

The Mandate of the Ontario College of Teachers

Over a number of years and through many venues, the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and the Affiliates (AEFO, ETFO, OECTA and OSSTF) have expressed concerns about what we have regarded as the increasing activity, beyond its mandate, of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT, the College). In the fall of 2013, the OTF Executive approved the commissioning of a report on how the mandate of the OCT has come to be interpreted and applied since its inception in 1997. That report, *Course Correction: A Renewed Focus for the Ontario College of Teachers*, was completed in January 2014 and is attached for OTF members.

Coincident with the preparation of this report, OTF made its concerns known to the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education. At that time, the OCT was seeking changes to its Act and Regulations in response to the *LeSage Report*; OTF felt the timing was opportune for the Government to take a broader look at OCT and its operations. Over the past year, a number of meetings have taken place among OTF, OCT and Ministry officials. While OTF has been led to believe that our concerns have been heard and are being considered, as yet the OTF Executive has not seen a sufficient response from the OCT.

At the March 2014 meeting of the OCT Governing Council, the paper, *Course Correction: A Renewed Focus for the Ontario College of Teachers*, was discussed in open session. In previous years, it had been common for meetings to take place between elected teacher councillors and OTF and Affiliate staff to discuss matters of policy. There was never, nor would there ever have been, discussion of investigation or discipline cases before the College. These opportunities for dialogue ended, however, when the College Chair requested that members of the Governing Council not meet with OTF or the Affiliates.

OCT is piloting a process allowing for deputations to be made to the Governing Council. In October 2014, the OTF President and Secretary-Treasurer made a presentation to the Council for the 10 minutes allowed and took questions for an additional 10 minutes. That **deputation** is also included for the information of OTF members.

Over the course of the last year, OTF has taken every opportunity to discuss these matters with the OCT and will continue to do so. Our view is that the College has a serious, legislated mandate on which it must focus its attention but it oversteps that mandate in a number of ways. When it does so, from our perspective, it leads to misunderstandings with teachers and the public, adds inappropriately to the operational costs of the College and risks the College being regarded as both advocate and disciplinarian of the profession. The distinct and legislated separation of these two functions was the reason that the College was created in the first place.

To help Ontario's teachers understand the clear distinction between the legislated functions and roles of the various organizations in Ontario's education system, OTF has created a "**Who Does What?**" primer which may be of interest. Short, animated videos will be available on the OTF website in the near future as well.