

A message from the OTF President **Terry Hamilton**

Colleagues,

Pensions have taken up a great deal of time at OTF over the last few months. OTF held a meeting of all local Affiliate presidents from across the province to update them on the proposed changes to the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP). These changes were finally endorsed by the OTF Board of Governors and approved by the OTF Executive on February 6, 2013.

The two OTPP Partners—OTF and the Ontario Government—have been working hard to ensure the stability and sustainability of the pension plan for the benefit of all members. A summary of the details of the changes can be found on page two of this issue and the complete details at otffeo.on.ca.

Meanwhile, Ontario has a new Premier but no guarantee that there will not be a provincial election soon. Elsewhere, teachers, educational workers, and unions remain under attack. The Federal Government has already passed Bill 377 and next on their list is the Rand formula.

We must be prepared to fully participate in any election, whether at the provincial or the federal level. Waiting until the writ is dropped is too late. Athletes start training for the next season as soon as the current one is finished, politicians start working on the next election as soon as the votes are counted for the last one, and we have to start politicking just as early.



It isn't usually the grand gesture that wins elections and changes minds; it is the work done every day and with everyone you meet. We must become more active at all political levels and not be afraid to speak out to protect publicly funded education.

The best way to protect education and the standard of living for all Ontarians is to ensure that strong and democratic unions are allowed to do their work in advocating for their members.

I ask you to speak up and speak out for education.

Yours in education,



Terry Hamilton



Give a teacher a pat on the back!

**The OTIP Teaching Awards
nominations are open!**

The Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) and the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) are proud to sponsor the OTIP Teaching Awards.

Ontario has a publicly funded education system which is recognized for its excellence around the world. This excellence is, in large part, due to the teachers who light sparks in students, inspire their colleagues and hearten parents. The OTIP Teaching Awards recognize these teachers.

There are three categories for the awards: elementary school teacher, secondary school teacher and beginning teacher in the first five years of teaching.

A teacher can be nominated by anyone — teachers, students, parents, or the general public.

**Deadline to nominate
is March 31, 2013.**

<http://www.teachingawards.ca>

Pension valuation filing 2012

On February 6, 2013 the Partners (OTF and the Government of Ontario) agreed to file a 2012 valuation of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP). The OTF Executive, comprised of the Presidents, General Secretaries and Table Officers of the four Affiliates (AEFO, ETFO, OECTA and OSSTF), along with the OTF Secretary-Treasurer, approved the filing. This followed upon the endorsement of the OTF Board of Governors and an all-member *Communiqué* to all OTF members through each Affiliate.

What changes does the 2012 valuation filing bring?

The filing means an expansion of the current 50% Conditional Inflation Protection (CIP) to 100% CIP for post 2013 service. So, service which occurs after 2013 would only receive indexing of between 0% and 100% depending upon the Plan's funded status. This would result in inflation protection for Plan members as follows.

For pension credit accrued	Level of inflation protection
Before 2010	100% indexing
From Jan. 1, 2010 to Dec. 31, 2013	50% to 100% indexing, based on Plan funding
After 2013	0% to 100% indexing, based on Plan funding

And there's more

As part of the balanced valuation filing in 2011, the Partners already invoked CIP at the 60% level (for post 2009 service) for benefits payable since January 1, 2012. In order to balance the 2012 valuation, the Partners will invoke CIP at the 50% level (for post 2009 service) for benefits payable beginning January 1, 2014. The Partners will also invoke CIP at the 45% level (for post 2013 service) for benefits payable beginning January 1, 2015.

It is important to note that your pension will be indexed based on the level of CIP that is invoked after you retire, not while you continue to work.

GET MORE DETAILS ON THE 2012 VALUATION FILING

The *Communiqué* with complete details of the 2012 valuation is available on the OTF website: otffeo.on.ca.

Timeline of negotiations for 2012 valuation



The decision to file a 2012 valuation was not made overnight. It involved months of negotiations, meetings, studies and reports. In February 2012, the OTPP presented a preliminary valuation for 2012 to OTF and the Government which showed a projected deficit for 2012 and larger projected deficits for 2013 and 2014.

Circumstances for this valuation differed in several ways. First, the *Drummond Report*, released in February, called for fiscal restraint and highlighted the Government's pension expense. The Minister of Finance made it clear in the spring budget that the Government would not pay more into pensions and that deficits must be met by benefit reductions from 2013-2018. In April, the Government began discussions with the Jointly Sponsored Pension Plans (JSPPs) which continued until late October.

Alongside these discussions, the Partners agreed to trigger the Hearing Officer Review Process so that a third party could examine the discount rate used by OTPP in assessing the Plan's liabilities. Both Partners were concerned that Plan liabilities could be overstated if the Plan's discount rate, to which liabilities are very sensitive, was overly conservative. The Hearing Officer recommended a slightly higher rate. This process, begun in the spring, did not conclude until August 2012.

As well, the filing deadline was amended twice, from September 30, 2012 to December 2012 and, later to February 28, 2013. Over many months, funding estimates as a result of many factors and various proposals were changed.

Finally, on January 18, 2013, the OTF Board of Governors was informed of a tentative filing proposal in closed session. On January 29, OTF held an all-presidents' meeting to inform them of the tentative filing and each Affiliate arranged for the dissemination of the information to members. The proposal received final approval on February 6, when the OTF Board of Governors endorsed the filing and the OTF Executive approved it.

A message from the OTF Secretary-Treasurer

No, unfortunately, this isn't a witty update on the Rick Mercer segment by that name. I thought it might be of interest, however, to share some interactions with Americans I've had in the last months and to compare our approach to education to that south of the border. Despite our different systems, our teachers have much in common.



