

On September 13, 2016, the Integrity Commissioner provided the first Code of Conduct Training and Information Session to TDSB Trustees.

At the September 13th session, she covered the principles of Accountability and Transparency upon which the Code is built. The training session covered the historical events at the TDSB that led to the development of the Code of Conduct and the creation of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner.

It was underscored that the rules of the *Education Act*, the TDSB Bylaws and the Code of Conduct, point out that it is the Board as Whole that makes decisions for the Board, not individual Trustees.

The statutory regime of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner sets out the authority of the Integrity Commissioner: The *Education Act*, (Subsection 218.1) Board Policy PO75 –the Code of Conduct and Board Procedure 708, the Complaint Protocol. Comprehensively, the Statute, the Code of Conduct, the Complaint Protocol and the relevant TDSB bylaws, form the statutory regime and accountability framework, which all Board Trustees must follow. As it was pointed out at the Code of Conduct Training session, these rules must be followed because it is the law.

The Integrity Commissioner reminded Trustees of the important words of Madam Justice Bellamy, stated in the 2005 Bellamy Inquiry Report: “By their actions, people in leadership positions—whether they be [public officials] or senior staff—send a powerful signal to all staff and to the public. They need to be careful that the signal they are sending does not end up corroding public trust. They need to create a positive culture for the [government organization].”

It was pointed out that Trustees operate within a mode for accountability. The existence of a Code of Conduct, an independent ethics officer in the Integrity Commissioner, a Director of Education separate from an Executive Officer, the role of oversight of Administrative omissions and decisions conducted by the Ombudsman of Ontario as a last resort, demonstrates to the public that the Board Trustees are committed to ethical decision making according to fair and transparent rules and processes.

Each Trustee is one part of a decision-making body that **collectively** and **as a whole** represents the TDSB stakeholders. Each Member was democratically elected and while each holds varying views on different topics, each Trustee serves as one part of a collective body to make decisions in the best interests of the students represented by the TDSB.

The Integrity Commissioner pointed out to the Board Trustees that the Ombudsman of Ontario has publicly confirmed it is the office of last resort, however, he **will receive** complaints about any unresolved concern about the TDSB, including school board staff, principals, teachers and Trustees.

In particular, the Integrity Commissioner pointed out to Trustees that the Code of Conduct requires that they will **not** participate in activities that grant, or appear to grant, any special consideration, treatment or advantage to an individual which is not available to every other individual represented by the Board in the City. Also, Trustees must avoid the improper use of the influence of their office, conflicts of interest, both apparent and real and must act in a way that will promote public confidence and bear close public scrutiny.