

# INTERACTION

VOLUME 28, ISSUE 1 | OCTOBER 2025

## A MESSAGE FROM THE OTF PRESIDENT



As another school year begins, on behalf of the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), I want to extend a warm welcome back to you—our members. Each September brings with it renewed energy, new opportunities, and fresh challenges. This year is no different.

The work you do is at the very heart of publicly funded education. Every lesson you teach, every connection you make, and every bit of encouragement you offer contributes to shaping the future of this province. OTF recognizes the tremendous

commitment it takes to walk into your classroom each day ready to meet students where they are, to foster curiosity, and to help them grow into engaged citizens.

At the same time, we know the realities you face every day: growing class sizes, complex student needs, and a shortage of resources. We hear you. OTF remains steadfast in advocating for the supports you need to do your work effectively and sustainably. We channel your voice and experience in every conversation we have with the government, stakeholders, and the public.

Education in Ontario has long been a source of pride. It is built on strong values: equity, inclusion, shared history, and the belief that every child deserves access to high-quality publicly funded

education. Teachers are the guardians of these values. In an era where misinformation and division often dominate public discourse, your role in fostering critical thinking, compassion, and community has never been more important.

OTF also acknowledges the toll that the demands of teaching can take. Balancing professional responsibilities with personal well-being is not easy. As this school year begins, we encourage you to lean on your colleagues, your federations, and your communities for support. Collective strength and solidarity have always been the foundation of our profession. Together, we will continue to stand up for teachers, for students, and for the publicly funded education system that is the foundation of a civil society in Ontario.

As you welcome students into your classrooms, know that your efforts matter profoundly. The learning environments you create are safe harbours where young people can grow, question, and dream. The Ontario Teachers' Federation is proud to represent you and to work alongside you in building a stronger future for publicly funded education in this province.

I wish you a successful, inspiring, and rewarding school year.

In solidarity,

*Chris*

**Chris Cowley, President**



# ONTARIO TEACHERS' PENSION PLAN

## Pension Workshops for Members

Fall 2025

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

[Access more information.](#)

### Preparing to Retire

(for members within five 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 several dates to choose from. Each presentation will be the same, so please choose a date below and click on it to register.

Webinar: Preparing to Retire (1.5 hrs)

#### October

**Tuesday, October 7, 2025 @ 6 p.m.**

**Thursday, October 16, 2025 @ 6 p.m.**

**Tuesday, October 21, 2025 @ 6 p.m.**

**Tuesday, October 28, 2025 @ 5 p.m.**

**Thursday, October 30, 2025 @ 5 p.m.**

#### Séance en français—Vous préparer à la retraite

**Jedi 23 octobre 2025 à 18 h 00**

**Mardi 18 novembre 2025 à 18 h 00**

#### November

**Thursday, November 6, 2025 @ 6 p.m.**

**Thursday, November 13, 2025 @ 6 p.m.**

*You will receive an email from OTPP confirming your registration. One hour before the time you selected, the OTPP will send a reminder email on how to join.*



### Webinar: 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 midcareer 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 three dates to choose from. Each presentation will be the same, so please choose a date below and click on it to register.

Webinar: Being a Member (1.5 hrs)

#### October/November

**Thursday, October 9, 2025 @ 6 p.m.**

**Wednesday, November 5, 2025 @ 6 p.m.**

**Thursday, November 20, 2025 @ 5 p.m.**

*You will receive an email from OTPP confirming your registration. One hour before the time you selected, the OTPP will send a reminder email on how to join.*



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



## A MESSAGE FROM THE OTF SECRETARY-TREASURER

### The gift of curiosity

*"Without strong questioning skills, you are just a passenger on someone else's tour bus. You may be on the highway, but someone else is doing the driving."*  
—Jamie McKenzie

I have a three-hour commute (round trip) every day to our Toronto office, part of which is on the subway. The other day, I witnessed a young boy, kneeling on his seat, marvelling at the sights flashing by outside as the subway travelled through tunnels and stations; his mother was seated by his side looking into the subway car. At one point, the boy exclaimed "Mommy, you have to see this, too." Dutifully, she turned and they shared a few moments of wonder and curiosity. This brief subway vignette reminded me about the power of curiosity in our lives and, more specifically, in our profession.

