



A message from the OTF President



Yves Durocher

Dear colleagues,

We are witnessing, in our teaching environment, a reconsideration of ideas and values surrounding the privileged place that rights hold in our society. Provincial governments acting on so-called parental rights. Privatization threatening union rights. Intellectual property rights being challenged with the use of Artificial Intelligence and Generative AI. We are seeing rights being debated in a way that is new and can be somewhat uncomfortable. There are those who would rather actively stoke the fires of division than seek to bridge divides when it comes to rights we hold dear.

We have groups of students who feel that their right to live and learn peacefully is being threatened by others who feel that their right to express themselves supersedes the former. We have fellow colleagues, fellow teachers, who don't feel safe at work and who are worried about speaking out against the violence they experience. It's making some of our members feel anxious about doing or saying the wrong thing. Teachers are showing up, but don't always feel they can be the best version of themselves.

All this is happening in real-time, in real-life, in our streets, stores, parks, homes and indeed in our schools. The sharp and un-nuanced invective being spewed on social media platforms translates into less forgiving and more threatening words and actions in our classrooms. It seems sometimes unmanageable and as teachers we may feel less than equipped to deal with it all, even though the wider public expects it of us.

So, as teachers, what are we to do? We can listen and act with empathy. It seems like an intrinsic approach for teachers. After all, we come into this profession with the aspiration to care for the students in our charge. However, sometimes we actually have to make a conscious effort to act with empathy. It is the best way to ensure that our students feel safe and supported. In the classroom, holding opposite convictions needn't lead to conflict: it can lead to respectful conversation and dialogue.

We can speak intelligently, with pedagogical authority. We are the experts in the classroom. With our knowledge and lived experience we can help to contextualize things for our students. We can invite open-mindedness to help students see issues in tones of grey instead of what they might wish to see as black and white. We can create conditions and climates to help our students tolerate and even accept ambiguity.

We can remind ourselves, as Federation members, that OTF's first listed object in the *Teaching Profession Act* is to promote and advance the cause of education. It means encouraging our students to look beyond the confines of their horizons, to use those critical thinking skills they've been building since Kindergarten to come to their own conclusions that are hopefully rooted in empathy, care and compassion. The same values we model in our classrooms. As teachers, we certainly have the right and responsibility to create safer spaces for ourselves and our students.

OTF recognizes March 8 as International Women's Day *#InspireInclusion*

This year's theme is *#InspireInclusion*—a reminder that a world that is safe and free for girls and women must include all girls and women. Individuals, groups and movements, who are both celebrating and advocating for the rights of women and gender equity, can make greater strides when we recognize the experience of those women who are still overlooked or marginalized.

As a Federation, we value the work you do as teachers and educators in the classroom to mentor and empower young women and girls. We also celebrate the ways each of you bolsters the efforts of your colleagues to ensure that the principles and practices of diversity, equity and inclusion are reflected in their teachings.



What you consistently model for and champion with your students will be instrumental in forging a better present and future for girls and women, recognizing that when they succeed, we all do.



DON'T MISS OUT!

**Nominations are now open
and will close on March 31, 2024!**

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A message from the OTF Secretary-Treasurer

Ian S. Pettigrew

CONTINUITY & CHANGE

Dear colleagues,

As I write this first *Interaction* message to you in my capacity as the newest Secretary-Treasurer of OTF, I find myself reflecting on the historical thinking concept of continuity and change. To be sure, many often equate continuity with stagnation and change with progress. Yet, as both a student and teacher of history, I know that both continuity and change can be simultaneously progressive.

I was reminded recently of an interaction between former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan and a journalist who asked him what the greatest challenge of governing was. Macmillan replied: "Events, dear boy, events". That might be an equally appropriate answer given by a teacher about teaching and the challenges and rewards of what happens in our classrooms, our schools and, yes, in our homes and lives. There is little doubt that during my tenure in the role, there will be some inflection and turning points for you, me and us—events that may try us and will also present us with yet another perennial dualism: challenges and opportunities.

Uncertainty and the unknown always lie ahead of us; that's why predicting the future is only ever a best-guess exercise. But, as I look ahead, of one thing I am certain: The whole team at OTF will lean on both continuity of practices and processes of change to meet OTF's objects which, together, support OTF's 160,000+ active members, protect the "pension promise" for active and retired members alike and advocate for a robust publicly funded education system in Ontario and beyond.

I am proud and inspired by YOU—OTF members, my colleagues. Your tireless dedication every day to attending to the myriad needs of the students in your professional care matters. I know that your efforts day in and day out make a real difference. Your voice and your strength in turn fuel our commitment to embody OTF's motto: *Your Voice, Your Strength*.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize all my predecessors in this role for their leadership and service and to offer my thanks to the 7th and 8th Secretary-Treasurers of OTF, Rhonda Kimberley-Young and Scott Perkin, with whom I had the privilege of serving.

In early June 2024, OTF will turn 80. In this celebratory year and beyond, I look forward to continuing to serve the interests of the profession and its members as the 9th Secretary-Treasurer of OTF.

In teaching, learning and Federation,

Ian S. Pettigrew
Secretary-Treasurer



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.**

Preparing to Retire (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 eleven dates to choose from. Each presentation will be the same, so please choose a date below and click on it to register.

March

[Thursday, March 7, 2024 at 6 pm](#)

[Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 4:30 pm](#)

[Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 6 pm](#)

[Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at 4:30 pm](#)

[Thursday, March 28, 2024 at 6 pm](#)

April

[Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 4:30 pm](#)

[Thursday, April 11, 2024 at 6 pm](#)

[Tuesday, April 16, 2024 at 4:30 pm \(French\)](#)

[Thursday, April 25, 2024 at 6 pm](#)

May

[Wednesday, May 1, 2024 at 4:30 pm](#)

[Thursday, May 2, 2024 at 6 pm](#)

You will receive an email confirming your registration. One hour before the presentation 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.

May

[Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 6 pm](#)

[Wednesday, May 15, 2024 at 4:30 pm](#)

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



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OTIP TEACHING AW★ARDS

Nominations are open
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on March 31, 2024!

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\$1,000 to the
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May 27, 2024