While Ontario students' performance on international measures have caught global notice, visitors to Ontario learn that Ontario's system has important fundamental concepts that are of more value than statistical indicators alone.

So, I've made a few observations based on conversations with American educators.

First, education is highly political in the US. This is true north or south of the border but it manifests itself differently, largely because education is funded differently. School funding in the US is very dependent on local circumstances, hence education is on the local and state political radar quite relentlessly.

As well, the US federal government, unlike ours, has used policy and funding levers, first through *No Child Left Behind* and more recently, *Race to the Top* to influence direction. To get federal funding from these programs, states must agree to certain

conditions, often diminishing the role of unions and promoting charter schools.

The second relates to centralization versus decentralization. In Ontario, control is much more centralized than in the states. As one comparison, Ontario has 14 faculties with authority to grant education degrees while Ohio has over 100. This is just one example, but indicative of the difference in organization. As expected, in the US, there are vast disparities in such areas as in school funding, student success, and teacher salaries.

A third difference relates to broader policy matters and consistency within the system. Like it or not, a more centralized system can focus on particular priorities and attempt to align those priorities within the whole system. Such is not the case when funding, power and implementation decisions are local. For example, we take

for granted in Ontario that there is an Ontario Curriculum—common to all students, thorough and comprehensive. That is not the case in all states.

What seems to me to be the most fundamental difference, however, is that our system does not have competition at its core. Ontario's teachers, parents and taxpayers want their schools and their school communities to provide a quality education for all students. Here, education funding provides a common amount for each child, supplemented by various amounts to address specific needs. The comparatively small gap between Ontario's highest and lowest performing students on international tests speaks to our commitment to all students.

Our goals are equity and universality; they are laudable. The choice, charter and voucher movements which are alive and well in some states have so far been rejected here and for good reason. In speaking with others outside Ontario, I'm reminded of how important it is that we not overlook what makes us successful—equity for every student.



Rhonda Kimberley-Young

Dr. Peter Jaffe Greer Award winner

The Greer Award, established in 1947 in memory of Dr. V. K. Greer, a distinguished Ontario educator, recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to publicly funded education in Ontario.

Dr. Peter Jaffe's life is dedicated to improving the lives of young people and working toward a more just and compassionate society.

He has worked tirelessly against abuse of women and children and in aiding those who have been victims. As well as teaching at the University of Western Ontario, he is the Academic Director of the Centre for Research

and Education on Violence Against Women & Children.

Dr. Jaffe is no stranger to publicly funded education. He has been a trustee for the Thames Valley District School Board since 1980, and served two terms as Chairperson. He has worked closely with teachers, teacher federations and youth.

Dr. Peter Jaffe joins a long list of deserving recipients of the Award.



Left to right: Ken Coran, OSSTF President; Dr. Peter Jaffe; and Terry Hamilton, OTF President

The Arctic and its people

OTF Curriculum Forum

From February 7-9, 2013, OTF Curriculum Forum members participated in a full-day and evening of learning all about Canada's north: "The Arctic and its people." Thursday evening began with a presentation from Parks Canada via Skype, in which an accompanying slideshow highlighted the magnificence of the parks as well as the many aspects of life in the far North that impact the people daily. The presentation included the challenges around such topics as the weather, isolation, education, development, transportation, the environment, food and socialization.



Members of the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) led Friday's workshops and presentations and tied several activities to the Ministry's "Ontario – First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework." These included

- Indigenous Games;
- Northern Music, Environment and Influences;
- Northern Habitat, Flora and Top of the World;
- e-Learning and other CWF resources; and
- Project Wild/Below Zero.



Participants gained an insight into and an appreciation for life in the Arctic, along with resources and activities to share with members of their associations, colleagues in their schools and boards and, most importantly, with students.

Start your summer planning now!

Book a spot at the OTF Parry Sound Campground

As can be deduced from its name, the campground, owned and operated by OTF, is located in the Parry Sound district. Lovely grassy meadows, spacious campsites, a beautiful lake—great for adults and children. Nature trails and quiet country roads provide ample opportunity for walking. The lake is ideal for swimming, fishing, canoeing, or sail boarding.



Space is set aside for baseball, horseshoes and volleyball, and there are several golf courses within driving distance. Facilities include service buildings with flush toilets and hot showers, two large picnic pavilions and three rustic cabins. There are lots of picnic tables and firewood is available at market price. There are, however, no electrical hook-ups at the sites.

All teachers belonging to an OTF Affiliate, as well as other education workers in our schools—principals, secretaries, educational assistants, caretakers—are welcome.

Check it out at otffeo.on.ca and click on *OTF Initiatives*.

OTF Connects

Bringing teachers together to inspire, learn and share

OTF, in support of teacher learning, is offering *OTF Connects* again this year. *OTF Connects* is an online, ongoing support developed by teachers for teachers. You can share and interact to broaden and deepen your learning in areas relevant to your teaching.

The easy-to-use webinar technology provides great PD right at home and allows you to learn, create and collaborate with other teachers across the province. You will leave each session with immediately useful ideas for your classroom. We know you will find a source of inspiration for your students and yourself with *OTF Connects!*

To experience this learning environment and to register for the 2013 winter/spring program, go to *Professional Learning* on the home page of otffeo.on.ca and click on *OTF Connects* or check it out on Twitter: @OTF_PD.

Copyright Matters

Easy guide to new copyright laws

To assist teachers with the new copyright laws which came into force in November 2012, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), in cooperation with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and the Canadian School Boards' Association (CSBA), has produced the publication, *Copyright Matters*.

The publication is very user-friendly and gives a thorough outline of the changes. Check out: http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/291/Copyright_Matters.pdf