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Report Released Today

Today, Special Commissioner of Investigation Richard J. Condon released a report describing an investigation into a scheme which defrauded the New York City Department of Education ("DOE") out of hundreds of thousands of dollars in custodial payroll funds. DOE Custodian Trifon Radef, assigned in the daytime to the Theodore Roosevelt Educational Campus in the Bronx, was essentially a no-show nighttime custodial employee at Harry S. Truman High School in the Bronx. The investigation found that Truman Custodian Nicanor Fernandez approved the payroll and signed the payroll checks for Radef and at least four other second job no-show custodial employees – who held positions elsewhere within the DOE – at Truman.

The investigation also found that, for a period of years, Radef used numerous other custodial employees to perform labor on his privately owned properties in Queens; he paid them through the custodial accounts at Truman, Roosevelt, or PS 158 in Queens – where he had been the custodian.

Special Commissioner Condon recommended to Chancellor Black that Radef and the other no-show employees be fired and made ineligible for work in the City school system; Fernandez retired while the investigation was being conducted, and SCI recommended that he be made ineligible as well.

Commissioner Condon further recommended that the DOE review its procedures for oversight of custodians.

The Special Commissioner referred the findings to Preet Bharara, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, for whatever action he deems appropriate.

The Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation is part of the New York City Department of Investigation and Special Commissioner Condon reports to Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn.