

President's *Message*

Colleagues,

In my final message as OTF President, I wish to reinforce the themes I have focused on this year—the professionalism of teachers, union and labour rights, and democracy in the political process.

The first is the professionalism of teachers. As I write this, the OTF office is busy preparing for the start of a new Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) project. Over 230 teachers will be involved in research projects to improve teaching methods and so, improve student learning. In smaller, less formal ways, teachers do this every day. We need to find the most successful methods, to adapt them to fit our schools and students, and finally implement them in our schools. As well, professional dialogue at many levels is required—communication, co-operation and collaboration. OTF supports many professional learning activities—check our website: www.otffeo.on.ca.

The second theme is the continued attack on unions and the labour movement. An article in the March 27 *Globe and Mail* was titled, “Do Unions Have a Future?” That same day, at the Labour Rights Conference, I heard the answer—unions matter a great deal. The rate of union membership in a country is an indicator of the level of economic equality which, in turn, is clearly linked to better health, lower crime rates, greater longevity and increased social mobility.

The 1940s brought legislation which created a society where employees were able to form unions and negotiate fair wages and working conditions. By the mid-’80s, 40 percent of the Canadian labour force was unionized. Today, that number is less than 32 percent.

There are several reasons for this decline but a major force is corporations which have used the weakening economy to attack unions even further. Added to this is repressive government legislation such as Bill C-377 which puts onerous reporting requirements on unions.

Language can be used as a tool or a weapon, and lately, the arsenal of union bashing jargon is growing—union boss, gold-plated pensions, and greedy union members. Not only are these terms inaccurate but also they are increasingly offensive. Tim Hudak continues to refer to union presidents as union bosses despite the fact that unions are far more democratic and egalitarian than some political parties.

We must draw the line in the sand. We must stand up to this abusive and bullying behaviour. We must stand up to attacks at all levels.

This moves to my third theme—political involvement. Education is continually



Terry Hamilton
OTF President

buffeted by the political winds. Mix that with the right-wing agenda to eliminate unions and drive down wages and our working conditions, our jobs, and the “fair society” that Charles Sousa spoke about in his budget speech are at risk.

To prevent this, we must use our skills as teachers to educate and motivate our family members, our friends, and our neighbours. We must become well informed, then we must become enthusiastic participants in the democratic process at all levels.

Now is the time—before the writ is dropped, before the next election. We have to remember the past struggles of teachers and workers and stand together. The futures of our children and our students depend on it.

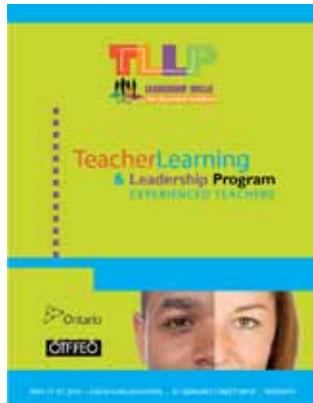


A new cohort, a new learning experience!

In mid-May, some 230 teachers from across the province gathered in Toronto to receive training and support for their Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) projects, which will be completed over the next year. A total of 133 new projects are underway—the largest number ever!

The TLLP, a Ministry of Education initiative, in partnership with OTF and its Affiliates, provides funding to experienced teachers for the projects. The three goals of the TLLP are teacher professional learning, teacher leadership and knowledge exchange and sharing of learning. OTF organizes and runs the two-day training session.

This year's participants are the seventh cohort in the program. They will report on their projects in June 2014 and share their projects with others at a summit in November 2014.



Each school board in the province can recommend up to two projects for approval by a joint Ministry-Federation committee.

For more information on the TLLP, go to www.otfeo.on.ca and click on the TLLP button.

Are Ontario's teachers great? *Yes!*

And the nominations for the 2013 OTIP Teaching Awards are one example of the excellent teachers in the public system. This year, OTF received 76 nominations for the OTIP Teaching Awards—38 in the elementary teacher category, 23 in the secondary teacher category and 15 in the beginning teacher category. Teachers were nominated by parents, teachers, administrators and students.

The three winning teachers will be honoured at an awards ceremony in September. They will receive a personal award of \$1,000 and a Certificate of Recognition. Their schools are recognized as well with a \$1,000 prize and a Certificate of Recognition. Prior to the ceremony, the names of the winners are not publicized.

The awards are sponsored by the Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) and the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF).

To read more about the awards, check out www.teachingawards.ca.



Hincks-Dellcrest Centre

The 2013 Greer Award winner

The Hincks-Dellcrest Centre in Toronto is a major force in working to eliminate the stigma of mental illness by promoting optimal mental health in infants, children, youth and their families and contributing to the achievement of healthy communities.

The centre was recognized for its contributions to public education in April at the OTF Spring Board of Governors' meeting. Terry Hamilton, OTF President and Sam Hammond, ETFO President presented the Greer Award to Donna Duncan, CEO and Linda Hills, Executive Director of Hincks-Dellcrest Centre.

The terms of the award allow the winner to designate an educational charitable organization to receive the monetary portion of the award. Hincks-Dellcrest designated Parents for Children's Mental Health to receive the monetary award.



