

A message from the OTF President



Chris Cowley

Dear colleagues,

The new academic year has started once again with the cloud of COVID-19 hanging over our schools and everything we do as teachers. Let's be clear: the pandemic-related anxiety that teachers and students are feeling is sadly becoming the norm, as it seems the Ontario Government continues to resist many of the protocols teachers have been calling for to help mitigate the spread so our schools can remain open and our students in class.

Despite this, however, teachers across Ontario are doing their best to ensure our students feel safe and welcome in every classroom across our province. Throughout the pandemic, teachers and education workers stepped up to make sure students continued to learn, whether virtually or in person. As teachers, we know that the most authentic learning happens in the classroom. This is why OTF and its Affiliates have been advocating for the basic measures that would allow schools to remain open: smaller class sizes for physical distancing, robust testing and tracing, improved ventilation, and investments to address learning loss. Unfortunately, the Ford Government had a different plan and we are seeing the results of this across Ontario with dozens of schools, hundreds of classrooms, and thousands of students forced to quarantine.

After an extended summer recess, the Premier prorogued the legislature and began a new session with a throne speech that mentioned the word "education" a grand total of zero times. This, as COVID cases in schools remain elevated.

Finally, the recent governance changes to the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) have been another disappointing development. Previously, teachers had a voting majority on the profession's regulator. That has now been eliminated along with the ability to elect our representatives. These anti-democratic changes will only further alienate OCT members from the College and reduce teacher input. Sadly, the OCT is now simply an arm of the Ford Government.

These issues underscore the importance next June's provincial election will have for our students and for the working conditions of our members. Teachers, parents, and education advocates need to be the voice for students and ensure we defend the publicly funded education system built in recent decades.

In the interim, OTF and its Affiliates will continue to stand behind you 100%.

In solidarity,

Chris Cowley
President

Join the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan for a virtual presentation to learn about one of your most important financial assets: your pension



Each of the sessions described below is about 1.5 hours with a Q&A session. These virtual sessions will be delivered in English, but there are plans to offer French sessions in the coming months.

Your Moment – Getting You Ready for Retirement (for members within 5 years of retirement)

You have been contributing to your pension throughout your career. Now that you're thinking about retiring, find out how this asset fits into your financial picture.

This interactive and informative presentation will provide you with everything you need to know about preparing for retirement, and what to expect throughout the retirement application process.

You have four dates to choose from. Each presentation will be the same, so please choose a date below and click on it to register.

OCTOBER

October 26, 2021 at 4:30 pm

October 28, 2021 at 6:00 pm

NOVEMBER

November 2, 2021 at 4:30 pm

November 4, 2021 at 6:00 pm

You will receive an email confirming your registration. Two days before the date you selected, we will send another email with information on how to join the virtual presentation.

Being A Member – Your Life as a Teacher (for early to mid-career members)

Your pension is one of your most important financial assets.

Consider this your Pension 101. Designed for all early to mid-career members, you will gain an understanding of how your contributions and pension are calculated, how to maximize your pension benefit and how some life events may impact your pension.

You have two dates to choose from. Each presentation will be the same, so please choose a date below and click on it to register.

OCTOBER

October 21, 2021 at 6:00 pm

NOVEMBER

November 9, 2021 at 4:30 pm

You will receive an email confirming your registration. Two days before the date you selected, we will send another email with information on how to join the virtual presentation.

Ontario Music Educators' Association receives 2021 OTF Special Recognition Award



ONTARIO MUSIC
EDUCATORS'
ASSOCIATION

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) is pleased to announce that the Ontario Music Educators' Association (OMEA) is the 2021 recipient of the OTF Special Recognition Award. This award, established in 2020, is presented annually to an organization, group or individual to acknowledge outstanding contributions to publicly funded education in Ontario, beyond the school board level.

"The excellence of Ontario's publicly funded education system is supported and enhanced by many individuals and groups who are external to Ontario's school boards," states Chris Cowley, OTF President. "OTF is very pleased to recognize the contributions made by OMEA for over 100 years supporting the work of Ontario's music educators."

Due to ongoing pandemic restrictions, OTF will recognize OMEA with the presentation of this award at the Spring Board of Governors' meeting in April 2022.

A message from the OTF Secretary-Treasurer



Scott Perkin

Dear colleagues,

As a new school year begins, we reflect upon the many challenges that Ontario's educators and students faced from the Ford government last year, hoping that history does not repeat itself again this year: inadequate funding for our schools, health and safety protocols that ignored the advice of health experts, a continuing fixation on online learning (that simply doesn't work for most students), and significant changes to curriculum without any meaningful consultation.

