



Michael (Mike) Foulds

## A message from the OTF President

### Rebuilding the foundation: A call to strengthen Ontario's teaching profession

In a moment of reflection, I recently found myself confronting a painful truth: for the first time in my career, I would hesitate to recommend teaching as a profession to my own children. This realization underscores the urgency of addressing the challenges facing Ontario's education system. At the heart of this crisis lie three essential pillars—**\*Recruitment, Retention, and Respect\***—which must be fortified if we are to ensure a sustainable and thriving future for public education in our province.

### Recruitment: Who will teach the next generation?

The landscape of teacher recruitment in Ontario has shifted dramatically. In 2015, only 16 per cent of new teachers secured permanent contracts in their first year. Today, that number has soared to over 70 per cent. While this might seem like progress, it masks a deeper issue: a growing disconnect between teacher availability and classroom needs. Despite the apparent demand, 27.5 per cent of teachers without permanent contracts report being underemployed.

This paradox is compounded by projections from the Ministry of Education, which anticipate rising student enrolment and increasing teacher retirements, all while the supply of new

teachers remains stagnant. Without intervention, a significant gap between teacher demand and supply is expected to emerge by 2027.

Rather than addressing this looming crisis, the government has shifted blame to teacher absenteeism, urging school boards and unions to improve attendance management. This response ignores the systemic issues at play. A 2025 Fraser Institute commentary—surprisingly aligned with union perspectives—urges policymakers to address the root causes of absenteeism, workplace violence, not just the symptoms.

One such root cause is safety. A recent [Auditor General's report](#) revealed a 67 per cent increase in violent incidents at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) between 2017 and 2023. During the same period, sick-day usage rose by 58 per cent. It's no coincidence—when educators feel unsafe, absenteeism rises.

Rural, francophone, and northern communities are already experiencing acute teacher shortages, with some schools unable to offer full-time instruction. To reverse this trend, we must create stronger pathways into the profession. This includes expanding teacher education programs and offering incentives such as tuition support, housing assistance, and guaranteed job placements.

*(continued on page 2)*

## Retention: Keeping our best educators in the classroom

Recruiting new teachers is only half the battle. Retaining them is equally critical—and currently, we are losing that battle.

According to the Ontario College of Teacher's 2024 "[Focus on Teaching](#)" survey, 28 per cent of long-term occasional (LTO) and occasional teachers (OTs) reported working less than they desired due to a lack of stable opportunities. The same survey found that nearly half of all educators are considering leaving the profession within the next decade.

Why? The reasons are clear: increased violence in our schools, unsustainable workloads, burnout, and a lack of professional support. Class sizes are growing, mental health needs are escalating, and administrative demands are increasing. These pressures are pushing even veteran educators to the brink.

L'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO) and its Francophone partner organizations have long sounded the alarm about the dire shortage of teachers in French-language schools. Their 2021 [report](#) included 37 recommendations—most of which remain unaddressed. Meanwhile, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) have all released comprehensive reports highlighting the rise in workplace violence and the urgent need for safer school environments. (ETFO: [ETFO Violence Survey Results, 2023](#); OECTA: [Workplace Violence and Harassment Against Teachers: Results of a Comprehensive Members Survey](#) and [Safer Schools for All: Addressing Violence and Harassment Against Teachers](#); OSSTF: [Safe at School—school violence survey results](#).)

The Canadian Teachers' Federation's 2025 "[Parachute](#)" survey confirms that these issues are not unique to Ontario—they are pan-Canadian. Yet, instead of meaningful action, we are met with superficial solutions like cell phone bans.

Real retention strategies are needed. These include reducing class sizes, increasing access to classroom supports, and ensuring that professional development is relevant and empowering. Most importantly, we must address violence in schools to make teaching a sustainable, and safe long-term career.

## Respect: Elevating the teaching profession

The third pillar—respect—is perhaps the most foundational. Without it, recruitment and retention efforts will falter. Over the past decade, public respect for teachers has eroded, fueled



by political rhetoric, chronic underfunding, and a growing disconnect between policy and classroom realities.

Ontario has cycled through four Ministers of Education in the past calendar year alone. This instability reflects a broader disregard for the voices of educators. It costs nothing to treat teachers with respect—to consult us on policy decisions, to value our expertise, and to recognize the critical role we play in shaping the future.

