



## Citizens' Representative's Message

On July 20, 2016, we tabled our second Annual Report pursuant to the *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act*. For the fiscal year 2015-16, we received 16 inquiries from public employees under our whistleblowing program. We also completed three full investigations which entailed significant contact with the whistleblowers, considerable review of document evidence and the conduct of numerous interviews. In two cases we found that the allegations were not substantiated and explained our reasoning to the whistleblowers. In the third, we advised the public body of our likely recommendations prior to the release of a formal report and they were accepted and implemented before we closed our file. We had the full cooperation of the senior executive of all the public bodies we contacted.

Over the next year we want to ensure that more public employees are aware of their responsibilities and protections under the whistleblowing program. It is our hope that our ongoing outreach offerings will explain the benefits of the program to more employees.

### Did you know?

The OCR is one of six statutory offices of the House of Assembly; the others being the Auditor General, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Advocate for Children and Youth, the Chief Electoral Office, and the Commissioner for Legislative Standards.



## Inmates and Correctional Officers Helping Haiti

Too often, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are exposed to negative media about our provincial correctional facilities. This makes an eyeglass recycling project at the Bishop's Falls Correctional Centre ("BFCC") worth mentioning. The project, designed by an OCR staff member who is a member of Lions Clubs International, has five project partners (Lions, the Adult Corrections Division, RCMP, Armour Transport and Team Broken Earth) and is giving the gift of improved sight to tens of thousands of people around the world. Each viable pair of glasses collected by Lions is shipped to BFCC by Adult Corrections or the RCMP where they are washed and sterilized, measured for strength, tagged, polished, bagged and then exported via Armour Transport to a Lions warehouse in Calgary for eventual free distribution in overseas eye clinics. A percentage of the glasses are kept in the Province to support vision clinics undertaken in Haiti by the Newfoundland and Labrador based medical charity Team Broken Earth, which sends volunteer medical teams to the City of Port au Prince throughout the year. Testimonials from participants in the project indicate that inmates are glad to help, and thankful for the opportunity to "not just serve time, but serve while doing time." Since October 2015, the inmates and staff at Bishop's Falls have processed nearly 50,000 pairs.

### Seeking Fairness

The English School District provides students who qualify with one-on-one tutoring during the academic year. This was cold comfort to the parents of a teenage student who suffered a stroke just prior to the end of the school year. Unable to avail of the service while undergoing medical intervention and rehab, when the parents requested tutoring to assist with the student's transition to the next grade level they were initially turned down. The OCR processed

the inquiry quickly and articulated the family's concerns with an eye to settling the matter outside of the investigative process. The OCR was told that while the intent of the program is confined to the academic year, the program was also under review. In light of the extreme hardship endured by the student, the ESD approved tutoring throughout the month of August, giving both parents and the student one less thing to worry about.

### Finding Solutions

2015-16 featured an OCR case where the culprit in a family's misery turned out to be an unsympathetic government computer. A father and son were losing the mom of the house to a terminal disease. As her health declined, the son volunteered to receive and administer his mother's federal disability tax credit to help provide support for her. He was notified shortly thereafter that the Department of Advanced Education and Skills ("AES") had begun clawing back money due to an existing debt he owed the Province. When the OCR took his predicament forward to AES, it investigated immediately and found that a CRA computer that identified federal government payments flowing to citizens who owed debts to the Province had triggered notification of recovery by the Province. Given the man's predicament and the automated error, AES immediately repaid the amount it had taken and agreed to collect its debt at a later date.

We have numerous presentations available for public servants and the general public, ranging from public interest disclosure, to our overall mandate, to navigating difficult complaints. Presentations are available by calling (709) 729-7647 or via email at [citrep@gov.nl.ca](mailto:citrep@gov.nl.ca).



### Questions? Comments?

Is your department, agency or community group interested in learning more about the OCR, its services and processes? Do you have a suggestion or question to be addressed in a future edition of *Insights*? Call us at 1-800-559-0079 or (709) 729-7647, or e-mail [citrep@gov.nl.ca](mailto:citrep@gov.nl.ca).

#### Office of the Citizens' Representative Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

4th Floor, Beothuck Building  
20 Crosbie Place  
P.O. Box 8400  
St. John's, NL  
A1B 3N7

Tel: 709-729-7647  
Toll Free: 1-800-559-0079  
Fax: 709-729-7696  
E-mail: [citrep@gov.nl.ca](mailto:citrep@gov.nl.ca)



[www.citizensrep.nl.ca](http://www.citizensrep.nl.ca)



Office of the Citizens' Representative  
Newfoundland and Labrador

Subscribe to **OCR INSIGHTS** at [citrep@gov.nl.ca](mailto:citrep@gov.nl.ca)