

President's message, September 2019

Colleagues,

As I write these words, I am getting ready to meet with teacher candidates at Queen's University. I have also visited Lakehead University teacher candidates, as well as Ottawa U. Still to come is Western as well as Laurentian University. Many thanks to everybody assisting with the faculty presentations and a special thank you to all the people at the faculties for their warm welcome and support.

What I like about these visits is talking not only about one of the best professions in the world with energetic and hopeful future teachers, but also having a candid conversation with them about the very real challenges that teachers face on a daily basis in their classroom and school environment.

I sincerely hope your school year has started out well, in light of the challenges such as larger class sizes and curriculum changes that teachers, educational workers and students are already facing.

The government thinks it has solved the issue of cell phones in the classroom with its recent announcement. As for the Health and Physical Education, teachers know that the exemptions in the curriculum will bring their own unique challenges.

On the assessment side of learning, the government also thinks that teacher candidates must be tested in math to improve students results in EQAO standardized tests, while many experts agree that evidence and research do not support the premise that such a test either improves teachers' math competency or leads to better student outcomes.

As we move further into this new school year, it's worth reminding ourselves that the work of teachers and other educational workers has a profound impact on students' lives. We will keep, in every way possible, urging the government to commit to working with all stakeholders (parents, administrators, teachers and their federations) to ensure that we build on Ontario's earned reputation as one of the best publicly funded education systems in the world.

OTF will continue to work with our partners to champion what is best for teachers and students.