

A MESSAGE FROM THE OTF PRESIDENT

SPRING is here, the days are longer, the sun is shining, the air is warmer and the birds are chirping!!! The winter months have gone by so fast. We've certainly been busy at OTF.

OTF continues to take part in Advocacy activities. In February, OTF/OADE jointly sponsored a conference: **Social Media & Teacher Learning** where registrants could opt to attend in-person or virtually. I also attended the Ontario Education Research Symposium where Andy Hargreaves and Andreas Schleicher were guest speakers.

Pension is a daily topic at OTF. In January we welcomed **Scott Perkin** as a member of the OTF Secretariat. He will have responsibilities related to the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan among other duties. We have also completed our selection and appointment process to find a director to replace **Louis Martel** on the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board. **Patricia Anderson** has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the Plan. With her background in finance and her experience in governance and board leadership, she will ably represent us on the Board of the Pension Plan.

The Plan's Communications Work Group has finished the first of two member surveys. The purpose of the first survey was to test member awareness and the effectiveness of several education initiatives on pensions. The second survey, to be done next February, will explore member preferences for actions that the Partners might take to address recurring funding shortfalls.

At the Winter Board, the Governors received an information session on **Fiduciary Responsibility**. At the Spring Board, OTF is hosting its **Pension Forum** on the topic of Governance. The OTPP will also hold its Annual Meeting, April 12, at the Carlu from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. If you cannot attend in person, you can watch the webcast from your computer. The Annual Report will be available online as of April 3 at www.otpp.com and you may send questions to the Annual Meeting using the question sheet provided when you register.

Another initiative is currently underway arising from an agreement made in conjunction with the filing of the last pension valuation. A small group comprising the actuaries and other representatives from the three parties (OTF, the Government, and the Teachers' Pension Plan) has been convened to look at demographic issues, including the difference between members' working and retirement periods. The object is to provide the Partners with advice prior to the next valuation. It is our shared goal to ensure that members' pensions are protected, with the lowest contribution rates and the strongest benefits possible. OTF takes very seriously its responsibility to represent the interests of all members of the Plan.

The **Ontario College of Teachers** is holding **elections** for their Governing Council. You are invited to review the candidates on the College's website: www.oct.ca and exercise your right to vote. You can vote online until April 10, 2012.

OTF continues its commitment to promoting the advancement of our publicly funded education system, from professional development for our teachers to the most important curriculum issues for the betterment of our students. OTF is a collective voice with a common action.

OTF is Your Voice. Your Strength.

Yours in education,



Francine LeBlanc-Lebel
OTF President



THE DRUMMOND REPORT

The much-anticipated Drummond Report was tabled on February 15, 2012, although many details of the Report had been leaked in the week prior. Education drew 27 recommendations while others referenced public sector pension plans in general and the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, in particular. In the weeks that followed, the Liberal Government began to tip its hand on the areas in which it intended to act.

Debt and deficits are, once again, the words of the day. While Canada and Ontario have made better recoveries following the 2008 financial crisis than most nations and jurisdictions, the stimulus spending at both the federal and provincial levels has created deficits and, apparently, panic.



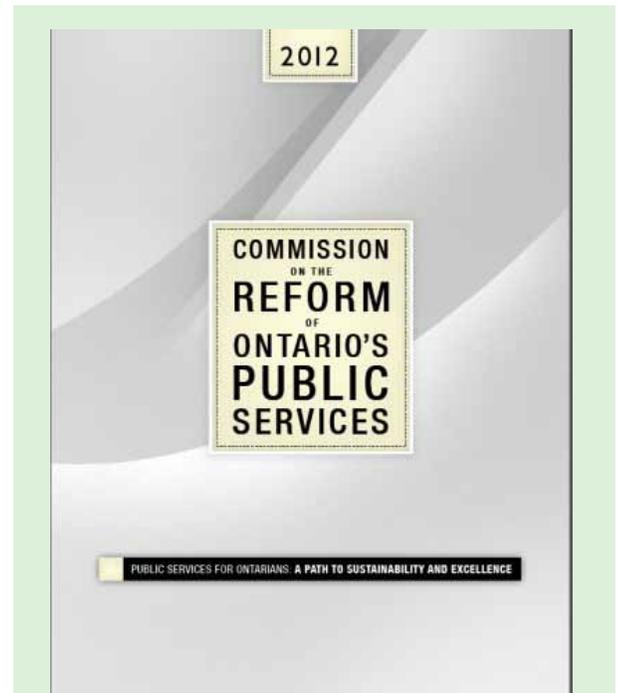
Drummond's mandate was to look at only one side of the ledger. Taxes and other sources of revenue were not to be considered. In addition, the Report is based on assumptions of economic growth,

