

A message from the OTF President – May 2018

Ask any former OTF President and they will tell you that a year goes by very quickly! As my term as 74th president comes to a close, I want to look back at what we have accomplished together and look to the future as our Federation enters its 75th year.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of this role is the ability to interact with so many teachers, education faculty students and stakeholders that contribute to the mosaic of publicly funded education in Ontario. Speaking with student teachers across Ontario has been a great way to understand the needs and issues of young men and women who are entering a profession that is in a constant state of change. Their perspective and passion for education is inspiring.

Equally inspiring are those groups and individuals whose passion for education enhances our system in Ontario; e.g., Frontier College and, of course, the active teachers who participate in OTF's Curriculum Forum and the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) or the many other PD opportunities OTF provides. Each adds value to our Federation and Ontario's education system.

This year, we challenged the Ontario College of Teachers' (OCT) proposed fee increase and, together with our Affiliates, made the case to OCT councillors that an increase of 20% was unacceptable to teachers in this province. The College must learn to live within its means and within its fee structure. OCT councillors voted down the fee proposal after intense pressure from rank-and-file teachers from every corner of Ontario. This positive result is more evidence that, when teachers stand united on an issue, our collective voice will not be ignored.

Recently, I have had the opportunity to attend several teacher union annual meetings across Canada. It has been an incredible opportunity to meet with teacher leaders across the country to share and learn from their experiences. Regardless of where I have travelled in Canada or the world, the issues important to teachers remain the same; workload, violence, teacher retention and school funding always top the list. We are fortunate in Ontario to have a sophisticated network of support from our Federations that teachers can count on.

This has been a busy year at OTF. In addition to the myriad of services and programs we always provide, we also modernized our logo, moved office locations and created a President's Twitter account (@OTFpresFEO) to position our Federation for the next 75 years.

I am proud of the work we have done over the past year to build and enhance our publicly funded education system. Our schools in the public, French, and Catholic systems are world class and our teachers and education workers are the reason Ontario's education system is such a success.

Serving as OTF President this year and representing your interests around Canada and the world has been the honour of my life. Wherever I go I am proud to say I am an Ontario teacher.

Yours in education,

Chris Cowley

OTF President