

A message from the OTF President



Will students be online or hung out to dry?

Spring has sprung and with it, an onslaught on education. There is one clear purpose – to save money. Sweep away the pretense that any of this will enhance learning or prepare our students for the future. This is about money, pure and simple, with no thought for the consequences. If allowed to proceed, it will take decades to undo the harm.

One announcement that troubles me deeply is the proposal to replace teachers in the classroom with a mandatory online course in each of the four years of secondary school. Welcome to robo-teacher – centrally located and without connection to either the student or their community. It is a 'one-size-fits-no one' change that flies in the face of research. Even the government's own webpage (until recently) stated that online learning is not for everyone.

Most of us have taken online courses, so how is this different? The difference is the word 'mandatory.' Around this province, there are amazing teachers who deliver engaging online courses. Students who enroll in these courses know what they are in for. They are prepared to learn online and have access to a device, reliable internet and a support system. Students who choose online courses generally work well independently and are proficient in navigating systems. Mandatory online courses, however, mean all students must engage whether they have access to devices, availability of reliable internet or the need for guidance and support.

The Minister's response that parents should hire tutors or that students should rely on peers to guide them is insulting and disrespectful. Not every family can afford a tutor, let alone a device or internet.

In education, connection is not about high-speed internet but the relationship between a caring teacher and a student. We know them. We know their communities. We know they inspire.

I hear many stories about how teachers have changed someone's world. I have never yet heard someone share how an online course inspired them. Like you, I became a teacher to make the world a better place.

This proposal does not.

Yours in education,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Diane Dewing'.

Diane Dewing
President



Let them know how you feel

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OCT Council recommends elimination of self-governance

On February 28, OTF President Diane Dewing delivered remarks to the Governing Council of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). These remarks outlined the concerns of OTF and the Affiliates with the OCT governance report and recommendations that Council received late last year from Governance Solutions Inc (GSI). These recommendations, if adopted, would eliminate the majority of teaching profession members serving on Council, a majority that has existed since the College was first established by the Ontario Government in 1997.

OTF polled members regarding the proposals to eliminate the current majority of OCT members on Council and their election to those positions. In just two weeks, OTF received almost 10,000 responses, 92% of which were in favour of maintaining the existing Council structure and 91% of which wanted to keep the existing election process.

Despite OTF's concerns, the Council voted to accept GSI's recommendations and to request that the Minister of Education eliminate self-governance of the teaching profession in Ontario. If enacted, the changes requested of the Minister would reduce Council from 37 to 18 members and would replace the current structure of Council (a majority of OCT members) with an equal number of members from the profession and from the public on the Council and all of its committees.

Dewing's presentation

OTF and Affiliate submission

Ontario's graduation rates

In 2016, the five-year graduation rate increased to 86.5% - up more than 18% compared to the 2004 rate of 68%. The four-year graduation rate grew to 79.6% - an increase of more than 23% since 2004.

In 2017, the five-year graduation rate was 86.3% and the four-year graduation rate was 79.8%.



Results of CIVIX student survey on budget 2019

The top five issues, as ranked by Canadian students:

1. Education
2. Environmental concerns
3. Poverty
4. Crime & gun control
5. Fiscal responsibility

See [budget consultation](#) for more details.



L to R: Ian Pettigrew, OTF Director, Curriculum and Assessment; Daniel Dale, *Toronto Star* Washington Bureau Chief; and Diane Dewing, OTF President at the 2019 Docs for Schools Teacher Conference in February. OTF is a proud sponsor of the event.

A message from the OTF Secretary-Treasurer



Rhonda Kimberley-Young

Words matter

Apparently, to 'modernize' class size now means 'increase.' Old code words for cutting employees such as 'rationalizing,' 'right-sizing' and 'finding efficiencies' have been replaced. 'No jobs lost' really means 'cross your fingers that attrition hits the target.' But make no mistake - the position is also lost.

