



Yves Durocher

A message from the OTF President

Dear colleagues,

The classroom as a vehicle for democracy.

We acknowledge the times we are in currently are grim. We are witnessing armed conflicts in the Levant, Congo, Sudan, Ukraine and in more than 110 areas around the world. There are nationalist governments being elected in Argentina and the Netherlands. There is a steady rise of gender-based violence and hate crimes occurring globally. Here at home, we are witnessing an unprecedented use of food banks in Ontario and an urgent need for accessible and affordable housing for the most vulnerable as winter approaches. Across the country, we are also witnessing an attack on 2SLGBTQ+ children, youth and communities. There have been protests and demonstrations that attempt to pit teachers and parents against each other, though our overarching goal is shared: to provide safety and care to young people.

Simultaneously, we are also witnessing the erosion of democratic values. From provinces like Saskatchewan and Quebec using the notwithstanding clause to override charter rights to political leaders berating journalists and each other, we can see how fragile our democracy can be.

Yet, our obligation as teachers and educators still stands strong. In this moment and beyond, we can support our democracy and the values it upholds: equality, dignity, justice, the rule-of-law, etc. While it can be difficult, there are tools at our disposal such as <https://politalks.ca/> or <https://electionsanddemocracy.ca/> to help establish fair, safe and respectful spaces in our classrooms that allow students to converse and learn without falling into the trap of the "us and them." These tools aid in providing the skills to engage in meaningful albeit difficult conversations that strengthen our understanding of each other and the world around us.

Yours in education,

Yves Durocher
President

Happy Holidays!



The Executive and Staff of the Ontario Teachers' Federation join you in recognizing the renewal that lights up these last weeks of the year. As we celebrate, we are also mindful of those who will not be so fortunate. So, let's be a source of support, comfort and care for one another this holiday season and throughout the New Year.

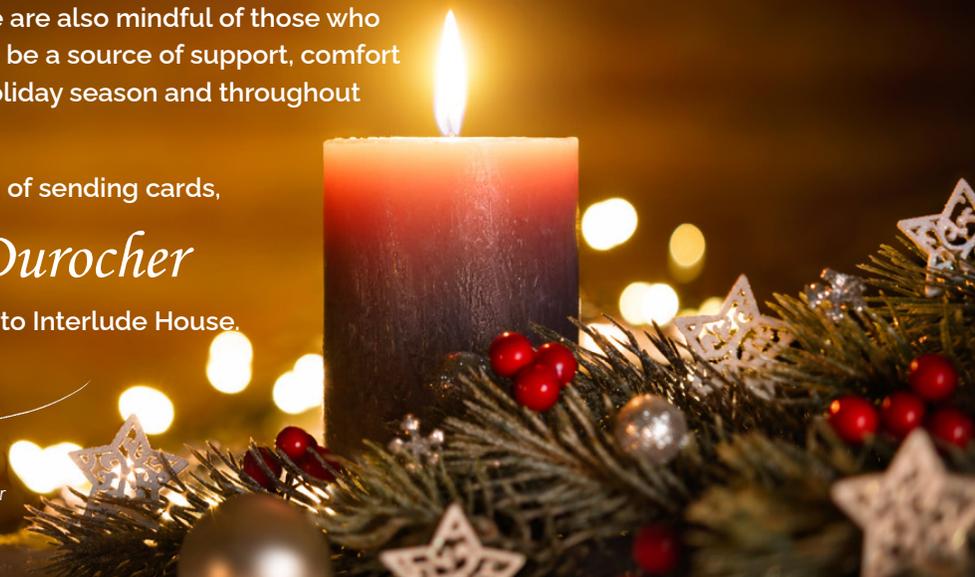
In the spirit of giving, and in lieu of sending cards,

President Yves Durocher

has chosen to make a donation to Interlude House.

Yves Durocher
President

Scott Perkin
Secretary-Treasurer



2024 OTF Special Recognition Award



**Nominations will
open on January 15
and will close
on March 31, 2024**

For more information or to download
a nomination form, visit [www.otffeo.on.ca/
en/advocacy/otf-special-recognition-award/](http://www.otffeo.on.ca/en/advocacy/otf-special-recognition-award/)

Congratulations are in order!

The holidays always bring a sense of beginnings and endings, and at the Ontario Teachers' Federation, that will be even more evident this year as our Secretary-Treasurer, Scott Perkin will retire on December 31, 2023.

We would like to thank our friend Scott for his service to the teachers of Ontario. We will miss your wisdom, wit and guidance, and your strong yet quiet leadership. Scott began his service to teachers in 1996 where he spent 15 years at the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, followed by 12 years at OTF. We wish you the happiest of retirements.

