



Ottawa, April 27 2021

**Subject: Invitation to a mediation process between the School Council and the CEPEO**

Dear parents and guardians,

On December 16, 2020, the Director of Education of the Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (CEPEO), Sylvie C.R. Tremblay, mandated me, in my capacity as Equity and Human Rights Commissioner, to conduct an investigation following allegations by parents of école secondaire publique Omer-Deslauriers.

The allegations contained in a petition sent to the Director of Education are related to communication difficulties between parents and the school administration, a lack of access to educational resources and perceived discrimination against of some students and their parents.

As CEPEO's Equity and Human Rights Commissioner, I act as an intermediary and lead investigator of complaints, harassment and discrimination in relation to the Ontario Human Rights Code, CEPEO policies and directives.

On March 25, I presented my [interim investigation report](#) to the Director of Education. In this report, I made recommendations on the urgent need to act in order to initiate a constructive dialogue between the school board and parents for the well-being of students and school staff.

My investigation has enabled me to determine that certain past decisions have had the effect of accentuating a perception of discrimination and stigmatization of certain students at école secondaire publique Omer-Deslauriers. These events unfortunately created a climate of tension and suspicion between the school board and some parents. This climate is detrimental to the success of the Omer-Deslauriers school community.

The school board must urgently create a space for dialogue with the parents of Omer-Deslauriers and send a strong message on its desire to be part of the sustainable path towards equity, inclusion and pluralism, as expressed in its [2020-2025 strategic plan](#).

The complexity, the sensitivity of the issues and the need to ensure the well-being of the students of Omer-Deslauriers incited me to recommend mediation between the parents of the students and representatives of the CEPEO in order to allow the reestablishment of a healthy and positive collaboration to allow students to develop in an environment which is conducive to their academic success.

This mediation process must be in keeping with the spirit of the *Ontario Education Act*, according to which all partners in the education sector have a role to play in improving student achievement and their well-being, closing the gaps in student achievement and maintaining confidence in the publicly funded education systems of the province

The mediation process is voluntary, non-coercive, informal and confidential. The mediation will be organized in five sessions which will take place by the end of the 2021-2022 school year. Each session will focus on an issue previously identified during a preparatory meeting in order to promote the resolution of the issues raised.

In order to promote a rapid implementation of this mediation process, I ask parents who wish to be involved in this process to communicate directly with me by email, [yves-gerard.mehou-loko@cepeo.on.ca](mailto:yves-gerard.mehou-loko@cepeo.on.ca) , or with the [school administration](#) so that we can determine the date of ratification of the mediation agreement that will be prepared by my office.

Respectfully yours,

Yves-Gérard Méhou-Loko  
Commissioner