

Report of the Secretary-Treasurer to the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Ontario Teachers' Federation – August 25, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Good morning Governors, and welcome to a brave new world as things evolve and begin to reopen . . .

These past six months have tested all of us in how we work and how we engage with others, while keeping ourselves, our families, and our communities safe and healthy. Because of the pandemic, we have found new ways to stay in touch with family and friends, and to engage with colleagues in connected and productive ways, while a new sense of normalcy continues to emerge.

The following report reflects the many activities that have kept OTF busy during the past year, and I wish to begin by thanking my OTF and Affiliate colleagues for their collective and creative efforts throughout. Since we shut down the OTF office on March 16, 2020 our work has continued in many different ways, absent the social interaction that we all normally enjoy working together.

As Governors are well aware, OTF and the Affiliates have collaborated with the Ministry of Education over many years to champion professional learning 'by teachers for teachers', to provide thoughtful input and guidance towards revised curricula, to administer subsidies for various AQ courses, and to work in partnership with the Ministry to support teacher professionalism through initiatives such as the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP).

Unfortunately, the past year has been characterized by the absence of such collaborative professionalism, and many educational missteps by the current Ford Government: legislative efforts to pre-empt the collective bargaining process, an absence of funding towards teacher professional development, revised curricula without meaningful opportunities for input from educational stakeholders, and an ill-conceived effort to improve student success in mathematics by imposing a standardized math proficiency test on new teacher candidates (Associate Members of OTF).

Throughout the winter months, we supported our Affiliate colleagues wherever we could – on the picket lines and on social media – in their collective efforts to force the government to back down on its damaging proposals for the education system regarding class sizes, e-learning and funding cuts. And we were proud to join tens of thousands of OTF/Affiliate members as they marched on Queen's Park on February 21, 2020 in an historic show of protest against this government's policies.

Following the release of an OTF/Affiliate position paper against the government's proposed Math Proficiency Test (MPT) for beginning teachers late last year, we provided support (in-kind and financial) to the new Ontario Teacher Candidates' Council (OTCC) as it developed its governance structure, and then focused its efforts on challenging the MPT through the courts. Governors had the opportunity to hear directly from OTCC leadership at our Spring Board meeting in April.

In late spring, OTF provided input towards CTF's survey of Canadian teachers on the impact of COVID-19 on their professional activities, their students and the teachers themselves. During this challenging period of distance teaching, OTF provided professional learning support for Ontario's teachers through a seven-week webinar series – What Works for ME Might Work for YOU! – in which 1,200+ teachers participated.

During this Annual Meeting, Governors will hear from Steve McGirr (OTPP Chair) and Jo Taylor (President & CEO) on how the Plan is faring so far during the pandemic. Hopefully, the mid-year results (as of June 30th) will be available by the time of our meeting (or shortly thereafter), but there is no question that the Plan Partners' decision to file a 2020 valuation for the Plan, and to allocate the surplus to a contingency reserve once again, was prudent. The next valuation will not be due now until 2023.

Unfortunately, given the evolving pandemic and the online format necessary for this Annual Meeting, we have had to postpone the celebratory elements of our gathering – the President's Banquet and the awarding of OTF Fellowships and our new OTF Special Recognition Award – until next spring. As the pandemic continues to evolve, we look forward to a time when we might gather once again in person as things reach a "new normal".

As we approach the uncertainty of this next school year, OTF will continue to support Ontario's teachers and to defend publicly funded education, while also working towards further engagement with our Ministry colleagues and, hopefully, a return to collaborative professionalism at some point in the future.

In the meantime, I encourage everyone to continue heeding public health warnings, while supporting your families and your communities in staying safe and healthy.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Perkin
Secretary-Treasurer

ADVOCACY

Word on the Street

As in past years, OTF's booth at this event on September 22, 2019 was a great success. OTF staff enjoyed many positive interactions with parents, teachers, and young people, and the many giveaways and handouts (especially the kits for teachers) were appreciated. This fall, Word on the Street will be held virtually on September 26 and 27, 2020 which will limit our participation.

OTIP Teaching Awards

On September 24, 2019, OTF and OTIP celebrated the 2019 OTIP Teaching Award winners at the OTIP banquet, along with OTIP's support staff recognition award and TFO's Prix Idello. OTF very much appreciates OTIP's ongoing generosity in sponsoring the teaching awards and for providing such a special tribute event for the award winners, their nominators, and their families.

The 2020 Teaching Award nominations closed on March 31, 2020. A total of 74 completed nominations were received. The OTF Awards Committee met virtually on April 21 to shortlist each of the three categories: beginning, elementary and secondary. The Awards Jury then met virtually on May 21 to select the winner in each category. Given the pandemic, the awards banquet will not be held this year; however, the production of the video of each winner has proceeded and plans are underway to present the award to each winner in her/his school in September or early October, conditions permitting and subject to following social-distancing guidelines. Press releases and social media announcements will follow the presentations. As well, the three winners will be invited to attend the OTIP banquet in September 2021 for appropriate recognition. www.teachingawards.ca

OTF Special Recognition Award

OTF is pleased to announce that Leigh Cassell is the inaugural winner of the new OTF Special Recognition Award, to be presented annually to an organization, group or individual in acknowledgement of outstanding contributions to publicly funded education in Ontario beyond the school board level.

Leigh Cassell is CEO at Digital Human Library (dHL) and Founder/President of the Digital Human Library Foundation. In 2011, she launched dHL to address the urban and rural gaps in education by using digital technologies to connect students with people, places, and ideas around the world.

OTF announced the award via a media release in June as well as through an email blast and social media. Due to the pandemic, OTF will officially recognize Leigh with the presentation of the award at the Spring Board of Governors' meeting in April 2021.

OTF Interaction and Website

Four issues of *Interaction* were published online during the past year, and shared via email blasts and social media. OTF also emails *Interaction* to local Affiliate districts, and we appreciate any opportunities to share the newsletter with members more broadly through Affiliate communication channels.

The OTF website continues to grow – this year, we added to new pages under the Learning banner: Indigenous Education and Media Literacy. OTF hosts other websites such as Inspire Financial Learning, Parent Engagement, Safe@School, Survive & Thrive, and Teachers’ Gateway to Special Education.

Social Media and Communications

We have maintained regular communications with our members through our email blast lists (Mailchimp) and social media.

The current number of followers on our three Twitter accounts is as follows:

@otffeo: 7,568 followers (an increase of 1,719 since July 2019)

@otf_pd: 4388 followers (an increase of 81 since July 2019)

@OTFpresFEO: 1,742 followers (an increase of 148 since July 2019)

The current number of followers (social media) and subscribers (email) are as follows:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/otffeo: 4,099 followers

Email Subscribers: OTF News: 28,804 subscribers / OTF Learning: 25,648 subscribers

YouTube Videos

OTF produced three President’s videos this past year in both English and French: World Teacher's Day (in October); Season's Greetings! (in December) and Thank you! (in June). These are posted on the OTF YouTube channel. Also available on this channel are previous OTF Connects webinars as well as the *What Works for ME Might Work for YOU!* webinars that were presented this past spring.

<http://www.youtube.com/c/OntarioTeachersFederationOTF>

OTF Political Action Staff Work Group

Members of the Work Group were scheduled to travel to Washington, D.C. to attend the two-day marquee CampaignTechEast conference, organized by Campaigns & Elections, to learn about the newest tactics and tools being leveraged in the political sphere. Due to concerns about the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, the event was postponed to late June and then subsequently moved online with sessions occurring in chunks on July 8. Closer to home, the Work Group connected, as needed, by email or video conference, to monitor the dynamic political landscape for opportunities to work collaboratively in the advancement of common goals and to keep up to date on matters.

Canadian Teachers' Federation National Staff Meeting

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) hosted its annual National Staff Meeting (NSM) on November 20-22, 2019 in Ottawa. This year's theme of "Our Profession, Our Voice" was timely, given the political landscape in Ontario as well as in other provinces and territories. The NSM was well attended. Lindy Amato, Jeff Barber and Ian Pettigrew attended on behalf of OTF. During the NSM, delegates heard two EdTalk-style keynote addresses by Joel Westheimer, Research Chair in Democracy and Education, University of Ottawa and Carol Campbell, Associate Professor, OISE/UT as well as an ED Panel featuring Bruno Muzzi (OECTA) and Louis Robitaille (NSTU). Throughout the course of the meetings, OTF senior staff attended professional issues and professional development-focused break-out sessions all connected to the NSM theme and their respective portfolios. All told, the NSM provided OTF senior staff an excellent opportunity to network with, and learn alongside, federation staff colleagues from across Canada.

