

## **Excerpts from Address of Rian McLaughlin, OTF President to the OTF Board of Governors, August 27, 2014**

First, allow me to say that it is not only my pleasure, but an honour to assume this leadership role for a second time on your behalf and that of OTF's more than 160,000 members. I will work to assure you of the efficacy of your decision.

As this is my second time, I can confidently say that being OTF President is a unique position, ripe with opportunity to be a problem-solver and peacemaker, a liaison, a diplomat, and an advocate. It is also the foremost avenue available for advocating for the profession unencumbered by the necessary and critical work of the affiliates in collective bargaining. That said, when any or all affiliates or any or all members are denied their rights to secure and respected professional lives, it is OTF's duty as the professional voice to demonstrate our solidarity and provide whatever assistance we are able until such time as justice is restored. As you embark on a new era in bargaining, after a tumultuous and difficult two years, please know that OTF is your quiet partner and much more than an interested party.

In public education, we have a very special and fundamental role in society. As we educate the young, we are ever mindful of the privilege afforded us and the responsibility it merits. Essentially, what we do lays the foundations for generations to come. Instilling our values of social justice and fairness for all coupled with decency and compassion are hallmarks of this profession from time immemorial. And while we draw strength and commitment from our brothers and sisters in the labour movement, we must also search continuously for and build awareness, bridges, and partnerships with others who share these same and just goals. I intend to continue to seek these opportunities to share with you and our members during my term.

When I served as president in 2010, we were facing very challenging and difficult circumstances with respect to our pension plan. Over the many months of arduous and demanding discussions, we made the decisions we had to make to put the plan into a safer position. Four years later, the fruits of our labours, along with a bit of help from the economy, brought about a restoration of some of what we needed, grudgingly, to suspend. We are in a much better place and our work must continue to focus on strategic monitoring and filings.

We all know that pension education for our members is critical. We all know that pension knowledge and interest increases exponentially as members approach their retirement. We also know that communicating pension information and ensuring that members understand and incorporate that knowledge into their own financial plans throughout their careers are two of the trickiest pieces of any education program. We must be relentless in our willingness to issue, re-issue, create and reinvent the ways we offer these education pieces.

We will be making important decisions around Plan governance this year and we will be reflecting on what Plan governance will look like in the years ahead. I look forward to the thoughts and input from all governors as we proceed.

I am of the opinion that our members need to be educated comprehensively and consistently as to the differentiation in the responsibilities of the College of Teachers and those of OTF and the Affiliates. Our focus must be directed to our newer members and to our associate members in the faculties. As a new teacher, it can be overwhelming to hear all of the information and organizations that one is automatically associated with or has responsibilities to. We have a responsibility to be truthful and clear about who actually represents their profession, who safeguards their working lives and who employs their monies for the benefit of all.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Julie Pauletig for her service as president this past year. It has been a challenging year for her, both personally and professionally. She has always brought her enthusiasm and passion to the many issues we deliberate on at the OTF Executive table. Her energy and honesty and commitment have served you and our members well. Bonne chance et merci, Julie.