With that, we also welcome Ian Pettigrew who will become the 9th Secretary-Treasurer of OTF.

Félicitations!





A message from the OTF Secretary-Treasurer

Scott Perkin

As the school year winds down toward the holidays, OTF continues to advocate on behalf of Ontario’s teachers on many fronts.

The recent Court of Appeal decision upholding the Math Proficiency Test (MPT), introduced by the Government in 2019, was very disappointing. It creates yet another obstacle for teacher candidates to begin their careers in Ontario’s publicly funded classrooms. The Ontario Teacher Candidates’ Council, that successfully challenged this unnecessary test at the lower court level, is to be commended for standing up to the current government and its misguided educational policy.

As new teacher graduates face the uncertainty of the MPT, OTF continues its work with the Ministry and other stakeholders to address challenges of teacher supply and demand. This arose from commitments made earlier this year, between OTF and the Minister of Education, “to timely

implementation of identified solutions during the 2023-2024 school year, to resolve the staffing challenges that our education system continues to face.” An Action Table, and a corresponding Steering Committee, have been meeting since March to arrive at evidenced-informed decisions, based on data collected over the summer.

As I retire, I am pleased to leave OTF in the very capable hands of Ian S. Pettigrew, the new Secretary-Treasurer. It has been a privilege to serve Ontario’s teachers over the past 27 years (both here at OTF and previously at the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan), and I wish OTF and its Affiliates the very best in advocating for and supporting publicly funded education in Ontario.

Yours in education,

Scott Perkin
Secretary-Treasurer

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Anne St-Arneault, and Annie Turcotte.

I’m sure many of us can remember where we were on that fateful December day. On December 6, 1989, a lone shooter walked into an engineering class at la Polytechnique Montréal and murdered 14 women and injured 14 others in the name of “fighting feminism.”

Over 30 years later and we still witness violence that targets women. For women that experience marginalization, particularly trans women, Indigenous women, Black women, sex workers and disabled women, the rates of violence disproportionately impact them.

Over three decades later, we are still working to build a world free of gender-based violence. As teachers, we have the opportunity to encourage change in our classrooms. We are able to disrupt language, ideas and beliefs that target women. As a Federation, we are committed to eradicating sexism and gender-based violence.



How is your cyber hygiene?

You may not be familiar with the phrase “cyber hygiene,” but it is something everyone should already be incorporating into their professional AND personal lives. Cyber hygiene is defined as the practices that organizations and individuals perform regularly to maintain the health and security of users, devices, networks, and data. The goal of cyber hygiene is to keep sensitive data secure and protect it from nefarious attacks. A good analogy for cyber hygiene is the practice of good daily oral hygiene to avoid cavities and gum disease.

Unlike oral hygiene, where there is a limited number of established procedures (brushing, flossing, mouthwash, and regular visits to the dentist) it would be impossible to provide an exhaustive list of the ever-evolving dangers and steps to avoid them in the digital world. The following list is meant to raise awareness and provide some strategies that you can employ right away to help avoid cyberattacks.

Pa\$sw0rd Security

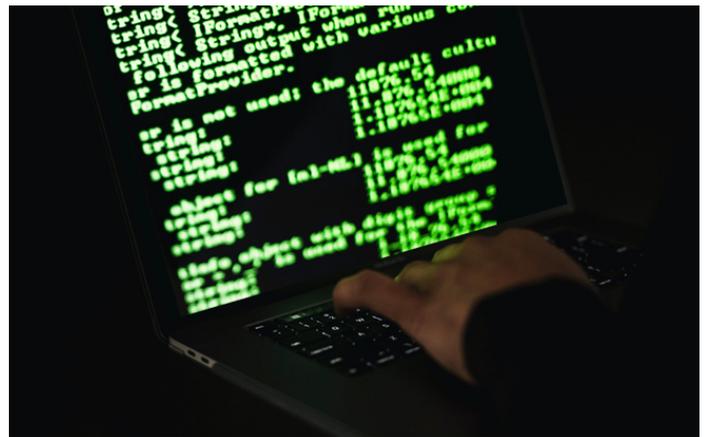
Passwords should be long and complex (consider pass**PHRASES** instead of pass**WORDS**) and should be **unique** for each account. Consider frequent password changes; always keep them in a safe place and never share your passwords or passphrases. Change your password immediately if you suspect it has been compromised.

Antivirus software

This is a vital element of overall cyber hygiene. You need to install and keep updated antivirus and anti-malware software to scan all files, quarantine anything suspicious and, if necessary, erase malicious files. Keep all applications, software and operating systems up to date, which will normally include critical updates and patches to prevent cyber attacks. Only install software that comes from trusted sites.

