

A Message from the OTF President, June 2019

Colleagues,

I am a rampant and unrepentant optimist. This quality has supported me as I worked to create change in my classroom, my school and my community. It is what allows me to face each day. That said, as I reflect in this profession that I love, I find I am, in equal parts, disturbed and encouraged.

Disturbed: This has been a trying year for education and for those of our disadvantaged communities. As teachers, this is a double hit. The impact of cuts in supports to the poor, to equity communities and to the number of teachers in our classrooms is profound. Teachers tell me over and over how they fear the additional pressures of larger class sizes and lack of community supports for at-risk families will increase violence or impact not only their ability to teach but also their health.

Encouraged: Fear and anxiety are mobilizing teachers, students and concerned citizens in unprecedented numbers. They are meeting with their MPPs. They are gathering for information meetings and rallies. They are engaging others in reflecting on what we value as Ontarians. They are fighting for education, health care and the issues important to Ontarians. People who have never been active before are joining the movement to speak out. Teachers are leaders in these movements.

Under this umbrella of disturbance and encouragement, OTF has continued as a strong and united voice. We are proud of the work we do in advocacy, professional learning, and pension. Our on-going campaign, Our Kids Succeed, speaks to Ontario's high-quality education with the data to support it. Recently, the National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education posted a wonderful profile of the many ways OTF supported teachers' work in FNMI education, even before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established. Their website is worth checking out.

There is much to celebrate even in trying times. In the final months of my mandate, please know that this teacher will continue to speak proudly of and advocate for you. I will participate in many meetings, conferences and media interviews. Know that I will always stand with teachers and fight for the well-funded, well-resourced education all our students deserve. When students thrive, teachers thrive.

Grow in strength but practise self-care.

Best wishes for a wonderful, restful summer!