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan remains one of the strongest in the world, offering financial security in retirement. But stability in retirement must be matched by stability during our working years. Teachers deserve to feel valued—not just through fair compensation, but through public recognition, workplace supports and professional autonomy.

Restoring respect for the profession requires collaboration. Policymakers, school boards, and communities must work together to ensure that teachers are seen—and treated—as the highly skilled professionals they are.

## A Call to Action

The future of Ontario's publicly funded education system hinges on our ability to recruit, retain, and respect our educators. We must make it desirable to become a teacher in Ontario. We must make it sustainable to remain a teacher in Ontario. And we must ensure that teaching is a respected and valued profession.

As leaders in education, we have a responsibility to defend the profession and advocate for these changes. Our students—and the future of our province—depend on it.

Yours in education,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mike'.

**Michael (Mike) Foulds**  
President



# A message from the OTF Secretary-Treasurer

Ian

**Ian S. Pettigrew**  
Secretary-Treasurer

## ***The importance of dialogos***

*"In a dialogue ... everybody wins if anybody wins. There is a different sort of spirit to it. In a dialogue, there is no attempt to gain points, or to make your particular view prevail. Rather, whenever any mistake is discovered on the part of anybody, everybody gains. It's a situation called win-win, in which we are not playing a game against each other but with each other. In a dialogue, everybody wins." ~ American theoretical physicist David Bohm*

I'm married to a Canadian of Greek descent, so she'll be pleased by my use, in the title, of the Greek root for the English word "dialogue."

I was reminded of Bohm's idea, put forward in his work *On Dialogue*, when I was recently invited to attend the gala dinner of the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO), at which selected Catholic principals are honoured annually. I was seated with a coterie of education stakeholders and past-CPCO presidents, one of whom (Blaine MacDougall) I engaged in an extended conversation in between award presentations.

Blaine and I had this in common: we were both once classroom teachers, albeit at different divisions, schools and boards. However, I have never been a school administrator and he has not helmed a teacher federation. Perhaps you're wondering if he, from the employer group side and me from the teacher advocate side, agreed on everything that night? Well, no, but that's kind of the point of dialogue; it can allow us to navigate differences respectfully and, as Stephen Covey observes, help us to seek first to understand and then to be understood.

Neither of us needed to relinquish our respective lived experiences in our current roles as educators but nor did we let the differences overshadow our quest to have an earnest

dialogue about opportunities and challenges facing the publicly funded education system, and society at large, in which we work and live. I think my elbow partner at dinner would agree that there was far more alignment of thinking than either of us might have initially thought we would encounter with each other. In this case, we had elbows down and ears open. And, for the record, neither of us had the hubris to believe we had solved everything by the end of dinner.

What we did enjoy was a wide-ranging dialogue about education-related matters such as the level of preparation of teacher candidates, the length of initial teacher education programs in Ontario, the struggles of securing the services of occasional teachers to fill vacancies, the lack of resources to support implementation of revised curricula, changing student behavioural patterns, and the frustrating efforts to encourage the government to address the teacher recruitment and retention challenge.

I have come away from my recent interactions with my CPCO counterpart and representatives of various other education stakeholders still fervently sure of one thing: the work collectively before us *will* require us to commit to a win-win approach fostered by more, not less, dialogue and bridge-building. Change happens one conversation—or dialogue—at a time.

# pension

## FACT



### Eligible spouse

Your spouse is your married or common-law partner. A common-law partner must have lived with you in a conjugal relationship for:

- at least three continuous years; or
- a shorter period if you're the parents of a child.

To be eligible for survivor benefits, you and your spouse must not be living separate and apart when your pension starts. If you subsequently separate or divorce, your spouse remains eligible to receive a survivor pension.

Under *Ontario's Pension Benefits Act*, your spouse is automatically entitled to survivor benefits when you die. Your designated beneficiary should be the person or organization you want to receive benefits if you die before retirement and you do not have a surviving spouse when you die.

### Consider naming your children

If you want your children to receive the biggest death benefit possible, name them as your beneficiaries. Although dependent children may be entitled to a survivor pension, there is often a benefit, in addition to the pension, to pay out. This benefit can be substantial if your dependent children are older and will qualify for a pension for only a few years. Children who are not dependants can receive benefits only if named as your designated beneficiary.