Both the OTF President and Secretary-Treasurer attended the CTF Board meetings (just prior to the NSM), providing an opportunity to learn more about CTF, its operations and finances, as well as to meet CTF staff and federation colleagues from across Canada. During the Board meetings, the OTF President was nominated to the CTF 2020 AGM Working Group, while the Secretary-Treasurer was nominated to the CTF Pension Plan Committee.

TEACHER EDUCATION

OTF's involvement in teacher education was once again extensive this past year, primarily through our established internal structures – the Teacher Education Liaison Committee and the Teacher Education Staff Work Group – as well as through our ongoing participation in teacher education policy and our activities in teacher professional learning projects.

Liaison with Faculties of Education

OTF participated in 23 highly successful Federation Days and four Pinning Ceremonies at faculties of education across the province this past year. We also continued our liaison activities with the Deans and other faculty members. Our local Teacher Education Liaison Committees (TELCs) met frequently and reported positive interactions and relationships at most programs.

This year marked the fourth cohort of teacher candidates (TCs) to graduate from the expanded, four-semester pre-service program regime, brought into existence by the Ontario government in September 2015. This year's TCs deserve specific recognition, however, given how extremely challenging the academic year was for them. Anxiety levels reached an all-time high, and many feared they would not meet the combination of old and new graduation requirements, in a year fraught with strike action, a new Math Proficiency Test, and a pandemic that shut down most school-based practicum placements.

Liaison Committee

The OTF Teacher Education Committee met four times this year, with two meetings held in person and two others held via Zoom. As was the case last year, the inclusion of an online meeting in December helped Committee members stay in contact between regularly scheduled, face-to-face meetings in the fall and winter. The final meeting of the year in May was originally scheduled to be held in person, but COVID-19 restrictions ultimately obliged us to hold this meeting online.

The main items considered by the Committee this year included: strikes and the impact on practicum placements; the government's new requirement of a Math Proficiency Test for Ontario teacher education graduates; teacher supply and demand; the preliminary findings from our 2019 study on Teacher Preparation and Success in Ontario; the status of Ministry-funded professional learning; and the budgetary needs of the TELCs across the province. More detailed information regarding this work can be found in the Teacher Education Committee's Annual Report, to be presented later in this meeting.

Staff Work Group

This was also an extremely busy year for the Staff Work Group, which met eight times over the course of the year. The main items considered by the Work Group included:

- the practicum and associate teaching;
- admissions and teacher supply and demand;
- the impact of teacher strikes on practicum placements;
- the Math Proficiency Test (MPT) introduced by the Ford Government;
- support for the new Ontario Teacher Candidates' Council;
- ongoing liaison and meetings with the Ontario Association of Deans of Education;
- disruption of practicum placements caused by COVID-19; and
- analysis of, and reporting on, the preliminary findings from our online survey entitled *Teacher Preparation and Success in Ontario*, which we ran last spring.

In addition to the above, the Work Group spent substantial time at successive meetings developing four important pieces of work:

1. A position paper in the fall in response to the MPT, entitled *A Recipe for Failure: The Math Proficiency Test for Beginning Teachers / Le test de compétences en mathématiques pour le personnel enseignant débutant : une formule vouée à l'échec*;
2. The program for the annual OTF/Affiliate Symposium on Teacher Education, which was offered jointly this year with the OTF Curriculum Forum in February;
3. A letter to the Minister of Education, in early April, lobbying for urgent consideration of flexibility in graduation and certification requirements for the graduating cohort of teacher candidates; and
4. A response to the proposal by the College of Teachers in June to introduce a new AQ course(s) on mental health and well-being;

Additional information about these four items is provided below.

OTF/Affiliate Teacher Education and Curriculum Forum Joint Symposium

As noted above, the Staff Work Group worked alongside staff responsible for the OTF Curriculum Forum to plan a joint Teacher Education Liaison Committee (TELC) and OTF Curriculum Forum (OTFCF) Symposium. This was the first year that the two groups came together at a single event, and the outcome was a resounding success. The Symposium was held in Toronto on February 7 - 8, 2020, and included 40 OTFCF members and 64 TELC members for a combined total of 104 participants. The theme of the event was *The Perfect Match? When Research Meets Practice*.

The opening keynote was delivered by Dr. Daniel Willingham, psychologist at the University of Virginia and author of *Why Don't Students Like School?* and *When Can You Trust the Experts: How to Tell Good Science from Bad in Education?* On the Saturday, researcher and TDSB educator Dr. Beyhan Farhadi shared her latest research on e-learning and how she has been using her findings to inform both her own teaching and to influence education policy decisions. Her perspective and insights were well received, especially considering the Ford Government's announced plans to introduce mandatory e-learning for secondary students. The Saturday also included interactive small- and large-group discussions regarding the best sources of educational research and how to assess the credibility of research to inform practice.

On the day prior to the joint Symposium, OTFCF members participated in a full day of learning including a keynote address by Joel Westheimer, Research Chair, Democracy and Education at the University of Ottawa, and a session on coding and computational thinking in the classroom facilitated by Brenda Sherry and Peter Skillen (Code to Learn). The final part of the day involved an Open Space Technology session in which OTFCF members had the opportunity to host small-group discussions about pressing matters and concerns that merited cross-Association conversations.

Math Proficiency Test for Beginning Teachers

As Governor's will recall, in August 2019 the Ford Government announced it was moving ahead with a new certification requirement for all beginning teachers, who do their pre-service education in Ontario, to pass a proficiency test in mathematics. The test was originally stipulated in Bill 48, the *Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, 2019*, which received royal assent in April 2019. On September 20, 2019, two new regulations detailing the Math Proficiency Test (MPT) were filed: Ontario Regulation 271/19 *Proficiency in Mathematics*, filed under the Ontario College of Teachers Act and Ontario Regulation 272/19 *Objects of the Office*, filed under the Education Quality and Accountability Act.

Following the filing of the Regulations, OTF and Affiliate staff worked to develop an OTF/Affiliate position paper on the MPT: *A Recipe for Failure: The Math Proficiency Test for Beginning Teachers / Le test de compétences en mathématiques pour le personnel enseignant débutant : une formule vouée à l'échec*. The paper describes the MPT as an affront to the teaching profession in Ontario and expresses the unequivocal opposition of OTF and its Affiliates to the test as a certification requirement. The document was sent to the Minister of Education in late November and shared with the Ontario Association of Deans of Education (OADE), the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). It was also posted on the OTF website, distributed broadly via OTF's electronic communications vehicles and forwarded to Teacher Education Liaison Committees (TELCs) across the province, as well as to the presidents of teacher candidate associations at every faculty of education and the leaders of the newly-formed Ontario Teacher Candidates' Council (OTCC).

Charged with developing the online test, the EQAO launched a website in late fall, including sample MPT questions and answers, and a “blueprint” of the test content.

In December, the government implemented some minimal Regulation changes to exempt teachers of Native Languages from the requirement to take the test, refocus the content aspect of the test on the Grade 3 to 9 Math curriculum (previously, Grades 10 and 11 were to be included), and allow third-party organizations (other than faculties of education) to proctor the test.

The field test administration of the MPT ran from February 18 to March 7, 2020, during which roughly 400 test sessions were offered at 15 community colleges and over 4,000 teacher candidates (TCs) took the test. Registration for the field test was extremely chaotic, with many TCs not finding spaces at the site(s) closest to them and, ultimately, having to travel long distances to take the test. While there has been no formal reporting by EQAO or the Ministry on the proportion of TCs who passed the field test, OTF heard from many TCs who told us that they did not pass one or both of the proficiency portion or the pedagogy portion and, as a result, failed the test.

Despite OTF’s ongoing lobbying efforts, and a court challenge launched by the OTCC, the government showed no signs of backing off the MPT. The MPT was the only assessment administered by EQAO that was not cancelled outright due to COVID-19. In late March, the OTF President and I, accompanied by OTF and Affiliate staff, met with the OADE to urge the Deans to work in unison with us to lobby the Ministry and the College to find reasonable modifications for teacher certification requirements in these unprecedented times. By this point, it was increasingly clear that TCs would struggle to meet certification requirements not only because of the MPT, but also due to the shutdown of schools during the pandemic. This, in turn, had made it nearly impossible for TCs to participate in practice teaching experiences in the spring. The Deans shared the same concerns as the Federation but did not support taking united action.