In our places of work, worship and play, curiosity—often signalled by the questions we pose ourselves and others—offers us, our colleagues and our students, ways to develop a greater comfort with ambiguity and nuanced approach to issues...and people. Questions can help us interrogate our unexamined and sometimes deeply held assumptions and beliefs. They can combat our instinctual reactions or default responses to ideas, people and events. Asking questions can signal to ourselves and others an openness to exploring new ideas and considering different viewpoints. Curiosity can illuminate fresh avenues for thinking and new ways of doing,

unleashing our creative juices. Questions can enable us to hover longer, to consider more options and alternatives, preventing us from prematurely landing on strategies or quickly jumping to conclusions and solutions.

Of course, these are only a few of the benefits of adopting an intentional spirit of inquisitiveness. If we suppress our curiosity—a trait we consistently see reflected in young animals and people as their consciousness of the world expands—we withhold the gift of surprise and wonder. So, I'm entering this new academic year with a stance of deliberate curiosity. It's a gift I'm trying to share both with myself...and others.

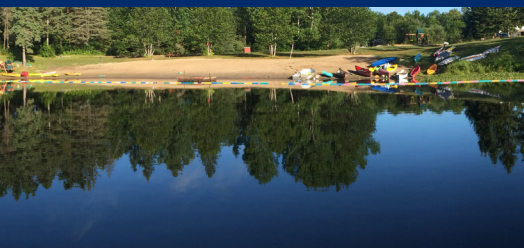
At the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), we're always asking ourselves: how can we better serve you—our colleagues and members? So, as I close off this fall message for you, let me leave you with this question: what questions are you asking (or might you ask) yourself, your colleagues and your students? And, yes, of course, I'd be curious to learn what those questions are.

[ian.pettigrew@otffeo.on.ca](mailto:ian.pettigrew@otffeo.on.ca)

Yours in education,

**Ian S. Pettigrew, Secretary-Treasurer**

## FORMER OTF CAMPGROUND PROPERTY SALE NEARS COMPLETION



For over 60 years, the former Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) Campground at Quinn Lake served a community of campers. OTF is in the final stages of the sale of the former OTF Campground property which is scheduled to close on October 9, 2025.

This sale was initiated following a motion by the OTF Executive on January 16, 2025, to permanently close the campground and list the property for sale. This strategic decision allows OTF to sharpen its focus on its core, legislated mandates, which in part

include protecting and promoting publicly funded education and advocating for the teaching profession. Throughout the winter, spring and summer, OTF staff worked with all members who had storage agreements to facilitate the retrieval of their personal items, including trailers, boats, and equipment.

OTF extends its sincere thanks to the community of campers for their cooperation and understanding during this period of transition. OTF looks forward to continuing its vital work on behalf of all OTF members.



## OTF MEMBER PROFILE: YVES LAFRENIÈRE

**OTF Affiliate:** Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)

**Grade(s) and subject(s) taught:** I teach Grade 9 science, biology 11U and 12U, a Grade 11 environmental science class, and I'm also a cultural facilitator as well as a mentor for the student council.

**School:** École secondaire catholique Franco-Cité, Sturgeon Falls, ON

**School Board:** Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord



**Years of teaching:** I started in September 1998, and this year is my 27th year.

**What motivated or inspired you to choose teaching as a career?** I am a lifelong learner, I love learning new things, and I want to share my passion for learning with young people and guide them.

**What part(s) of being a teacher give(s) you the most joy or are most rewarding?** I like to share my passion with students through innovative projects such as linking the garden with the kitchen. For example, this week in biology, we're harvesting our tomatoes to make bruschetta! I'm very involved in the culinary arts with my after-school club, and when I see my students excel and win medals, I'm very proud of them.

