

COMMUNIQUÉ



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Recent Ontario College of Teachers' membership survey

What are they really asking?



The Ontario Teachers' Federation, the statutory body which advocates for the teaching profession in Ontario, had an opportunity to provide input through the Ontario College of Teachers' (OCT) consultation process regarding a review of the Professional Learning Framework (PLF). On behalf of all OTF members, representatives of OTF and all four Affiliates (AEFO, ETFO, OECTA and OSSTF) reminded the OCT of the context in which the current PLF was created. That context was very different from the context in which this document is now being reviewed some 15 years later. Since the extensive OCT member survey does not provide that context, this *Communiqué* will inform members who may wish to complete the OCT survey.

The OCT was given the authority under the Mike Harris Conservative Government to not only license and discipline teachers, but in 2001, to also require teachers to earn credits in a mandatory recertification program in order to remain licensed to teach. While offensive to the professionalism of teachers of that time period, it also created an expensive and bureaucratic regime of teacher learning and reduced meaningful learning opportunities for teachers to those which "checked the boxes" toward an arbitrary quota. The profession, through OTF and the Affiliates, lobbied successfully to abolish mandatory recertification in 2004.

Although not indicated in the OCT survey document, all OTF members should be aware that a committee of the Ontario College of Teachers is considering that the OCT become responsible for tracking the ongoing learning of Ontario's licensed teachers. OTF and its Affiliates are opposed to this unnecessary, expensive and counterproductive concept.

All members of OTF should be aware that accountability for this framework (PLF) is evidenced through programs and processes like the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) and the Annual Learning Plan (ALP) for teachers. Beyond these regulated programs, the interests of the profession and the public are well served by the ongoing voluntary engagement of members in extensive professional learning provided by the Ministry of Education, school boards, faculties of education and all of the teacher federations. These models of professional learning are highly regarded by jurisdictions and experts the world over.

Through increased funding, increased opportunities and a collaborative partnership model, learning opportunities for Ontario's teachers, and the voluntary participation in such activities by Ontario's very professional teachers, are both at peak. In fact, it is OTF's view, supported by

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research and evidence, that the reason for the growth in learning opportunities and teacher capacity, is the self-driven nature of teacher learning in our province which respects teachers' time and their personal motivation and understanding of their needs in their professional learning.

The Professional Learning Framework (PLF) remains a valid and appropriate document outlining the principles and nature of self-directed learning for the profession; only minor adjustments are required in OTF's view to make the document more current without altering the philosophy upon which it is based. The OTF representation made it clear to the OCT that voluntary self-directed and meaningful professional learning continues to be the cornerstone of the Professional Learning Framework.

Should you choose to complete the OCT survey, please keep in mind the efforts of generations of teachers in Ontario to abolish recertification. The system of professional learning in Ontario is both appropriate for teachers and respectful of teachers' professional autonomy. It also adequately assures the public that Ontario's teachers are well-qualified. The fact that teachers go well beyond legislative requirements to advance their own professional learning through their school boards, their Federations, their personal efforts and collaboratively with one another is something to be celebrated, but certainly not cause for a new bureaucracy.

The OCT has your email—OTF does not.

For more information on how the PLP was repealed and to read about advances in teacher professional learning and autonomy, click [here](#) for OTF's September *Interaction* devoted to this issue.

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