Incredibly, by March 31, 2020, the date on which the Regulation requiring the MPT went into effect, TCs had still received no information regarding scheduled test dates or how they would be expected to meet the requirement under COVID-19 restrictions. On April 3, OTF sent a strongly worded letter to the Minister of Education urging him to consider three immediate actions:

1. Postpone, until further notice, the requirement for graduates of Ontario’s initial teacher education programs to pass the MPT;
2. On a one-time basis, enable flexibility regarding the experiences that TCs could use to count towards the 80 days of practicum required by Regulation; and
3. On a one-time basis, enable the College of Teachers to issue a Transitional Certificate to TCs who, due to school closures brought about by COVID-19, could not meet the 80 days of practicum normally required for teacher certification.

On April 22, after weeks of silence by the Minister and heightened anxiety on the part of graduating TCs, the government announced that TCs would be given until August 31, 2021 – essentially one additional year – to meet the MPT requirement. In the interim, newly graduated teachers who have not yet passed the MPT will be issued a conditional Certificate of Qualification. It is worth noting that the announcement came just two days before a Motion for an Injunction, proposed by the OTCC, was set to proceed .

It is also worth noting that the Ministry simultaneously “forgave” TCs who were missing practicum due to COVID-19 and who did not meet the 80 days of practicum normally required for certification by the end

of their program. [At a Special Meeting of the OCT Governing Council on April 17, 2020, Council approved amendments to Regulation 176/10 – Teachers’ Qualifications relating to a practicum exemption.] The Ministry’s decision speaks volumes about the relative importance the current regime places on the practical components of initial teacher education relative to the MPT.

Work with the Ontario Teacher Candidates’ Council (OTCC)

Throughout this year, OTF worked closely with the OTCC. Following our first meeting with OTCC representatives on October 18, 2019, OTF and the Affiliates provided both in-kind contributions and financial support to the OTCC. OTF’s in-kind support included the provision of French translation assistance, access to our ZOOM online meeting platform, and sharing information from the OTCC via Twitter. Most importantly, OTF staff assisted the OTCC by providing guidance on how to formally establish itself as an organization and how to create a constitution and by-laws. Members of OTF staff also participated in the official inaugural meeting of the OTCC on November 19, 2019 and assisted the group through their initial elections. In terms of financial contributions, both the OTF Executive and the OTF Board of Governors approved donations to the OTCC to assist with the organization’s legal challenge of the Math Proficiency Test. Governors will recall that time was allocated during the Spring Board meeting in April to hear from the President and Vice President of the OTCC.

In the coming academic year, we hope to continue to support the OTCC as it mobilizes to represent the voices of teacher candidates (TCs) across the province. We have suggested that the Teacher Education Liaison Committees at each faculty of education consider including an OTCC representative among their members, and we have also encouraged OTIP Edvantage to liaise with the OTCC to assist with the issuing of Edvantage cards to TCs.

Ontario Association of Deans of Education (OADE)

OTF continued its ongoing liaison with the Deans of Education through attendance at the quarterly meetings of the OADE. As noted above, we also participated in the annual “Federation-only” meeting with the OADE in late March. Although we continue to enjoy very positive relationships with individual Deans at most faculties of education across the province, it has become increasingly clear over the past few years that, as a group, the Deans see their relationship with OTF and the Affiliates as less and less important. For example, the OADE did not object to the exclusion of the Federations from the table set up by the government to discuss the Math Proficiency Test (MPT), nor did it respond to repeated entreaties from us to work in partnership to find a reasonable counter position to the MPT. The OADE was also quick to set up a meeting with the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) in June to discuss practicum placements for the year ahead and to seek a commitment from the Directors to continue hosting teacher candidates (TCs) in practicum placements, some of which may need to take place as part of ongoing remote emergency learning. It did not occur to the OADE that their main partner in teacher education should, in fact, be the teachers themselves as represented by their Federations. The act of serving as an Associate Teacher remains very much a voluntary activity and is not something that can or should be assigned by board administrators.

While many of the faculties acknowledge the importance of providing OTF and the Affiliates with appropriate time at formal Federation Days to present information to TCs (all of whom are defined under

the Teaching Profession Act as Associate Members of OTF), in some cases, unfortunately, it has become necessary for us to insist that we be granted this time. We now know that all faculties of education in Ontario will be delivering their programs online in the fall due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns. We have communicated to the faculties that we expect to be allocated time to provide livestreamed presentations during formally structured Federation Days. We have no interest in providing faculties with pre-recorded Federation Day presentations for TCs to watch “when they have time.” We do not believe that formally allocated time with TCs is an unreasonable expectation, and we trust that all faculties will respect this.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROJECTS

Support for Teachers Working Remotely During COVID-19

As has been the case across Canada, teachers in Ontario faced an unprecedented challenge in the final months of the 2019-20 school year to “keep students learning” and engaged during the prolonged closure of schools caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Working in coordination with the Affiliates, OTF responded by providing online supports to assist members in their distance teaching and education activities.

In addition to posting helpful resources on the OTF website, and sending out frequent messages via our social media channels regarding useful events and supports, OTF launched a new series of webinars under our *OTF Connects* online professional learning program. Adhering to our previous professional learning axiom of “for teachers, by teachers”, the new series of *OTF Connects* webinars brought together a selection of excellent teacher facilitators to share hands-on tips and tools to support members, across divisions and subject areas, as they worked with their students in a remote and distance learning context. Entitled *What Works for ME Might Work for YOU!* the new webinar series established a relaxed atmosphere through which teachers could share stories of what has been working – or maybe not so much – and what they might want to try out as we navigate these unprecedented times together.

What Works for ME Might Work for YOU! included 16 webinars offered live over a seven-week period in May and June 2020. Consistently over-subscribed, more than 1,200 teachers participated in these livestreamed sessions. As in the past, all webinars were recorded and archived so that members who could not participate in the live sessions were able to access them afterwards.

OTF Coding Connections - FEO synergie et codage

Last year, the Executive had approved the involvement of OTF in a partnership with TakingITGlobal (TIG) Youth Association to develop a *Code to Learn* program. *Code to Learn* is a program, funded by the Government of Canada, which offers free resources to Canadian students and teachers to help them learn coding, robotics, computational thinking and 21st century skills. *Code to Learn* focuses on learning to code and “coding to learn” by supporting activities in diverse subject areas and across broad curriculum goals.

The new OTF program, entitled *OTF Coding Connections - FEO synergie et codage*, launched on January 8, 2020, with a call-out to teachers to submit proposals for teacher learning projects. In total, 58 applications were received from across the province and 24 projects were ultimately selected. Preference was given

to applications received from teachers in rural, remote and Francophone school settings. Due consideration was also given to ensuring a fair balance of Affiliate representation across the selected projects. Each of the approved projects will receive up to \$5,000 to enable teams of teachers to work together collaboratively to explore computational thinking and coding, using the Canadian coding platforms [Lynx](#) and [Microworlds JR](#).

Originally, a face-to-face training session for just the project team leaders was scheduled to be held at the OTF office on April 3 - 4, 2020. Owing to COVID-19 restrictions, however, all team members were instead invited to participate in an online training session May 9, 2020. The teams will next meet online on August 20 and will receive guidance and supports for moving their projects forward, in light of the ongoing uncertainty created by the pandemic.

Safe@School

As part of OTF's ongoing partnership with le Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA), we recently added COPA's evidence-informed, online course for students on cyberbullying to our Safe@School bullying prevention website. The online course helps students learn about bullying and cyberbullying and provides advice on different ways they can protect themselves from cyberbullying. We also hope to add several excellent student resources on the issue of consent to the Safe@School website over the summer months.

Ministry-Funded Professional Development Projects

In both the spring and fall of 2019, the Ministry of Education had indicated an interest to continue providing funding through OTF to support subsidies for teachers taking Math Additional Qualification (AQ) courses, and a new subsidy for teachers taking an AQ in teaching students with Autism. However, as Governors are aware, the government subsequently enacted Bill 124: *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019*, which not only restricts public sector wage increases, but also extends such restrictions to any third-party organization that receives transfer payments of a million dollars or more. Consequently, OTF has not signed any new agreements with the government to fund large-scale professional learning programs. The Ministry has accordingly proceeded to flow the above-noted subsidies (for Math and Autism) through school boards, instead of through OTF.