**What part(s) of the job do you find the hardest?** Dividing time between family and work is always a challenge.

**What has surprised you the most about being a teacher?** There isn't much that surprises me in my career anymore...

**What's the biggest myth or misconception people have about teaching?** I believe that a career as a teacher requires a passion for working with young people and a passion for the subject matter and projects. It is sometimes difficult to communicate to the public how committed a teacher becomes to the youth during the school year.

**What tip could you provide for a new teacher?** First of all, at the beginning of your career you have to master the subject matter, discipline and the workings of a school. Once you're comfortable with your class, it's time to figure out where to focus your passion! A teacher committed to youth shines and attracts success! Whether it's through sport, a club or whatever, passion is a must!"



# pension FACT



## WHAT'S A "BUYBACK"?

If you take time off to have a family, study or travel, you may be eligible to buy credit for the time you're away from work. Many members of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) already understand the value of buying back time for their leaves of absence.

### Impact to your pension

Paying for your time off makes a difference. For example, buying back a \$10,600 maternity or parental leave could increase your pension by about \$2,000 each year. Most of our retired members collect a pension for around 30 years. Paying for that time off today could mean you'll get as much as \$60,000 more throughout your retirement.

### Why not just work an extra year?

Working an extra year to make up for your time off may be the last thing you want to do by the time you approach your 85 factor. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Consider paying for all your time off to maintain your retirement goal.
- Paying for your leave or reduced workload will increase your service credit. The more service credit you have, the bigger your pension.

You can pay for a leave or reduced workload up to five years from when it ended, but no later than the month before your pension starts. If retirement is around the corner for you, it's a good idea to begin paying early to avoid delays in processing your pension application.

Your pension is about as close to a guaranteed investment as you can get. When you retire, your monthly pension payments will be determined by a formula, not the ups and downs of the market.



**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)

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## 50TH ANNIVERSARY— FRANCO-ONTARIAN FLAG

**OTF President Chris Cowley joins  
AEFO President Gabrielle Lemieux and many  
others on Franco-Ontarian Day as they attend a  
raising of the flag ceremony in Sudbury,  
celebrating the 50th anniversary of the  
Franco-Ontarian flag.**



# UPDATE ON BILL 124

## RETROACTIVE SALARY ADJUSTMENTS

Over the past year, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) has been working diligently to implement retroactive salary adjustments related to Bill 124. This complex process has impacted over 160,000 active members and 22,000 pensioners, representing more than five times the usual annual workload.

OTPP is pleased to report that retroactive pension recalculations have been completed for eligible retirees from the 2019–2020, 2020–2021, and 2021–2022 school years. Retirees from later years may need to wait a little longer as OTPP continues processing adjustments tied to Bill 124 and collective agreements.

### What you need to know

- Still working? No action is required. Your service record will be updated once the necessary information is received and processed.
- Planning to retire or already applied? You can apply for your pension as usual. If applicable, your pension will be adjusted once the required data is processed.

- Retroactive payments: Once your status is marked “complete,” on your online account, it may take up to two months to receive your retroactive payment. You’ll be notified when your pension amount changes.

### Behind the scenes

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) has kept lines of communications open with the OTPP throughout the process, ever since Bill 124 was declared unconstitutional in late 2022, with the intent of ensuring that:

- The Ontario government released funds to employers, namely school boards.
- That employers calculated and reported salary adjustments to our members.
- That OTPP recalculated taxes and pension benefits.

