



OCASC April 2016 Meeting Minutes

chair@ocasc.ca

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133 Greenbank Road, Ottawa, ON K2H 6L3

Date: April 21, 2016

Location: Fisher Park School, 250 Holland Avenue (Library)

Time: 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Attendance

Total attendance (47)

Total Schools represented (33)

Total Member Schools (51) (53% present)

Member School attending (31) based on SY2015-2016

Bayview PS—Michelle Branigan

Briargreen PS—Carlie Brown

Bridlewood Community ES—Andrea Haas

Canterbury HS—Louise Crawford

Castlefrank ES—Carol Mothersill, Stephanie
Nasmith

Dunlop PS—Craig Tiberi

Elgin Street PS—Jennifer Simms

Elmdale Ps—Megan Richardson

Elizabeth Park PS—Dale Childs

Forest Valley ES—Joel MacKinnon

Glashan PS—Gerry Nera

Glen Cairn PS—Paul Warner (Vice Chair)

Glen Ogilvie PS—Stephanie Ettinger

Greenbank MS—Helen Norman

Huntley Centennial PS—Mark Tymowski
(Communication)

Jockvale ES—Joe Allen

John McCrae SS—Ellen Dickson

John Young ES—Mike Hickey

Katimavik ES—Stephanie Nasmith

Lakeview PS—Tracy Neufeld (Chair)

Manordale PS—Cathy Babyak (Membership)

Manotick PS—Sophie Paluck

Maple Ridge ES—Cynthia Allen

Mary Honeywell ES—Elizabeth Conabree

Meadowlands PS—Rula Worrall

Mutchmor PS—Adrienne Annan

North Gower-Marlborough PS—Tara
Hawkins Kavanagh

Rockcliffe Park PS—Hacene Oukacine

South March PS—Christine Moulaison

WE Gowling PS—Marisa Moher

Woodroffe PS—Danna Campbell

Non-member School attending (2)

Goulbourn MS—Susanne Bowen

Knoxdale PS—Geoff Pearce

Guests (13)

Mike Carson (Chief Financial Officer), Chris Ellis (Zone 6 trustee, Rideau and Rockcliffe),

Nadine Clarke (Secondary School Committee), Barbara Finlay (Deputy Ombudsman)

L. Williamson (Ombudsman), C. Too (parent), Helene Lapointe-Jerome, Brenda Boylan

(St. Joseph High School), Elaine Hughs (Advisory Commmittee on Equity), Emeka Ndukwe

(Advisory Committee on Equity), Susan Lindsay (Elgin St. parent), Theresa Kavanagh (Trustee

Zone 4 Bay Ward), Amanda Taillon (W.O. Mitchell Parent)



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1. Welcome and Call to Order (7:03 pm)

OCASC Chair Tracy Neufeld welcomed members and guests. She also introduced Deputy Ombudsman, Barbara Finlay.

2. Approval of Agenda

Approved as presented. Motion: South March; Second: Manotick

3. Approval of Minutes

Approved as presented. Motion: Bayview; Second: Dunlop

4. Complaints about School Boards with Deputy Provincial Ombudsman, Barbara Finlay—Presentation in the April Meeting Materials

- Since Sept 2015, the Provincial Ombudsman, which celebrated its 40th anniversary last year, has had jurisdiction over school boards and municipalities
- No federal ombudsman
- Independent and impartial resource
- Try to resolve issues at lowest level possible – facilitate solutions to problems – behind the scenes
- Has always overseen community colleges
- The Ombudsman Act – focus on administrative conduct – can't set policies – makes sure policies are administered properly
- Hiring – recruiting – check out Careers on the Ombudsman Ontario website
- Recommendations are not binding – but almost all recommendations are followed
- Discretion not to investigate – Why is complaint being made? Is it still relevant to the current content?
- Last resort – people should exhaust all other complaint mechanisms before calling the provincial ombudsman
- Surveys sent to school boards to find out what was already available
- Only give information with the party's consent - Confidentiality helps to the ombudsman investigate – broad access to confidential info
- Not covered by access to information – don't need it to get information
- Can't force an organization to follow the recommendations, but need to be very persuasive – not advocates
- Four teams work together to triage complaints – negotiating resolutions so that investigations are not necessary
-



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- Anyone can make a complaint, but office wants to work with the person who is most directly affected – for example, if a parent make a complaint on behalf of their child, the ombudsman will want to talk to the child
- Ombudsman can take on any issue that s/he wants to, but it doesn't happen very often
- Ask for a lot of information about the impact of the problem – What has been done so far? who was dealt with? What happened?