Similarly, funding for the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) has also not been continued this year. We were originally encouraged last year when the Ford Government, under pressure from practicing teachers, announced plans to continue funding the TLLP in 2019-20. In late October, however, we received disappointing news that decision-makers at the Ministry had rejected several key components of our proposal. In the absence of agreement on the fundamental pieces in our proposal, and given the lateness of the timing, it was impossible for us to proceed with the TLLP this school year. The future of the TLLP remains unclear at this point.

OTF Parent Engagement

Teachers continue to periodically request copies of the *Parent Engagement / Engagements des parents* print resource developed in 2014. OTF has exhausted its supply of English hard copies of the resource, but a few French versions remain. The website versions of the resource can be accessed at www.parentengagement.ca (English) and www.engagementdesparents.ca (French).

POLICY and LEGISLATION

Broadly speaking, there have been less extensive Ministry consultations with OTF on most files or issues.

Ministry of Education-Subject/Division Association meetings

The Ministry of Education did not schedule either a fall or a spring meeting with Subject/Division Associations this past year.

Ministry-Faculties of Education Liaison Committee

It has been customary for the Ministry to organize approximately four face-to-face Ministry of Education-Faculties of Education Liaison Committee (Committee) meetings each school year. This Committee is co-chaired by a Ministry education officer and a representative from one faculty of education, the latter being determined according to a pre-determined rotation among the faculties. Tina Giglio (EDU) and Roxane Lamothe and Tracy Crowe (University of Ottawa) were the Committee's 2019-2020 co-chairs. From September to late December 2019 there was radio silence from the Ministry about the status of this Committee or its meetings. Finally, on December 18, 2019, the Ministry announced that three one-hour meetings would be held, all via videoconference: January 22, March 11, and May 13, 2020.

While the first meeting was well attended by Ministry education officers and faculty representatives, it was initially undermined by the videoconferencing software, and then by nearly 30 minutes devoted solely to introductions. That left only half the meeting for updates from EDU and from the faculties of education. Of note, only a few minutes at the tail end of the meeting were devoted to questions and discussions. With respect to this segment of the meeting, two contentious issues emerged. The first was a statement by Diana Petrarca (Ontario Tech University) who called into question claims that research supports the imposition of mandatory e-learning for secondary students. The second was related to the Math Proficiency Test (MPT). The response of Ministry staff was short of the kind of clarification one should expect at this juncture. Understandably, and rightly, several faculty representatives, especially Mary Reid at OISE/UT, expressed vehement opposition to the MPT as a concept and also to the manner of its anticipated execution and roll-out. All told, a dearth of new or helpful information emerged from the meeting. What was shared was already largely known to us or stale news.

By the time of the second online meeting of the Committee, on March 11, 2020, the technical problems experienced at the first meeting had been resolved, allowing for better interaction. At the outset, Ministry

staff read a statement regarding the MPT administration that had occurred between February 18 and March 7, 2020. Ministry staff emphasized that the field test administration had been the purview of EQAO, and that it would not follow the Regulations regarding the 10-day time-period for providing results to those who took the test. Two additional updates from Ministry staff were simply to inform the Committee that the PD sessions offered by EDU at faculties of education were now completed for the 2019-20 academic year, and that the College of Teachers (OCT) had released its *Transition to Teaching* study.

The rest of the meeting centred on a discussion, led by Tracy Crowe (University of Ottawa), regarding teaching all students to read. Her interest arose from the submission that her faculty was putting together in response to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) inquiry on “The Right to Read”, and the question of what faculties of education are currently doing to instruct teacher candidates on how to teach reading to students who struggle. OCT accreditation requires faculties to cover just the Ontario Curriculum. Since the Ontario Language Arts curriculum is missing several aspects of the teaching of reading, it is possible some aspects are missing at the faculties of education. It was clear from the discussion that a wide range of practice exists at the faculties and that this issue merits further attention.

The final May 13, 2020 meeting focused on surfacing then-current end-of-program challenges for faculties and teacher candidates stemming from the province’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the closure of elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities. Discussion also focused on the possibility that initial teacher education programs may look different in 2020-2021. Committee members shared what they were learning about online adult learning and considerations for faculties faced with the real prospect that teacher candidates might not return to campuses full time in the fall of 2020.

Indigenous Education

Despite the absence of meetings of the Minister’s Advisory Council on First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education and of the associated Working Group of the Council once again this year, OTF continued its important work supporting Indigenous education and education for reconciliation.

Specifically, we continued our annual sponsorship of the Inspire National Gathering for Indigenous Education, held this year in Toronto on November 20-22, 2019. As I reported in the winter, the OTF President and I attended the event, along with hundreds of other educators and community partners. This year, OTF offered its display table to the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Association of Ontario (FNMIEAO), one of our Curriculum Forum subject associations. We also distributed our popular *Joining the Circle* toolkit on Indigenous Education, developed by OTF in partnership with the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA). The Gathering was a great success, providing many networking opportunities for participants to share practices to improve educational outcomes of Indigenous students.

FNMIEAO was also one of the principal organizations supported by OTF this year through access to a Zoom account that we specifically designated for Curriculum Forum members, to enable them to run professional learning sessions with their members. Additionally, we profiled new resources for promoting truth and reconciliation in both face-to-face and remote teaching via OTF’s recent webinar series. The new *Truth and Reconciliation in the Classroom* resource includes numerous high-quality videos on a multitude of topics such as geography, treaties, history, leadership, community life and more.

Finally, OTF had planned to participate once again this year in the National Indigenous Education and Reconciliation Network Gathering, originally scheduled to be held in Vancouver in late May. This event provides an invaluable opportunity for staff from teachers' organizations, provincial and territorial ministries of education, and others involved in education for reconciliation across the country, to network and learn about work being done to promote reconciliation education. Unfortunately, the Gathering had to be cancelled this year due to COVID-19.

Letters of Permission (LOPs) and Temporary Letters of Approval (TLAs)

Each year, OTF receives correspondence from the Ministry's Field Services Branch informing us of the total number of Letters of Permission (LOPs) and Temporary Letters of Approval (TLAs) issued by the Ministry in the previous school year. In the past, these reports were sent out in late fall, but this has not been the case since the Ford Government was elected. As I reported to Governors in the spring, the late arrival of this year's reports (in early April) meant that we did not have an opportunity to analyze the data fully prior to the Spring Board meeting. We can now confirm that the data received for 2018-19 shows a massive and worrying jump in both LOPs and TLAs for the second year in a row:

- The number of teacher LOPs issued for 2018-19 was 916, up from 723 in 2017-18 and from 518 in 2015-16.
- The number of ECE LOPs issued in 2018-19 was 52, up from 40 in 2017-18 and just 38 in 2016-17.
- The number of TLAs issued in 2018-19 was a staggering 1,319, up from 1,166 in 2017-18 and 821 in 2016-17.

Additionally, the data for English and French boards each tell a very different story: almost 60% of all LOPs issued in 2018-19 were in Francophone school boards. By contrast, 80% of TLAs were issued in English-language boards. These figures do not reflect the relative number of educators in each of Ontario's official language school boards.

Teacher Supply and Demand

For the second year in a row, neither of the Ministry's Supply and Demand Working Groups (English or French) met. It is our understanding, however, that AEFO and French First-Language (FFL) provincial stakeholder organizations continued to meet, as they did last year, to discuss and move forward on actions to address teacher supply and demand challenges in the Francophone school system. Similarly, OTF and the English-language Affiliates continued to participate in the French as a Second Language - Labour Market Partnership (FSL-LMP), a three-year project managed by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) and funded by a grant from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (TCU).

The FSL-LMP Committee met a total of five times this year. During this period, funding for the third and final phase of the partnership received approval and a detailed workplan was developed. Ultimately, however, many of the planned Phase III activities were curtailed. In the early part of 2020, any activities that were seen to exacerbate tensions in the system during labour negotiations were put on hold. By March, planned Phase III activities were further reduced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, some

work was able to move forward despite these setbacks. Once funding for Phase III was secured, school boards were requested to provide descriptions of the type of language assessments and practices they use in the hiring of FSL teachers and educational support staff. This information has now been collected and is in the process of being analyzed. Last year, the work of the FSL-LMP was expanded to include education workers as well as teachers which meant that, this year, work could be undertaken by an Education Workers Sub-Committee to generate a number of recommendations to support FSL professional learning opportunities for education workers.