Multifactor authentication

Where possible, consider using multifactor authentication (MFA) for your online accounts, especially accounts with sensitive personal information such as your finances or email. MFA will normally use a password as well as a code sent to another device (cell phone) or account to verify your identify and grant or deny access.



“The first step to overcoming a challenge is to identify it. Once you know what you are dealing with, you can start to develop a plan to address it.”

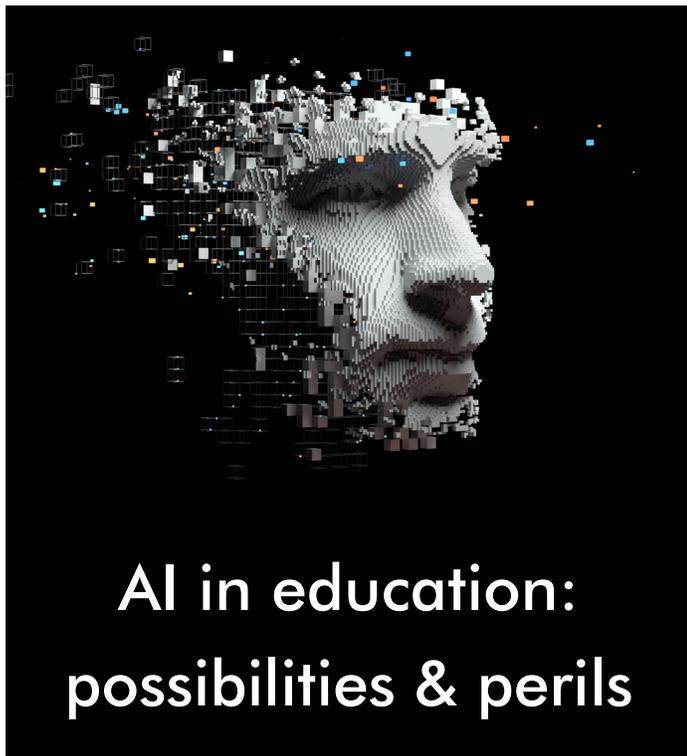
Divulging personal information

Participating in seemingly innocuous online quizzes or using online image transforming software and applications can be used to divulge personal information that can be used to access your online accounts.

Vigilance

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Scammers send messages designed to lure victims to download viruses or access your sensitive information by offering a free prize, identifying a “problem” with your account, or by asking you to click on a link (phishing). Scammers use a sense of urgency or fear to pressure recipients into quick responses via unsolicited emails, text messages or phone calls. You should always be able to verify the source of the message; if you do not know who has sent the message, you should treat it as a potential scam. It is always a good practice to get a second opinion to help identify a scam. When in doubt, do not respond immediately! If you can independently verify from legitimate sources the company’s published number, call the (alleged) company and speak with an official representative.





AI in education: possibilities & perils

Full disclosure: This article was written by human beings, not by generative AI (AI).

Here's a challenge: what recent technological advancement can you name that has been hailed as *both* innovative and disruptive in recent years? The smartphone in 2006? Augmented/virtual reality? While both answers are accurate, neither and none has expanded at the feverish pace and scale as generative AI.

For instance, ChatGPT reportedly hit the threshold of one million users a mere five days after its launch in 2022, a milestone it took Instagram two-and-a-half months to achieve. Clearly, there is no going back. The risk and reward of AI are equally great. On the one hand, it has the potential to ease daily routines and turn mundane tasks into entertainment. On the other hand, AI is used to replace workers and threaten job security.

The current and next iterations of AI will likely have a disproportionate impact on numerous vocations and workers including within the teaching profession; some aspects will be more disrupted than others. As we live through these changes, will we be capable of appreciating, or anticipating even, the full depth and scale of the ripple effects this technology will have and bring?

We echo the recent ASCD article which reminds us "technology is not *inherently* good or evil."

However, as a human engineered technology, we must also be mindful it is subject to the biases of its human creators. These are not just mechanical questions about its use; they are ethical and value-laden.

Perhaps part of a responsible way forward is to be cognizant of the fact that while we are relatively free to choose whether to harness OpenAI in our practice and lives, we are not free from the consequences of that choice, be they unanticipated or unintended. Put another way, as Stephen R. Covey once observed, "when you pick up one end of a stick, you pick up the other."

2024 **OTFFEO** **OTIP RAEO**

Nominate a teacher in one of three categories: elementary, secondary, or a beginning teacher in the first five years of teaching.

Winners will receive a personal award of \$1,000 and a Certificate of Recognition.

Nominations will open January 15 and will close on March 31, 2024.

OTIP TEACHING AWARDS

To nominate, visit teachingawards.ca