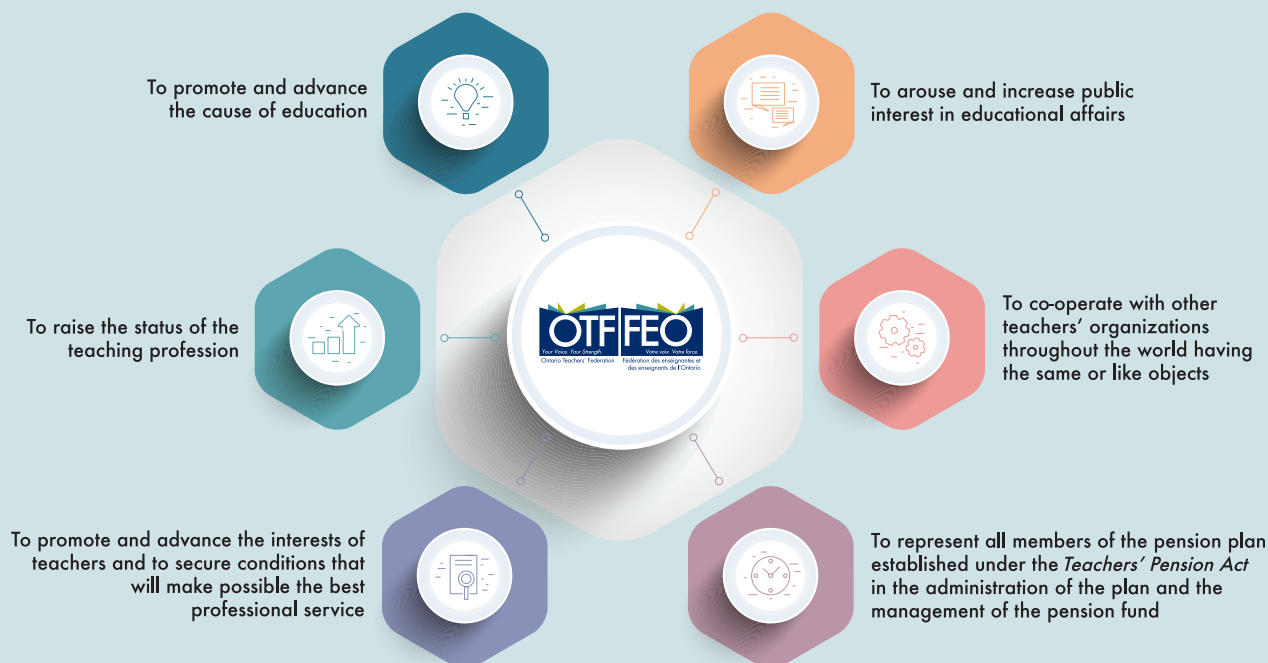
### Communications

OTPP has published a [FAQ](#) and will continue to release news updates on its progress related to processing the salary adjustments.

OTF will continue to support its members and amplify OTPP communications.

## UNDER THE **TEACHING PROFESSION ACT**, THE ONTARIO TEACHERS' FEDERATION HAS SIX LEGISLATED OBJECTS.

### OTF/FEO LEGISLATED OBJECTS







## NEW PROGRAM HELPS ONTARIO YOUTH DEALING WITH ADDICTION— THE FIRST OF ITS KIND

The Youth-VAST (Vaping, Alcohol, Substance Use, and Technology) Dependence Program is Canada's first personalized youth addiction program that provides team-based care to address many types of addiction.

The program offers free and confidential treatment to youth aged 12 to 21 living in Ontario to help them develop healthy coping strategies, access specialized treatment, and build resilience in managing their addiction, either in-person or virtually. No referral necessary.

Have you noticed a **student** who is...

1. Spending excessive time on an activity?
2. Showing signs of stress or frustration when unable to do it?
3. Experiencing conflicts or difficulties in peer or family relationships because of it?
4. Allowing it to interfere with academic performance, attendance, or sleep?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you might consider recommending Youth-VAST.

Youth in the program will meet with a Care Coach who will listen and help them build a way forward to change behaviours. They will get personalized treatment to manage cravings and triggers and if needed, they will meet with a physician for medication.

Visit [WeHearYou.ca](https://www.vehearyou.ca) to learn more and to get a youth started.

A week-long civic  
learning experience in  
Ottawa for youth  
aged 15–18



**FORUM  
FOR YOUNG  
CANADIANS**

[forum.ca](https://forum.ca)



## ELECTIONS ONTARIO PROVIDES FREE TEACHER GUIDES FOR GRADE 5 SOCIAL STUDIES AND GRADE 10 CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP CLASSES



**Make learning about  
Ontario's provincial  
elections easy.**

Discover our curriculum resources at:  
[elections.on.ca/learning](https://elections.on.ca/learning)

These booklets contain seven curriculum-guided lesson plans focusing on key themes like voting, democracy, and civic engagement. These resources include curriculum links and learning goals, student worksheets, and engaging and interactive classroom activities.