Building on work in Phase II, funding has again been made available for a small number of high-yielding pilot projects that will run in the 2020-21 school year. The pilots will be funded to a maximum of \$7,500 each, with interim reporting to be completed by the end of December. Both OSSTF and OTF have submitted proposals for pilot project funding.

While the TCU funding for the FSL-LMP is currently projected to come to an end in January 2021, the group received news in March that it was successful in securing funding from the Federal Department of Canadian Heritage for three projects to support improved recruitment and hiring of FSL teachers. Although the specific project proposed by OTF and the Affiliates was not included in the projects submitted to Heritage Canada by the FSL-LMP, we are hopeful that the approved proposals will help improve the overall shortage of FSL teachers in Ontario.

Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Education Advisory Group

In February, OTF was invited by the Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) to participate in a newly established Education Advisory Group. To date, we have attended two meetings of the Advisory Group (May 14 and June 30, 2020). The three main areas of focus have been:

1. the Right to Read Public Inquiry that is currently underway;
2. plans to develop a human rights lesson plan package to be used in the Grade 10 Civics course; and
3. the recent review of the Peel District School Board concerning allegations of systemic racism.

To date, the meetings have been conducted with tremendous respect and what appears to be an authentic valuing of the input provided by the members of the group. The work of the Education Advisory Group is anticipated to take at least one year, with meetings held every two to three months.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Interim Registrar and New Deputy Registrar

As of June 19, 2020, the College website no longer lists Joe Jamieson as the Interim CEO and Registrar. This change comes after many hours of in-camera sessions during regular Governing Council Meetings as well as several special meetings of Council to discuss “human resources”. Michael Salvatori remains listed as the CEO and Registrar on the College website, with the notation “ Currently on Leave”.

After an in-camera session at a special meeting held on April 14, 2020, the Chair of the Governing Council announced that the then Interim Deputy Registrar, Paul Picard, would be completing his term in that position effective April 17, 2020. She also reported the appointment of Chantal Bélisle as Deputy Registrar for a two-year term, renewable upon mutual consent, commencing April 15, 2020.

As of June 26, 2020, the College website does not list a Director of Investigations and Hearings, the position previously held by the new Deputy Registrar, Chantal Bélisle.

June 2020 Governing Council Meeting - Chair's Remarks

In her opening remarks, the Chair welcomed two new appointed members of Council: Bonnie Oakes Charon - from the Ottawa area, a Procedural Clerk in the House of Commons, and Éline Legault – a French language advocate and former trustee from Durham region.

During her report, the Chair spoke about the issue of systemic racism and her plan to write a letter on the subject, with the Vice-Chair, to members of the College and to the public. (This letter was published in the June 2020 College's electronic Newsletter with the title "A Time for Reflection and Action".)

2021 College Elections for Governing Council

The proposed regulations that would have eliminated College elections, and created the need for a new governance selection process, have not yet been enacted by the government. In meetings with the Deputy Minister, the Chair reiterated "the urgency in knowing whether the Government was planning on introducing the Governance enhancements recommended by Council so as to understand the implications of the Council Election cycle. The government acknowledged that our duty is to fulfill the current regulation."

So, it would appear that the College will continue taking steps to prepare for the 2021 elections and the existing governance model will be in place for the foreseeable future.

Proposed College Governance Model

Should the new governance model proceed at some point in the future, a presentation was made to the Governing Council's March 2020 meeting, by Council's Governance Committee, on recommendations related to the proposed sortition process for future members of Governing Council and certain Council Committees: Executive Committee, Human Resources Committee, Governance Committee and Nominations Committee. The sortition process would be used for the selection of members of the profession, and not for appointed members. The sortition process would not be used to select members of the following committees: Investigation, Discipline, Fitness to Practise, Registration Appeals, Accreditation, Accreditation Appeals, and Standards of Practice and Education. The sortition process would be based on the competencies and attributes confirmed by the Governance Committee and the following steps: 1) Letter 2) Self-Selection/Application 3) Long List 4) Short List 5) Interview 6) Final Sortition, and 7) Audit.

Inter-Staff Meetings

Staff from OTF and the Affiliates interact with staff at the College via two sets of “inter-staff” meetings – one for Professional Affairs staff and the other for staff engaged in issues pertaining to Investigations and Hearings (I&H). Both groups continued to meet this past year.

The Professional Affairs staff met with staff from the Standards of Practice and Accreditation (SP&A) and Membership Services Departments in November. While there are usually two meetings scheduled among these groups each year, the spring meeting never took place due to COVID-19. The main issues discussed at the November meeting included the Math Proficiency Test and ongoing accreditation activities by OCT of both pre-service programs and AQ courses.

OTF/Affiliate staff were to have met with College I&H staff in the spring, but this meeting never took place due to COVID-19. The agenda was to include discussion of options for sharing school board complaint-reporting statistics with the Affiliates, and informing school boards of the College Governing Council’s support for sharing such statistics.

College Finances

Despite having budgeted for a \$4.4 million deficit for 2019, the College finished the year with a \$3.3 million deficit, to be covered from reserves (roughly \$7.7 million as of December 31, 2019). The College will see a large increase in fee income in 2020 as member fees increased from \$150 to \$170.

Discipline Matters

At the March 2020 Governing Council meeting, statistics were provided from the Investigations and Hearings (I&H) Department for 2019. Compared to 2018, there was a significant increase in the number of complaints originating from members of the public (23.5% / 321 v. 260), a large increase in the number of complaints originating from the Registrar (including employer notifications) (14.5 % / 450 v. 393) and a similar increase in complaints from members of the College (14.5% / 79 v. 69).

A total of 412 complaints were brought before the Investigation Committee (IC) in 2019. Of those, 158 (38%) were referred to the Discipline Committee (DC). The referral rate has “grown exponentially since 2017” and has had “significant implications for the ... timelines for disposal of cases as well as for adjudicator and staff resources.” There were 321 open files at year end (DC and Fitness to Practise).

Not only has the significant increase in cases meant delays in members’ cases being resolved, it has also meant that the I&H budget line is almost \$1.3 million over budget.

Counselling and Therapy

As previously reported to Governors, the Counselling and Therapy program was launched on the College website on January 1, 2020. To be eligible for the counselling and therapy program, the alleged acts must have occurred after January 1, 2020.

At the June 2020 Governing Council meeting, Councillors approved two proposed changes to the regulation that governs the program: the first change will cease program funding when allegations are withdrawn, and the second change will expand the program to students who are subject to sexual abuse or a prohibited act involving child pornography by any member of the College. Previously, the program only provided funding for therapy and counselling for students who were the subject of sexual abuse or a prohibited act involving child pornography by a member of the College in the course of his or her practice or where the member supervised or was responsible for the student at the time of the alleged act. The new proposed regulation reflects recent court case decisions, and the final regulation is still subject to approval by the Deputy Minister of Education.

College Recertification

Research into the requirements of other regulators with respect to confirming competence prior to recertification is underway. Currently, OCT members who need to recertify are only required to pay a recertification fee.

Proposed New AQ on Mental Health and Wellbeing

In late May, OTF was invited to participate in a provincial consultation regarding the possible addition of one or more Additional Qualification (AQ) courses related to mental health and wellbeing. OTF and Affiliate staff met in early June to discuss the College's proposal and to draft a response for the approval of the OTF Executive, following which it was forwarded to the College.

It was the consensus position of staff that the creation of a new AQ on mental health and wellbeing was not something that the Federation should support. Of primary concern was that an AQ covering this content could easily lead to heightened and erroneous expectations on the part of teachers, education workers, parents, administrators and others that a teacher holding the AQ would somehow be "additionally qualified" to take on added responsibilities regarding students experiencing mental health and wellbeing challenges. Our joint response to the College argues that professionals such as school psychologists and social workers are more appropriately trained to take on these responsibilities.

Should the College choose to pursue the addition of a new AQ course on mental health and wellbeing, despite our objections, we have recommended that it would be more appropriate to frame this as a single course (Schedule C) and not a three-part specialization (Schedule D).

Proposed New AQ on Teachers working with Blind / Low Vision Students

The College also sought feedback on five new proposed Additional Qualification (AQ) courses for teachers working with blind / low vision students. OTF staff gathered input from the Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO) and from each of the four Affiliates. OTF staff also reached out to teachers working at the W. Ross Macdonald Provincial School Authority for comment. OTF's final submission, approved by the Executive, supported the additional professional development opportunities, but raised concerns regarding the proposed structure of how the AQ courses might be offered: it is OTF's position that these new AQ courses should be offered as individual Schedule C courses, and not as a new Specialist program (requiring three of the five new courses) as proposed.