The oft-repeated Ford campaign promise started with no one losing a job, then no (yet to be defined) 'front-line worker' losing a job and finally our class sizes are too low anyway and it's time to 'modernize.' Nothing says let's 'modernize' more than 'back to basics math,' spending most of the school year debating the HPE curriculum only to get back (almost) to where we started, and cutting thousands of teachers for students from Grade 4 through to high school. But hey, cell phone policies are a good distraction, right?

Having lived the Harris days, I remember two key tenets that government followed. First, you need to create a crisis to bring about change and second, 'hit 'em hard, hit 'em fast and don't blink.' Sadly, these tenets proved fairly effective in creating chaos and turmoil in the education system for years.

Double-speak needs to be called out. Only consistent and clear voices from the profession will help parents and the general public understand that fewer teachers reduces support and programs for students.

When talking with parents, neighbours, friends and relatives, speak plainly and honestly about what these announcements really mean for kids and education in your school and community. In a school of 700 secondary students, the number of teachers will fall from 32 to 25.

The loss of those seven teachers doesn't just mean bigger classes. It means students will lose out on electives and options. Their future choices will be limited as a result. After explaining that, just ask: does that seem like 'modernization' to you?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhonda Kimberley-Young".



OTPP Annual Meeting

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) is holding its annual meeting on Thursday, April 11 at 5:00 pm at The Arcadian Court, 401 Bay Street, Simpson Tower, 8th floor in Toronto. Pension plan members can register to attend at [annual meeting](#).

At the same URL, if you cannot attend the meeting, watch a webcast of it – live or later at your convenience.

Media feedback

On March 18, Diane Dewing, OTF President, issued a statement concerning the proposed cuts to education. Following are just a few of many positive comments on social media.

As a parent of a child with a learning disability and an IEP, I vehemently oppose mandatory on-line courses, and as a teacher I know there are many students for whom this would not be appropriate or beneficial.

@LisaThompsonMPP Please provide Ontario teachers with your "evidence based" research that shows how increased class sizes are better for students. In return, I'll provide you with plenty of research that shows the exact opposite.

There should NEVER be job losses for teachers. Let's see if the voters' opinion counts. Usually doesn't. They just pretend it does.

I do not support an increase in average class sizes, neither in elementary school nor in secondary.

The mandatory online learning is discriminatory against lower income families and those who live in rural areas with no or poor internet access.

I do not support an increase in average class sizes, neither in elementary school nor in secondary.

In the process of emailing Lisa Thompson. Grrrrr.

Where is the differentiated learning in an e learning course? Not every child is meant to learn online. Disadvantage for some for sure.

Teachers walked out of the original Harris-directed "slash-and-burn" movie in the 1990s, and we won't sit through the 2019 Ford-directed sequel!

"Modernizing" and "improving" education by significantly increasing class sizes is a metric that NO education system adopts!

The pen is mightier than the S-word: Say no to SLASHING education funding and help us write the next great chapter in public education in Ontario.

@otffeo
www.facebook.com/otffeo/

Working and Thriving in Challenging Times: Tips and Tools

At the OTF Curriculum Forum Retreat in February, Brynne Sinclair-Waters, Executive Director of the Ontario Employment Education and Research Centre, shared experiences from the Fight for \$15 and Fairness campaign.

Maureen Davis (AEFO) led a workshop in which she underscored some successes, challenges and lessons learned as AEFO collaborated with other educational stakeholders to put policy into practice.

Tiffany Goulet, a teacher with the Northwest Catholic District School Board, shared some of her key learnings about the impact of mindfulness and self-regulation on student wellbeing and achievement gleaned from her Teacher Learning and Leadership Program project.

Cathy Renfrew (OSSTF) and Jenny Chen (OSSTF) facilitated a workshop which first built an understanding of the concepts of advocacy and activism followed by the transfer of learnings to 10 real-world case studies.

The retreat ended with an Open Space Technology/Unconference in which participants built the agenda and explored six topics of their choosing. Representatives from 37 provincial subject/division associations, along with staff from each of OTF's four affiliates, participated and contributed to professional learning activities.

To join a subject/division association or learn more, click on [curriculum forum](#).