- Get both sides of the story
- Resolution is what's reasonable to the ombudsman
- Formal notice when the issue will be investigated – most valuable for systemic issues
- Have access within the provincial government
- Didn't find out until May 2015 about the school board coverage – did some research ahead of time and have a dedicated office for school board complaints
- There is a monthly e-newsletter that one can subscribe to – The Watchdog – and an annual report
- Two examples of cases:
 - Wrong way – two 4 year olds let off at the wrong bus stop – several complaints – calls to schools, transportation boards, etc.
 - Bad reaction – parents wanted school to be no nuts, but also no dairy as well – not practical – not the result that the parents wanted
- Don't usually go into schools – mostly deal at board level
- Mostly information and referral

Questions and Answers:

Q: Glashan: How big is staff? Are you only located in Toronto?

A:

- 86 (hiring up to 140)
- Yes, but many staff members travel to where the issues are

Q: Greenbank: Is the ombudsman who we could contact to find out why schools don't oversee the organization of proms?

A: Contacting the office is a good first step to get information on the issue.

Q: Manotick: If conduct is contrary to law? Do you have jurisdiction on what money is spent on?

A:

- Not really. If there is an impact of underfunding, there may some recommendations made.
- Don't recommend funding for particular policies, etc.

Q: Maple Ridge: Jurisdiction of over minor (private) sports leagues?



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A: No

Q: Trustee Ellis: Does the annual report from Ombudsman to show issues that are common across boards? Are policies checked against legislation and see if they are followed?

A: Yes

Q: Chair: Is there a way to share best practices? Parental engagement – insights?

A:

- Case studies (about 40) in annual report – what worked and what didn't
- Seen an overwhelming level of parental involvement – really important for parents and involved community parties to share

Q: Do all school boards have a complaint process? Can you find it out from the board itself or from the ombudsman?

A:

- Best to go to the board (or municipality) first
- Recommendation for more clearly communicated policies
- Tracy – OCASC could share the complaint process

Q: Elgin street: Do you put binding recs in place?

A: No

Q: Trustee Kavanagh – Can trustees refer complainants?

A: Yes and can make complaints themselves, if necessary

Q: Advisory committee school board – Do you go below supervisor level? How to get information to different communities – meeting them in their comfort zone – recommendation to address community?

- If it could have been resolved at lower level, will make the call to that level.
- If we see opportunities for improvement to the system, will make recommendations

Q: Mapleridge – Do you look to see if the policy was communicated properly?

A:

- Won't make recommendations that will change the policy
- Look at the impact of the decision

Q: Jockvale: Where do we take federal complaints?

A: There is no federal ombudsman, but many federal departments have ombudsmen.

Tracy thanked Barbara for the presentation. There were some brochures distributed at the end, PDFs of which can be found here—<https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/Resources/Brochure.aspx>



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5. Chalk It Up

Q: Glen Ogilvie: Lunch options?

A:

- Manotick: Local vendors – subway, independent restaurants, hot potato - hotlunches
- Forest Valley – pita pit
- Mary Honeywell – pita pit – hot dog pit
- Meadowlands: Hot dogs still done
- Greenbank: Mommies Yummies
- Castlefrank: Hot dogs – Food Basics and Independent

Q: Manotick: AODA compliant web platform - wordpress?

A:

- We pay someone
- Board website – doesn't work for the councils
- Trustee Ellis – wordpress themes – accessible websites

Q: North Gower: Do Council fundraising events have to meet the Healthy Eating Guide and, if so, these events count as one of the 10 (free) days?

A: Yes and yes

Q: South March: How many Spirit Days a year? And who runs them

A:

- Glen Cairn: Students
- Castlefrank: two a month – staff
- Mary Honeywell – staff
- Katimavik: one a month – students
- Maple ridge – two a year – run by council as fundraisers

Q: Elizabeth Park: Pro grants: Tips for applying?

A: Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants for School Councils

- Vice chair – Contact the regional office – either in person or by phone – and ask questions
- Woodroffe – get someone every year
- Mapleridge – make sure to fill in the report
- Meadowlands – Can we have the event during school hours? A: As long as it's not an event for the students only the parents. Knoxdale: Streamed their presentation online: allowed parents



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- Greenbank:
 - Can we carry over the money? Yes, ask at the office
 - Can we use it to help Syrian families? Yes, ask at the office
 - Take home Kit for parents – summer slide? – ask at office

Castlefrank: Scientists in schools – New community workshop for parents - flyers

6. Nominating Committee and AGM update

Dale Childs, Mark Tymowski and Paul Warner are all on the nominating committee - Move Glashan Second: Mary Honeywell

The information about the positions and the process is on the OCASC website (<http://ocasc.ca/final-meeting-and-call-for-nominees-ocasc-agm-may-19-2016/>) and on the Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ocasc/permalink/793335764104527/>)

Manotick: How do we know if the incumbents are staying?

A: Each person can nominate themselves. Email the nominating committee to ask questions. Working to have a strong executive. Please go to councils and ask for volunteers.

In the case of an election, the membership chair will run the election.

7. From Your Executive

Paul: Talking about the Committee of the Whole (COW) – getting the point across in four minutes – possibility of doing a session at OCASC – or at a school council meeting

8. The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 pm