Professional Advisory on Professional Boundaries

In early June, the College invited OTF and the Affiliates, along with other education stakeholders, to provide feedback on a new draft Professional Advisory on the issue of Professional Boundaries.

The new Advisory will be the eighth issued by the College since it was established in 1997. As has been the process in the past, the College began by consulting with an unnamed group of “experts” to create the draft document, and then turned to education stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft Advisory. The deadline for receiving feedback was June 30, 2020, with the intention being to present a finalized document to the College’s Governing Council for approval in October 2020.

Staff from OTF and the Affiliates met via Zoom on June 12 to discuss the draft Advisory and created a document encompassing the consolidated and consensus feedback of all Federations. As in the past, our joint position noted that the French version of the advisory was poorly translated. The Executive approved the joint document and it was forwarded to the College on June 24, 2020 with AEFO’s feedback appended.

Other College Activities

We continue to monitor initiatives approved by the College’s Governing Council during the past year:

- **Shared Services Program** – an effort to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of regulatory services, and to reduce costs to registrants and members, by pursuing service consolidation strategies with other regulators.
- **Communication with Parents on College Mandate** – Council has recommended to the Minister that the Education Act be amended to require all district school boards, school authorities, private schools and the Provincial Schools Authority to provide information regarding the role and mandate of the College to parents/guardians at the start of each school year, or when students register mid-year.
- **Private Schools and Membership Requirement** – Council has also recommended to the Minister that the Education Act be amended to require membership with the College for all teachers of private schools as a condition of the annual notice of intention to operate.

CURRICULUM and ASSESSMENT

OTF Planboard

OTF renewed its agreement with Chalk.com, a Waterloo-based company, to provide free access for members to this online planning tool for the 2019-2020 school year. The platform currently has 27,541 users. Information, including sign-up instructions, for *OTF Planboard* is on the OTF website under the *Learning* tab (<http://www.otffeo.on.ca/en/learning/planboard/>).

Curriculum Review

OTF pressed Ministry staff this year on the absence of direct and meaningful Ministry consultations with OTF, its Affiliates, Subject/Division Associations and front-line teachers about revised curricula that were released last school year.

Revised Mathematics Curriculum, Grades 1-8

The revision of the mathematics curriculum (Grades 1-8) – last revised in 2005 – continued apace through a less-than-transparent curriculum review process this year. Dr Christine Suurtamm, Vice Dean Research, and Professor of Mathematics Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa was retained as an academic expert in mathematics instruction throughout the review process.

The Ministry eventually provided a limited opportunity (two one-hour long meetings, within a six-working day span) for OTF and Affiliate staff to review and provide feedback on an incomplete, embargoed draft version of the curriculum. OTF and Affiliate staff, assigned to the task of providing that feedback, learned from Ministry officials that the curriculum was already in the hands of fact-checkers, among one of the very last pre-release stages in a curriculum review process, and that, as a consequence, there was little room for substantive change to the contents.

In under one month from the initial meeting in late May with the Ministry, OTF and Affiliate staff consolidated feedback and shared an Executive-approved formal response, entitled *A Measured Response to Implementation: Feedback on the proposed revised mathematics curriculum (Grades 1-8)* (<https://bit.ly/2020mathFEO> ; <https://bit.ly/FEOMath2020>), with Ministry officials. Recognizing that members need time to acclimatize to changes and adjust programs and practices, the response included five specific recommendations focused on release and implementation timelines and plans. The formal submission was also made public subsequently in English and French.

Despite repeated requests to delay the release and implementation, on the same day the formal response was submitted to Ministry officials, and while Ontario was still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minister of Education announced (on June 23) the release of the final version of the revised mathematics curriculum (Grades 1-8) and its mandatory implementation in September 2020.

The revised math curriculum is the first curriculum document uploaded to the Ministry's new Curriculum and Resources digital platform (<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/>). The Ministry has also announced \$15 million in funding to support release time for educators to become “expertly familiar” with the revised curriculum. With respect to implementation plans, the nature, scope and timelines for professional learning opportunities and the status of teaching and learning resources under development remain unclear.

Revised Science and Technology Curriculum, Grades 1-8

On July 13, 2020, the Ministry of Education unexpectedly signalled, through a call for writers/invitation to quote memo, its intention to conduct a curriculum review of the Science and Technology Curriculum, Grades 1-8. According to the documentation made public with the memo, three teams of 11 writers (one team for each division, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-6 and Grades 7 & 8), will develop elementary Science and

Technology curriculum content, including the overall and specific expectations, as well as pedagogical supports. The writing is to take place in two stages:

- *First stage:* divisional teams will work for five days in the summer of 2020 to begin to revise identified areas of the curriculum. Their work will be shared with education stakeholders and partners for feedback.
- *Second stage:* divisional teams will review the feedback of their initial draft and any further recommendations from a research report. They will have another five days to complete the revisions to the curriculum.

The first stages of the writing and review process will occur within a compressed timeframe in that the two stages of the writing process will comprise a maximum of 10 days in total for each writer, with the work of all teams scheduled to be completed by January 2021. No release date has been formally announced but, in keeping with recently established patterns, a mandatory implementation of the revised curriculum in September 2021 does not seem out of the question.

Destreaming of Grade 9

Citing the practice as systemic, racist, and discriminatory, the Minister of Education announced on July 6, 2020 that the Ministry was ending the practice of streaming grade 9 students into academic and applied levels beginning in the fall of 2021.

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)

2018-2019 Results – Provincial Assessments

On August 28, 2019, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) published provincial-level results from its Grades 3, 6, 9 and 10 provincial assessments administered in the 2018-2019 school year.

In a marked departure from EQAO's past reports, the agency elected to lead-off with a section called *Learners' Context | Contexte des apprenantes et apprenants* highlighting qualitative findings about Grades 3, 6 and 9 students' attitudes toward mathematics and Grades 3, 6 and 10 students' attitudes towards reading and writing. These findings were drawn from student responses to questionnaires administered during the respective EQAO assessments.

Overall, results have continued to decline since 2014 in math results in Grades 3 and 6 for English-language students but have remained consistently high and stable for French-language students in these same grades. Of note, EQAO explicitly and publicly stated that students' basic math skills were stronger than their ability to problem-solve or apply and transfer their knowledge to more abstract contexts or tasks. Nevertheless, the release of results further reinforced the government's commitment to introduce a Math Proficiency Test for Beginning Teachers.

In addition, with the exception of Grades 3 and 6 writing, French-language students consistently outperformed their English-language peers across all EQAO-assessed areas and at all the divisions. The most pronounced difference in results occurred in Grade 6 mathematics (including students with special

needs), Grade 6 reading (students with special needs), Grade 10 TPCL (students in the applied course and students with special needs).

Changes at the Top

On November 12, 2019, Norah Marsh announced her resignation from EQAO to take up the position of Associate Director of Academic Services for the Durham District School Board. Marsh served as CEO of EQAO for two years. Steven Reid, then the Chief Operations Officer, was appointed interim CEO. One month after being named EQAO's interim CEO, Steven Reid announced his resignation from EQAO to assume the position of Associate Director at the York Region District School Board. Reid served EQAO as its Chief (Assessment) Operations Officer for one and a half years. Laurie McNelles, previously EQAO's Director of Data and Reporting, is the new CEO. Joanne Rinella, previously EQAO's Program Manager, has been appointed to the COO role.

EQAO Advisory Committee

This Committee usually meets several times each year. However, in the 2019-2020 school year, only one meeting was scheduled for December 4, 2019, and it was postponed (and never rescheduled) by EQAO since it coincided with a one-day province-wide strike by OSSTF.

Administration of EQAO Assessments for the balance of the 2019-2020 School Year

In March, the Education Minister, citing the extraordinary circumstances facing the province due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cancelled all scheduled EQAO assessments for the 2019-2020 school year. As a result, successful completion of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), usually a requirement to obtain an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, was waived for students eligible for graduation this year.

In June, the Minister announced that no EQAO testing of Grades 3 or 6 students would occur in the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. This is intended to allow time to align provincial assessments with the recently revised mathematics curriculum. However, the Grade 9 mathematics and Grade 10 OSSLT will still be administered.

