudsman, a post I assumed on April first of this year. Since we have accomplished a great deal since then, I felt it was important that this report reflect our latest work, as well as that of the past fiscal year.

My priority as Ombudsman has been to build on this office's strong reputation as an agent of positive change, by establishing appropriate and productive relationships with all of our stakeholders. This has been particularly important as we have expanded our jurisdiction to areas where people are not necessarily familiar with who we are or what we do.

For that reason, today's report is more than a summary of the 22,118 cases we received up to March 31 – and the 10,830 we've received since then. It also covers the basics of what an Ombudsman is, how we work, and how we can help. It reviews the most common topics of concern to Ontarians and how we addressed them – whether through quick, behind-the-scenes resolution, proactive work with the relevant bodies, or formal investigation.

My hope is that it provides an answer for anyone who has asked, "What can the Ombudsman do for me?" What we can do – and what we are doing every day – is promoting fairness in the public sector and improving governance.

For example, we helped an inmate who had been in segregation for nine months receive psychiatric help and get moved to the general population. We prompted the Family Responsibility Office to take action against a man who owed more than \$300,000 in support. We helped a woman get the \$4,900 in disability support she was entitled to from ODSP. We helped a senior whose medical report had been misplaced by the Ministry of Transportation get his license reinstated in one day. We persuaded school boards to implement processes for complaints about trustees. This is the kind of work we do day in and day out.

But we add value for all stakeholders and that includes providing feedback to public sector bodies on systemic issues through our investigations and recommendations for corrective action. We have done that with our recent systemic reports on police de-escalation training, and on services for adults with developmental disabilities. In both cases, after some initial resistance, we were able to persuade the relevant ministries to accept all of our 82 recommendations, which I am convinced will save lives.

We have also done it in our proactive meetings with public sector leaders, including the head of the Ontario Public Service, where we have alerted them to brewing problems. We have done it in our outreach work with our new stakeholders. And we have done it in our submissions recommending legislative change, in such important areas as police oversight and segregation in Ontario jails.

I am proud to lead an office that is known for the value it provides to millions of Ontarians. I am committed to making it more effective than ever as we continue to expand our horizons.

Now, I'm sure many of you have questions about specific issues – what would you like to know?