expenditure growth and rising interest rates. Some economists regard the assumptions used by Drummond as being overly conservative—at the low end of possible estimates. More reasonable assumptions would drastically reduce the projected deficit. The tax cuts of the Harris Government's term are estimated by some economists to have reduced the annual fiscal capacity by \$16 billion alone.

It is surprising and disappointing how little criticism of the *Drummond Report* there has been in the mainstream media. During the election, all three political parties assumed roughly the same rate of growth in the economy and all parties promised to protect various areas of public spending and to significantly increase spending on new programs. A few short months later, and the outlook is fundamentally different. To say that election promises from various parties were disingenuous would be kind.

During the election campaign, no political party was talking of the kinds of drastic measures to public services which have, since Drummond, become the essence of the public discussion in Ontario. It is important to remember that the gains made in health care and education and Ontario's economic recovery can be attributed to the investment made by Ontario's taxpayers. We have been through periods of time when public discourse was only about "costs"; as teachers we will have to do our part to return to a conversation about "value".

Over the term of the Liberal Government, significant investments have been made in education and the teaching profession has been treated



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with respect. Many positive changes have resulted from that investment and that relationship. Ontario has become an education model among other jurisdictions. Time will tell how dependant Ontario's success was on that approach.

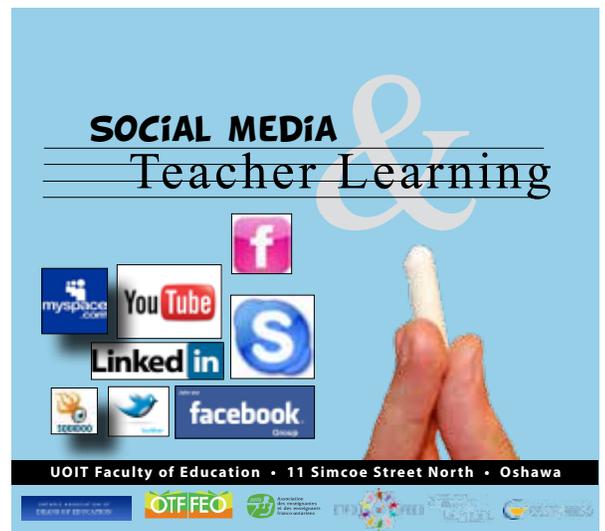
The *Drummond Report* purported to speak to the three goals identified by the Government for education—improving student achievement, closing student achievement gaps, and increasing confidence in the publicly funded education system—and then listed recommendation after recommendation that would adversely affect those goals. If implemented, the recommendations would be devastating to the success of Ontario's publicly funded education system and to the teaching profession. In short, the report spoke to costs but not to value—and that is its greatest shortcoming.

Rhonda Kimberley-Young
OTF Secretary-Treasurer

OTF/OADE CONFERENCE

After a short hiatus of a year and a half, the annual OTF/OADE Conference on Teacher Education was held on February 3 – 4, 2012. The theme of this year's conference was **Social Media and Teacher Learning**. In addition to a highly thought-provoking keynote presentation by Garfield Gini-Newman on the topic of **"Using Social Media to Promote Critical Thinking in the Classroom"**, a total of 51 stimulating workshops were offered to conference participants. The workshops covered themes as diverse as social media in initial teacher education, professional learning, student engagement and learning, literacy development, research, critical discussions and policy. A panel presentation entitled **"Doing it Right with Social Media"** shared the expertise of teachers, teacher educators and Federation members, and provided an excellent backdrop to the deliberations that ensued throughout the duration of the conference.