### Multiple beneficiaries receive equal benefit

Your death benefit will be divided equally among your designated beneficiaries. For example, if you designate your favorite charity and two children, your death benefit will be split in three.

[Designating a Beneficiary](#), form and fact sheet

### Designating a Beneficiary (Pre-retirement death benefits)

By designating a beneficiary, you help ensure your benefits are paid as you wish should you die before you start your pension. Funds are paid directly to your beneficiary, if age 18 or older, without the delays or probate fees associated with the processing of an estate. Estate taxes are also avoided, although your heirs will pay tax on your death benefit.

Pre-retirement death benefits are paid in the following order to your:

1. Eligible spouse
2. Dependent children
3. Designated beneficiary
4. Estate



**ONTARIO  
TEACHERS'**

PENSION PLAN – RÉGIME DE RETRAITE  
DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS

For more information, connect with  
OTPP by email, phone or fax

Email: [inquiry@otpp.com](mailto: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)

Contact centre hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.,  
Monday to Friday





# Congratulations 2025 OTF Fellows!

In 1964, the Ontario Teachers' Federation celebrated 20 years of Federation. In order to commemorate that event, the Board of Governors established Fellowships in OTF.

Intended to acknowledge service to OTF and to the teaching profession, the new honour was given in its first year to George Drew, the Premier of the Province when the *Teaching Profession Act* was passed in 1944.

The other honourees in that first year were all former Presidents of OTF and founding members of the Board of Governors.

This year, OTF would like to congratulate nine outstanding OTF Fellows who will be honoured and presented with their Fellowship at the President's Banquet, to be held on August 25, 2025 in Markham.



**Marc-Éric Audet**  
AEFO



**Émilie Brochu**  
AEFO



**Jason Johnston**  
ETFO



**Kathy Pigeon**  
ETFO



**Anthony Rocchio**  
OECTA



**Diana Corazza**  
OECTA



**Cathy Renfrew**  
OSSTF



**Chris Goodsir**  
OSSTF



**Scott Perkin**  
Non-member





## OTF Connects ... Connecting teachers to ethical GenAI use

This spring, OTF hosted two amazing webinars on the topic of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI):

[\*AI Literacy and Fluency—Responsible Engagement with Generative AI\*](#) was facilitated on April 8 by Heidi Siwak of I-Think, an education charity developed at the University of Toronto. Through its *I-Think AI Challenge*, I-Think has engaged over 3,000 students and has gained great insights into the AI literacy and fluency that teachers and students need, so that it can promote AI use that is ethical and human-centered. The OTF Connects webinar explored what AI literacy and fluency are and how teachers can develop these skills for themselves and their students.

[\*Enhancing Classroom Practices with Generative AI\*](#) was facilitated by teacher-librarian Deidre Harrington on April 29. This webinar explored how generative AI can be used as a teaching tool to enhance literacy practices and personalized learning. Participants received an overview of GenAI, including ethical considerations, training on prompt engineering, and 12 practical examples of how GenAI can be used wisely and ethically in our classroom practices.

OTF will be offering a similar session *en français* for our francophone members on June 5 at 4:00 p.m. Register [here](#).

If you missed the above webinars, no need to worry, as both have been archived on the [OTF website](#) and are also easily accessible by following the specific links above. Also included with the webinar recordings is access to the slide decks and to other useful resources on GenAI.



## Honouring the stories, achievements and resilience of Indigenous Peoples

In Canada, we celebrate National Indigenous History Month every June and recognize National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21.

The month and day provide teachers and their students with an important opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the rich and unique cultures, traditions and experiences of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. It should also serve as a needed reminder that Canada and Canadians have not made amends for historical wrongs. Over 80 Calls to Action, stemming from the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, remain unfulfilled. Non-Indigenous people must be better and do better to foster more equitable and just relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. And we must confront and address the lingering, generational impacts of Canadian policies—the residential school system, the 60s scoop and the placement of Indigenous children and youth in care—intentionally enacted to vanish Indigenous peoples.