Left to Right: Terry Hamilton, OTF President; Donna Duncan, CEO; Linda Hills, Executive Director, Hincks-Dellcrest Centre; and Sam Hammond, ETFO President

We're all in it together... *that's why it works!*

I was recently reflecting on a comment made by a participant at a Learning Partnership summit last fall. I'm not sure whether the person making the suggestion that we should only have teachers born after 1975 actually meant it or just meant to be provocative. However, her statement spoke to the belief we hear expressed from time to time that only young teachers can bring enthusiasm and creativity to teaching. This comment came on the heels of a very engaging speaker who described how technology and pedagogy have changed so fundamentally and so quickly. Maybe, since I don't qualify as post-1975 or as a 'digital native,' my feathers were too easily ruffled, but I couldn't let the statement go unchallenged.

In our discussion afterwards, I made my case that teachers at all ages and stages of the experience spectrum bring important qualities, talents and traits. I spoke to the perception that younger teachers are better because of their youth and enthusiasm, and now because they are 'digital natives.' Of course, we need new and young teachers and all they bring... but we need all ages and experience levels in the system. This does not dismiss the value of new teachers entering the profession, but to diminish the value of experienced teachers is neither fair nor constructive, especially in a system where professional collegiality is of paramount importance. When I started teaching, I had great role models, mentors and colleagues to whom I looked for advice and support. This diversity of experience is helpful both to individuals and system-wide.

Those who choose to become teachers do so because they are drawn to it; they bring that compassion for children and enthusiasm for learning with them. But, as with any profession, over time, they also develop deeper knowledge as a result of their experience and generally improve their capacity as a teacher. In most professions and trades, high value is placed on the experience and knowledge that come with practicing one's craft or profession over time. Would you expect to hear anyone say that we need to get rid of those born before 1975 if we



were talking about actuaries, accountants, dentists, doctors, judges, lawyers, plumbers, engineers or electricians? My guess is that the individual who made the comment expects recognition for her experience but her table group (all seemingly born well before 1975) seemed quick to dismiss the same for teachers.

Teaching is a profession and, like others, the time spent practicing and honing one's craft over time has incredible value. But, for some reason, the public seems to think that teachers are resistant to change. If they only knew! Teachers are incredibly adaptable and our education system is constantly evolving. In fact, teachers lead the change. I see this when I observe an OTF professional learning conference, including the successful Teacher Learning and Leadership Program. These teacher leaders of today and tomorrow come in all ages and they arrive with an energy and excitement level of which other professions should be envious. I am equally confident that, on any given day in any Ontario school, that same level of energy, commitment, compassion and talent is being provided by Ontario's excellent teachers, both pre-and post-1975!

Rhonda Kimberley-Young
OTF Secretary-Treasurer

Your organs count... *Be a donor*

According to the Be a Donor website, over 1,500 people in Ontario are on the waiting list for an organ transplant, yet less than 25% of eligible Ontarians have registered to donate an organ.

Now, you may say that you have signed a donor card, but that is not enough. You need to register. Information on a signed donor card is not recorded in the same way and may

not be available when needed. By registering your consent, information about your decision can be shared with your family, so they can be made aware of your wishes.

You can register your consent at all ServiceOntario centres in person, by mail or online.

For more information, visit BeADonor.ca.



OTF does connect with the classroom teacher

OTF Connects, our online interactive webinars facilitated by teachers for teachers, cover many topics, including Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century, Critical Thinking, Financial Literacy and Media Violence Prevention.

The 2013 Winter/Spring program has been extremely successful. Between February and June, a total of 27 webinars were scheduled. In some areas, the demand has been very high, requiring follow-up sessions. You can still register for the remaining spring session or access archived sessions by visiting www.otffeo.on.ca. Just click on OTF Connects under Professional Learning.

Here is what teachers had to say:

"Thank you very much for putting these webinars on! It's wonderful for teacher comfort, for the environment and for differentiation of OUR learning! Keep 'em coming!"

"Please keep providing these webinars. They're excellent. I learn so very much and it's a great way to see what other teachers are doing."

"Very user friendly. I was anxious as it was my first time using this platform but it went well and I will be registering for more. I think this is very valuable and worthwhile. Thank you."



Raija Vahasalo, Chair of Finland's Education and Culture Committee presents a set of DVDs of photos of Finland's landscape accompanied by Sibelius' music to Terry Hamilton, OTF President, as thanks for OTF's hospitality

OTF met with members of Education and Culture Committee from the Finnish Government in early May.

As well, in the same week, representatives of OTF met with representatives of the Oil and Mining unions from Columbia and the editor of the Swedish Teachers' Union professional journal.

Thanks, Dave! Dave Stuart retires as caretaker of OTF Parry Sound Campground



My first impression of Dave was simple, "Be careful to follow the rules." I soon got to know Dave better. I can now say that I've had the privilege of becoming a friend.

One memory in particular will always stand out in my mind. I had to head up to North Bay on short notice—one of my family was terminally ill. I was with my Grade 8 class on a field trip in Ottawa, got a train home and headed north the next day. I couldn't afford a motel so it was camping each night. Dave went the extra mile for me by making sure the camp was open on May 1st. He took the trouble to call me on my cell phone to let me know.

I can truly say I made a friend. All Dave asked was a few fish fillets for his efforts—which I duly delivered. Dave is a kindred spirit—we understand each other. I love his sense of humour—just the right touch of sarcasm. Dave has an exceptional ability to let certain things go in one ear and out the other.

Dave, we'll miss you. We appreciate all your hard work during your ten-year tenure. Thank you for all the times you've cut the grass, moved trailers and picnic tables and done a thousand other jobs to keep the campground operating.

We all join in wishing you good health and happiness in your future. From all of us and to one of my "Best Buds," thank you. How are we ever going to find anyone with your "people skills?" All the best, Buddy.

By Bob Purnell, aka "Basic Bob"