International Assessments

2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

On December 3, 2019, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) publicly released results from its 2018 PISA. This assessment was administered in April and May 2018.

PISA is a triennially-administered, computer-based international assessment of the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students in minor and major domains - math, reading, and science - assessing skills that the OECD and member countries decide are key educational outcomes in each discipline/area. The OECD also positions PISA as a valid and reliable barometer of students' beliefs and perceptions about themselves.

Over 79 countries/economies (including 37 OECD members) participated in the 2018 PISA. Canada has participated since its inception and the assessment is carried out through a partnership between Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Over 22,000 Canadian students from just over 800 schools, in all 10 provinces, took part in the 2018 PISA. Schools and the students within schools in both the French- and English-language school systems were randomly selected for participation. The results are reported at the pan-Canadian and provincial levels and are not disaggregated at the individual school or student level.

In addition to two hours of direct assessment of reading and approximately one hour each of math and science, students in Canada also completed a 35-minute background questionnaire providing information about themselves and their homes, about information and communication technology, and about their school experiences, work activities, and relationships with others. School principals completed a separate 45-minute questionnaire about their schools. Ontario was also among seven provinces which elected to include a one-hour financial literacy component, defined as the knowledge and understanding of financial concepts and risks, and the skills, motivation and confidence to apply such knowledge and understanding in order to make effective decisions across a range of financial contexts. Furthermore, Ontario added “national options” to gauge students’ participation in French immersion programs and students’ expectations, and students’ perceptions of parental expectations, related to educational attainment.

This year, the public release of results was met with far less fanfare than usual from mainstream media or from the government. There are a number of contributing factors. First, the major (focal) domain in 2018 was reading (not math or science) and Ontario students did relatively well by comparison to other jurisdictions. Second, the assessment covers students who were in school during the years when the former Liberal government was in power, and the Ford Conservatives are notoriously allergic to crediting positive student results or outcomes to its predecessors. Third, the collective bargaining process, not international rankings, occupied the government’s attention.

As we know, many variables - individual and collective - contribute to student achievement. Given its international administration, the PISA assessment is necessarily not tied to any one participating jurisdiction’s curricula or programs of study. Furthermore, students’ results in three disciplines cannot possibly pretend to speak to or be predictors of students’ ability to navigate their future lives or careers successfully. Unfortunately, PISA has proved low-hanging fruit for educational policymakers and the results have become a proxy measure for determining the health and effectiveness of education systems.

Large-scale assessments continue to represent “shiny objects” which are perceived by some in decision-making positions to offer accurate and objective barometers of student achievement and attitudes. In too many jurisdictions, these external assessments are valued as accountability mechanisms which feed the educational equivalent of an arms race among countries and contribute to a damaging culture of testing in schools. Looking further ahead, the next PISA assessment which will be administered in 2021 - with mathematics as the major domain - will also include a new assessment of creative thinking.

Post-PISA Cross-Jurisdictional Check-In

On December 10, 2019, OTF staff co-organized and facilitated a post-PISA virtual check-in session with colleagues from across Canada (including staff from OTF’s Affiliates), the UK, Iceland, and Norway. The purpose was to assess the degree to which the results had gained traction in various jurisdictions. During the hour-long session, few reported significant mainstream media pick-up on PISA results; for most media

outlets across Canada, reporting was typically a quick 'drive-by'. In addition, the response by ministries of education was muted. Moreover, relative to previous years in which PISA results were released, unions/federations received far fewer requests for comment. There was some social media traffic about rankings, including declining scores in mathematics. Overall, results did not help to feed narratives of "broken public education systems."

However, despite the limited attention the 2018 results garnered, PISA remains a looking glass: results are interpreted to drive a particular agenda and sometimes weaponized. Participants in the December 10, 2019 meeting did raise the spectre of the OECD actively broadening its measurement framework to assess 'soft skills', 'growth mind-set' and social-emotional indicators.

Among the key ideas that emerged from the December discussion were how we might harness growing questioning of the merit of participating in large-scale, snapshot assessments and how we might also leverage - across jurisdictions and affiliations (e.g. academic, research, unions) - our experience and expertise to assemble evidence-informed counter-narratives to help combat the OECD's influence as a catalyst for education reform and a driver of education policymaking. At the end of the Zoom session, there was agreement that this first virtual check-in had proven valuable, and that this sort of informal scanning activity was a worthwhile activity to continue.

Public education systems continue to be on a collision course with the OECD. Its central preoccupation seems to be how to insinuate itself indelibly into the fabric of educational policymaking. This is a classic case of rampant empire-building with policymakers acting as foot soldiers, schools as battlegrounds, and teachers and students as unwitting victims.

WELLBEING and MENTAL HEALTH

Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health

The Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health (Coalition), of which OTF and its Affiliates are members, celebrated 10 years this year. The Coalition unites education, mental health, community, and health sectors to promote the priority of social and emotional wellbeing as a part of healthy child development in Ontario, and to make it a priority that drives integrated public policy in the province. During the past year, the Coalition met twice in person and once virtually (due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

The fall meeting, on October 22, 2019, was focused on providing members of the Coalition with an opportunity to help chart the course for the Coalition's next 10 years. This was accomplished using a series of facilitated table- and whole-group activities designed to solicit members' input about matters germane to the work of the Coalition. In addition, Dr. Kathy Georgiades, Associate Professor & David R. (Dan) Offord Chair in Child Studies at McMaster University, shared insights from the 2014 *Ontario Child Health Study Findings: Policy Implications for Canada* (OCHS). Of note is the fact that, since a similar benchmarking study conducted in 1983, the prevalence of emotional-based mental disorders among 4 to 17 year-olds has increased. More specifically, one in five children/youth in Ontario meets the criteria for at least one mental disorder. Moreover, a dramatic change in the perception of need for professional help occurred in the same 30-year period.

The second meeting on January 14, 2020 occurred during the labour unrest in the education sector. In the course of the meeting, discussion ensued about endorsing Bill 116: Act to Enact the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act, 2019 and the Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, 2019 and gauging support for an endorsement of a move by the government to establish a Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day (Bill 154). Coalition members were also asked for feedback on the draft version of *Beyond the Binder: A Case for System-wide, Sustainable Approaches to Mental Health and Wellbeing in K-12 Education (Beyond the Binder)*, a discussion paper which emerged out of two national roundtables in 2018 and 2019 hosted by the McConnell Foundation. Ian Pettigrew, OTF's representative on the Coalition, raised some concerns privately with Judith Nyman about *Beyond the Binder*, which ultimately led to the Foundation deferring indefinitely a formal launch of the discussion paper until more robust consultation had occurred.

The last meeting in June was converted to an online format given the provincial restrictions placed on large, face-to-face gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was clear that, in the time of COVID, responding to the dynamic needs of the respective demographics of people whom they serve has pre-occupied every Coalition member's time, efforts and resources. Nearly all organizations underscored the fact that they had pivoted to address these needs given that normal, face-to-face mechanisms were severely restricted by the pandemic and Ontario's response to it. Some organizations indicated they had harnessed lessons learned from the SARS outbreak in 2003 to guide their response, prioritize their actions, and marshal their resources to deal with the effects of COVID-related matters. Also clear was that some organizations were already better prepared to pivot, or found it easier, given the type of response mandated for, or requested of, them by the groups of people and communities whom they serve.

A common refrain from members of the Coalition this year was the need to find alternative and creative ways to engage with the government and other decision-makers to advance the Coalition's cause, given the government's penchant for not consulting with some key stakeholders.

Stronger Together (I/Strong I/Fearless) Mental Health initiative

During the past year the OTF Executive considered an invitation to partner with a proposed new initiative to support student mental health at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels. Originally called: *Stronger Together* and now called: *I/Strong I/Fearless*, the ambitious initiative is the creation of William Wallace McKinnon, Founder and CEO of Canadian-based Redwood Medical Centres Inc. and Pinnacle Centres of Healthcare Excellence Inc. The purpose of the initiative is to create a series of books, to be made available for free to schools across Ontario, addressing a number of mental health topics. *I/Strong I/Fearless* also hopes to include the launch of a new CBC television series that will highlight the selected mental health topics. After due consideration by staff and the Executive, it was determined that OTF would not participate in the initiative at this time.