For the first time in the history of our jointly-sponsored conference, attendance was opened to the broader education community, and registrants could opt to attend in-person or virtually. In total, some 200 people attended the conference in person, and 26 attended virtually via **Adobe Connect**. The conference was planned by a committee composed of three Deans and five Federation representatives, and the event was hosted by the Faculty of Education



at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) in Oshawa. The enthusiasm of the participants was evidenced both in their level of engagement and in the busy **Twitter** stream that continued throughout the day and a half of the conference. We received extremely positive feedback on the event, with many participants commenting on the relevance of the information to their work.

Post conference, all of the recorded workshop presentations are being made available to registered participants via the conference website. In addition, UOIT is working on the development of an **eBook** of all submitted papers, which will be accessible via the conference website **by the end of March 2012**.



In early February, 37 reps from Ontario Subject and Division Associations gathered in Barrie for the 2012 Curriculum Forum retreat: "It's All About Us, All of Us Together: Partners in Teaching and Learning". Keynote speakers, as well as Open Space sessions, provided Forum Members with professional learning and networking opportunities with colleagues from all over Ontario.

Zane Schwartz, Past President of the Ontario Student Trustees' Association and now a political science student at the U of T, presented results from the 2011 Student & Parent Survey engaging Forum members in a very thoughtful dialogue for almost three hours !

Forum members also heard about the Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health from speakers: **Dr. Kathy Short**, *Child Psychologist (Hamilton-Wentworth DSB)*, **Judith Nyman** *Ontario Public School Boards' Association*, **Martha Wood**, *Principal of Stephen Lewis SS (Peel DSB)*, and a teacher and student from the school.



2012 OTF Summer Program

FOR THE LAST SEVERAL SUMMERS, OTF HAS OFFERED AN EXTENSIVE SUMMER WORKSHOP PROGRAM. THIS YEAR, WE EXPECT TO OFFER A COMBINATION OF FACE-TO-FACE AND ON-LINE WORKSHOPS.

Our funding for teacher professional learning has diminished significantly so we have had to scale back workshop opportunities.

Watch for details of our summer program at www.otffeo.on.ca.

Monitor our “**Breaking News**” section on the website or check the tab “**Professional Learning**” for a listing of all OTF professional learning programs and register early as space is limited!



THE ONTARIO TEACHERS’ FEDERATION CARES ABOUT SUPPORTING YOUR LEARNING AND IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING YOU WITH ONGOING SUPPORT THAT RESPECTS THE LIMITED TIME TEACHERS HAVE AND THE NEED FOR PD THAT IS IMMEDIATELY USEFUL IN YOUR CLASSROOM. AT OTF, WE KNOW THAT EFFECTIVE PD SHOULD NOT END WHEN A CONFERENCE OR WORKSHOP IS OVER.

OTF Connects provides teachers with opportunities to learn and interact through easy-to-use technology, including online webinars and social media. An OTF Connects session is a small serving of great PD, built by teachers for teachers, delivered right to your home computer.

Visit www.otffeo.on.ca, go to *Professional Learning* and click on *OTF Connects*

Not sure what a session is like? Check out the recordings of previous sessions found on our Resources page, along with numerous links to useful tools and resources that will inform and inspire you. OTF Connects allows you to learn, create and collaborate in ways that fit your needs and your schedule.



LEADERSHIP SKILLS
for classroom teachers

FOLLOWING THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL TLLP *SHARING THE LEARNING SUMMIT* HELD LAST NOVEMBER, PLANS ARE NOW WELL UNDERWAY FOR THE TLLP LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS TRAINING SESSION.

This intensive and interactive two-and-a-half-day training session is offered to teachers who have been chosen to participate in the **Teacher Learning and Leadership Program**. The agenda has been specially designed to assist the selected teachers to develop the skills they need to effectively manage their learning projects and to share their learning with others. Led by expert facilitator

Peter Lipman and key Affiliate personnel, the May 9 – 11 event is shaping up to be an information-packed extravaganza, replete with exciting plenary sessions and innovative workshops. Internationally renowned educational researcher **Ann Lieberman** will be the keynote speaker and will examine the international context for the TLLP.