Every day, Ontario teachers live, learn and work on the ancestral lands and traditional territories of First Nations people. In June, let us both celebrate the historic and contemporary contributions of Indigenous people and communities and acknowledge the past and current injustices perpetrated on them.

## Taking the Math Proficiency Test (MPT)? We've got you!

As of February 1, 2025, the Ontario government has reinstated the Math Proficiency Test (MPT) as a certification requirement for all graduates of Ontario ITE programs. Since this ill-conceived test was first proposed, OTF has advocated against it. Our 2019 position paper, [\*A Recipe for Failure: The Math Proficiency Test for Beginning Teachers\*](#), expresses OTF's unequivocal opposition to the test and the reasons why the MPT will do nothing to improve math teaching and learning in Ontario.

In response to the original introduction of the MPT as a certification requirement in 2021, OTF curated a series of webinars, which we grouped under the title of [OTF Math Office Hours](#). These eight English and seven French webinars gave beginning teachers and teacher candidates the opportunity to ask questions about math concepts and procedures and to receive support from a teacher qualified in math, in preparation for the Math Proficiency Test (MPT). The archived webinars can still be accessed for free and include many useful resources for teacher candidates and recent graduates who are preparing to take the MPT.

PRIDE month  
in June,  
kicks off  
many  
celebrations!



Event	Date
<a href="#">Bay of Quinte Pride</a>	TBA
<a href="#">Binbrook Pride</a>	June 1
<a href="#">Brantford Pride</a>	June 14
<a href="#">Brockville Pride</a>	June 2–8
<a href="#">Cambridge/Grand River Pride</a>	June 1–14
<a href="#">Chatham-Kent Pride</a>	August 6–16
<a href="#">Collingwood Pride</a>	July 11–12
<a href="#">Dryden Pride</a>	June 14
<a href="#">Pride Durham</a>	June 7
<a href="#">Greater Napanee Pride</a>	May 31
<a href="#">Grey Bruce Pride</a>	TBA
<a href="#">Guelph Summer Pride</a>	June 5–14
<a href="#">Pride Halton</a>	July 20
<a href="#">Pride Hamilton</a>	August 8–10
<a href="#">Huron County Pride</a>	June 7
<a href="#">Kenora Pride</a>	June 28
<a href="#">Kincardine Pride</a>	June 21
<a href="#">Kingston Pride</a>	June 8–15
<a href="#">Lanark County Wide Pride</a>	June 7
<a href="#">London Pride</a>	July 11–20
<a href="#">Pride Manitoulin</a>	TBA
<a href="#">Manitouwadge Pride</a>	TBA
<a href="#">Minden Pride</a>	August 18–24
<a href="#">Muskoka Pride</a>	July 19–27
<a href="#">Pride Niagara</a>	May 31–June 8

Event	Date
<a href="#">North Durham Pride</a>	
– Scugog Pride	June 21
– Brock Pride	July 12
– Uxbridge Pride	August 9
<a href="#">North York 2-Spirit Pow Wow</a>	June 7
<a href="#">Ottawa Capital Pride</a>	August 23–24
<a href="#">Oxford County Pride</a>	June 14
<a href="#">Pembroke Pride</a>	TBA
<a href="#">Perth County Pride</a>	June 7
<a href="#">Peterborough-Nogojiwanong Pride</a>	TBA
<a href="#">Sarnia-Lambton PrideFest</a>	July 13
<a href="#">Sault Pride</a>	July 19
<a href="#">Simcoe County Pride</a>	August 4–15
<a href="#">Stratford-Perth Pride</a>	June 1
<a href="#">Strathroy Pride in the Park</a>	July 5
<a href="#">Sudbury Pride</a>	July 7–13
<a href="#">Timmins Pride</a>	June 2–9
<a href="#">Thunder Pride</a>	July 5
<a href="#">Toronto Pride</a>	June 26–29
<a href="#">Toronto Trans March</a>	June 27
<a href="#">Toronto Dyke March</a>	June 28
<a href="#">Tri-Pride: Kitchener/Cambridge/Waterloo (Kitchener)</a>	June 7
<a href="#">Windsor-Essex Pride</a>	August 8–10
<a href="#">York Pride (Newmarket)</a>	June 21
<a href="#">York Trans March (Newmarket)</a>	June 21