Educator Wellbeing

Much of OTF's work in the area of educator wellbeing occurred last fall, in connection with initiatives undertaken by the McConnell Foundation and EdCan (previously the Canadian Education Association (CEA)). In September, OTF staff participated in a webinar co-hosted by McConnell, EdCan and *WellAhead*, entitled *Making the Case for Workplace Wellbeing in K-12: How school, school district and stakeholder leaders can achieve more buy-in for greater investment in teacher and principal wellbeing*.

In September we also met with EdCan's Executive Director and Research Manager to discuss their new *Well at Work* initiative, which is funded by the McConnell Foundation. EdCan staff explained their interest in educator wellbeing and the preliminary work they had begun through *Well at Work*, indicating strong interest in learning from the work that teacher federations across Canada have been doing to support members' wellbeing. Shortly after meeting with EdCan, we were invited to participate in a consultation and professional learning session led by them on November 22, 2019 *Making the Case for K-12 Well-Being: Financial, Legal, Student Achievement*. Unfortunately, the event coincided with the CTF National Staff Meeting and the Inspire National Gathering, making it impossible for anyone from OTF to attend.

In early October, OTF participated in a meeting of staff from McConnell and the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF). The meeting was held at the explicit request of McConnell in an effort to repair strained relations with CTF and its Affiliates that arose in the 2018-19 school year due to the *WellAhead* survey administered by McConnell. McConnell's Program Director apologized for the survey problems, indicating a strong willingness to work together on teacher and education staff wellbeing initiatives.

OTF was subsequently invited to attend McConnell's pan-Canadian *WellAhead Summit*, originally scheduled to be held from May 11 to 13 in Edmonton. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled due to COVID-19. In late June, OTF staff provided feedback to a draft proposal being considered by McConnell to support staff wellbeing in K-12 schools within and across provinces. The main question being considered by the five-person design team is how might K-12 workplace wellbeing be advanced at district, provincial/territorial and pan-Canadian levels ?

CTF Survey of Teachers re: the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In early May, OTF staff provided input and feedback on a planned survey by CTF assessing the impact of COVID-19 on educators and students across the country. Based on a survey launched a few weeks earlier by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), the CTF survey included a focus on four main areas of teacher experience during the pandemic:

1. Wellbeing and equity;
2. Technology use and online instruction;
3. Pedagogy and the profession of teaching; and
4. Return to public school buildings.

The survey was launched on June 1 and remained live until June 18. OTF used its social media channels to advise members of the survey's existence and to encourage participation. In total, 7,237 Ontario teachers responded to the CTF survey. The raw, quantitative data was shared by CTF in late June, but the qualitative results are still being analyzed. Below are some highlights of the survey findings for Ontario teachers provided by CTF to date:

- Not surprisingly, the vast majority (73%) of teachers registered concern for the mental health and wellbeing of their students, while only 43% expressed concern for their own mental health.
- Similarly, most teachers expressed concern with getting their students what they need to be successful with online (remote emergency) instruction, and identified students living in poverty, ELL students and students with exceptionalities as particularly struggling with online instruction.

- Also, not surprisingly, the vast majority of teachers identified students' readiness to learn, ability to focus and likeliness to check in each day as significantly or somewhat worsened due to the pandemic.
- Almost 90% of respondents indicated that they have concerns or questions about returning to public school buildings or the reintegration of students into face-to-face classrooms after the first phases of the pandemic.

Proposed new AQ on Mental Health and Wellbeing

As noted earlier in this report, staff also responded to a consultation by the College of Teachers on whether to introduce a new Additional Qualification (AQ) course(s) on mental health and wellbeing.

Health and Safety Work Group

The OTF Health and Safety Work Group met a few times during the past year. Concerns related to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre (WHSC) were identified and relayed through the OTF representative on the WHSC Board of Governors. In March, the Work Group met with Loretta Michaud, Director of Communications at the WHSC, and discussed many issues connected to the education sector including: the new WSIB Excellence Program, the ETFO Workplace Symposium and strategies to address workplace violence, WHSC workshops, the Provincial Work Group on Health and Safety and recent Labour Board rulings and decisions.

PENSION

Plan Valuation

As Governors are aware, OTPP finished 2019 with a 10.4% rate of return and net assets of \$207.4 billion. As of January 1, 2020, the Plan was fully funded (for the seventh year in a row) with a 103% funded ratio and a \$6.1 billion surplus. This is based on an average contribution rate of 11% for active Plan members and 100% inflation protection on all pensions, and using a real discount rate of 2.60% (previously 2.75%).

Governors are also aware that the Partners decided to file a 2020 funding valuation for the Plan, allocating the surplus to a contingency reserve. The purpose of the contingency reserve is to reduce volatility in Plan funding and to facilitate stability in members' contributions and benefits (including inflation protection). The next required filing (triennial filing required by the Pension Benefits Act) will occur in 2023.

Pension Forum

As Governors are aware, we had originally postponed the 2020 Pension Forum due to the continued challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. A decision has since been made to simply cancel this year's Forum and to carry forward this year's efforts to the 2021 Pension Forum next April.

Plan Amendments

There were no Plan amendments made by the Partners during the past year.

Director Appointments

Later in this meeting, Governors will consider the re-appointment of two OTF nominees on the OTPB Board (OTPPB) for further two-year terms, as well as the re-appointment of the Board Chair (in conjunction with our Government Partner). During the past year, our Government Partner filled one of its two vacancies on the OTPPB with Cindy Forbes, Global Chief Analytics Officer (and former Chief Actuary) at Manulife.

OTPP Orientation

A full day orientation was held on January 31, 2020 for new Governors and new OTF Pension Committee Members at OTPP's offices. In addition to an overview of the Plan, including the Member Services and Investment Divisions, there was a Valuation 101 session to provide information related to Plan funding and the annual actuarial valuation process.

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Later in this meeting, Governors will receive a report from the International Assistance Committee and a short visual presentation of the work it has accomplished this year. The Committee met twice this year, having received 333 requests for project assistance of which we were able to fund (at least partially) 196. The number of worthwhile applications received by the Committee continues to exceed what we are able to support within our budget, but we are confident that the projects receiving grants from OTF are extremely deserving of our support and that the funds will be put to good use. We continue to use our partnership organizations and individual contacts on the ground in India, the Philippines and Zimbabwe to ensure the authenticity and validity of the requests that we receive from schools, teachers, and NGOs in those countries. The projects that received approval this year are located in 13 different countries including: the Congo, El Salvador, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nicaragua, the Philippines, South Africa, St Lucia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe and, for the first time, Yemen.

Education International Urgent Action Appeal

Ironically, in a year characterized by the greatest global disaster of our times, there have been no urgent action appeals issued by EI.

International Visitors

Late last summer, OTF was contacted by an influential education and social policy advisor from Israel, retired Brigadier General Ram Shmueli. Mr Shmueli had read a report submitted to the Israeli Ministry of Education by a delegation that had spent time in Ontario in the spring of 2019, and he was interested in learning more about Ontario's experience with coalition-building among education stakeholders, government and public organizations. OTF facilitated meetings between Mr Shmueli and available Affiliate staff, as well as with Carol Campbell, Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves.

We also welcomed a further Korean delegation (possibly the third or fourth in the past few years) this past winter.

OTF CAMPGROUND

Despite the ongoing pandemic, we were able to open the OTF Campground within a month of our normally scheduled opening, although we continue to take our direction from public health authorities as things evolve. Many measures have been put in place to keep our staff and campers safe. We will not have as many "happy campers" as we would in a regular year, but campers have been very patient and are very appreciative to have access to this fantastic campground.

Improvements made over the past year include work on additional campsites (nearing completion) on the north side of the lake, and new roofs, windows, and doors on two of three cabins on the south side of the lake. Unfortunately, these two cabins are not available for rent this summer as they require further renovations to make them safe for campers.

Mike Bosley (Caretaker) and his wife Mary Baldackin (Registrar) have worked hard to ensure that the Campground is run efficiently, washroom facilities are clean, grass is cut, water is safe to drink, structures (buildings, shelters, docks) are in good shape, and infrastructure (equipment, electricals, plumbing and septic) is in good working order.

OTF continues to assess fees (camping, cabins, and storage) on an annual basis to ensure that the Campground is not only self-sustaining but also competitive with Provincial campsites. OTF's continued investments in improvements ensure that the Campground is in good shape for years to come. T-shirts with our new OTF Campground logo have been delivered and are currently on sale for \$20 each at the Campground. If Governors are interested in purchasing a t-shirt, please contact Jeff Barber.