Ontario's educators have made, and will continue to make, the best of a very challenging situation, as schools reopen and face-to-face learning returns.

At OTF, we are proud of the efforts of our Affiliates and all of Ontario's educators in advocating for their students, and for a safe and productive return to in-person learning. It is time that

the government begins listening to Ontario's educators, those dedicated professionals who are determined to protect the learning environment and the supports necessary for student success.

At OTF's Annual Meeting in late August, we bid farewell to President Parker Robinson as his term concluded, and we welcomed Chris Cowley as he begins his second term as OTF President. We wish Parker all the best, and we look forward to working with Chris on various initiatives during this next school year, a year that will likely present many challenges. Governance changes at the College of Teachers, and an unnecessary Math Proficiency Test imposed upon new teacher graduates are just some of the issues that OTF will continue to monitor and advocate against.

50-Day Re-employment Rule for Retired Members of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan

Due to recent inquiries, the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) wishes to clarify the re-employment rules for retired members. The current rule is 50 days, which means that a retiree can work to the end of the month in which they exceed their 50-day limit while drawing both employment income and their pension. If they choose to continue working beyond that month, their pension is simply suspended until they stop working or until the following September 1st, whichever occurs first. Each new school year provides a brand new 50-day limit for all retirees.

OTF respects the right of all Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) members to make their own retirement decisions, weighing their own financial and personal

factors in the process. Having made the significant decision to retire, they understand that working after retirement rules provide an opportunity, not a barrier, to providing their talents to the school system within reasonable limits.

There are some great resources and scenarios that can be found on the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan website:

Re-employment FAQs: <https://www.otpp.com/members/cms/en/life-career-events/retirement-life/working-after-retirement/reemployment-faq.html>

Re-employment overview: <https://www.otpp.com/members/cms/en/life-career-events/retirement-life/working-after-retirement.html>

OTF recommends that retired members keep track of their days worked and to reach out to a Pension Benefit Specialist at the OTPP with any inquiries about how re-employment rules apply to them, or to confirm details of their re-employment.

Email: inquiry@otpp.com

Phone: 416.226.2700 or 1.800.668.0105 (toll free)

FAX: 416.730.7807 or 1.800.949.8208 (toll free)

Call service hours: 9 am to 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday



...returning this fall

OTF will again be offering our excellent webinar series for teachers on a variety of topics. This fall's lineup will include a focus on anti-racism, Indigenous education and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). To mark the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* or *Night of Broken Glass*, we will be hosting a very special virtual tour of Auschwitz on Wednesday, November 10, facilitated by the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies.

Watch out for announcements in the latter part of October with the full schedule of OTF Connects webinars for November and December.



OTF's Ici on parle français grant program is back this year and Take 2 is even bigger and better!

In September, we announced that we would

once again be offering a limited number of grants this year that teachers can use to participate in a French as a Second Language (FSL) professional learning program/activity of their choosing or to purchase resources to support their FSL proficiency and teaching. Funded through the French as a Second Language Labour Market Partnership (FSL-LMP), led by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA), the grants enable FSL teachers to work together in a collaborative learning team of two to four teachers, or to pursue their professional learning individually. For those working in a team, the maximum grant is \$500 per team member (maximum \$2,000 per team), and for those working individually, the maximum grant is \$250.

More than 300 applications were received from across the province by the deadline of October 14, 2021. Successful applicants will be notified by November 5, 2021.



In the past several months, OTF's equity and inclusive education partner, COPA, has been busy creating new programming and resources for educators, students, and their families. For the moment, most of what COPA has been developing is

available in French only. However, the intention is that most, if not all of these programs and resources, will be available eventually in both French and English.

One of their newest resources is a project called *Notre pouvoir dans l'adversité* (Our Power in Adversity), funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

During the pandemic, students experienced such a great deal of stress – due in part to isolation from their peers and an inability to pursue normal activities, as well as safety measures that led to school closures and interminable online learning. The intent of this project is to respond to this stress in a way that fosters resilience in students through a message of positive empowerment. It includes a two-page visual tool for self-reflection, and two films that model active listening. The [first film](#) is an example of

how NOT to respond to a peer in distress, and the [second film](#) portrays a more positive way in which students can offer support to their peers.

COPA is now creating workshops for students, educators, parents and guardians using these tools to promote resilience in both individuals and communities. Stay tuned to COPA's social media and [subscribe to COPA's newsletter](#) to find out when these workshops will become available to school communities.

[COPA Twitter](#)
[COPA Facebook](#)
[COPA Instagram](#)