You can view and order these curriculum resource guides—and other Elections Ontario brochures and posters—on our [website](https://elections.on.ca).



## THREE OUTSTANDING RECIPIENTS HONoured

The Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) and the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) are proud to announce the recipients of the OTIP Teaching Awards for 2025. These awards recognize and celebrate teachers who make a difference—teachers who light a spark in students, inspire their colleagues and give parents confidence. Our winners are celebrated at a ceremony where they are presented with a personal award of \$1,000 and a Certificate of Recognition.

**The recipients of this year's awards are:**



**Tara Halberstadt**  
Beginning Teacher

F.H. Miller Junior Public School,  
Toronto District School Board,  
Toronto

[Read more](#)

*"Each of our winners exemplifies the very best in education—bringing commitment, creativity, and passion to their roles, whether in the classroom or supporting the wider school community," said Vic Medland, CEO of OTIP. "Their dedication not only enriches school life, but also empowers students to realize their full potential. We are honoured to celebrate their impact."*

*"Teachers create the learning conditions so that every student can thrive and achieve their potential," said OTF President Chris Cowley. "This year's award recipients exemplify the dedicated, committed and talented individuals who stand in front of our classrooms every day. On behalf of OTF, congratulations on this achievement."*

More information on the OTIP winners can be found at [teachingawards.ca](https://teachingawards.ca).



**Dave Brown**  
Secondary Teacher

Uxbridge Secondary School,  
Durham District School Board,  
Uxbridge

[Read more](#)



**Andy Speers**  
Elementary Teacher

Elora Public School,  
Upper Grand District School Board,  
Elora

[Read more](#)



### CHECK OUT THE OTF PD CALENDAR!

Here you'll find learning opportunities to enhance your professional knowledge and practice.

## OTF SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD



*L to R: Mike Foulds, 2024–2025 OTF President; Jason Dockeray, Director of Services, The Lighthouse For Grieving Children and Families, 2025 winner; and Ian S. Pettigrew, OTF Secretary-Treasurer*

The OTF Special Recognition Award, established in 2020, is presented annually to an organization, group or individual in acknowledgement of outstanding contributions to publicly funded education in Ontario, beyond the school board level.

The 2025 recipient of the award is The Lighthouse For Grieving Children and Families.

**The Lighthouse For Grieving Children and Families** (Lighthouse) was founded in 1999 by Jo Fallon and Marg Humphrey in response to the need for dedicated grief support for children and families. Recognizing the profound impact of loss on young individuals, they established a safe space where children could process their grief alongside peers who understood their experiences.

Beyond its direct services to children, youth, and families, Lighthouse reaches many other children and families through its online grief education resources, which educators across Ontario access to better support students. By providing direct support, resources, and in-person and virtual training sessions to school staff across Ontario at no cost, educators gain practical strategies for supporting grieving students and fostering a compassionate classroom culture. When students receive the support they need, they feel more welcome and are more likely to stay engaged in school, contributing to overall student well-being, retention and academic success.

Lighthouse's commitment to ensuring that schools are equipped to support grieving students and families, is an added value that enhances publicly funded education. Its work empowers educators to create safe spaces where students feel seen and supported while also ensuring they have access to grief support outside of school. As Ontario's schools continue to become more diverse, Lighthouse is prioritizing multicultural outreach to better understand and address grief across different cultural backgrounds.







National Healthy Schools Week is an annual event in October to prioritize, plan, and engage your school community in Healthy School conversations at the start of the school year. This week is meant to be tailored to your unique school community, giving you the opportunity to identify opportunities most relevant in your context.

Engage students, staff, and community members in conversation, experiential learning, and action planning to support the well-being of your school community throughout the entire year.

Coming soon! Toolkits for National Healthy Schools Week (NHSW) 2025 will be available shortly.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
[healthyschoolsalliance.ca/nhsw](https://healthyschoolsalliance.ca/nhsw)

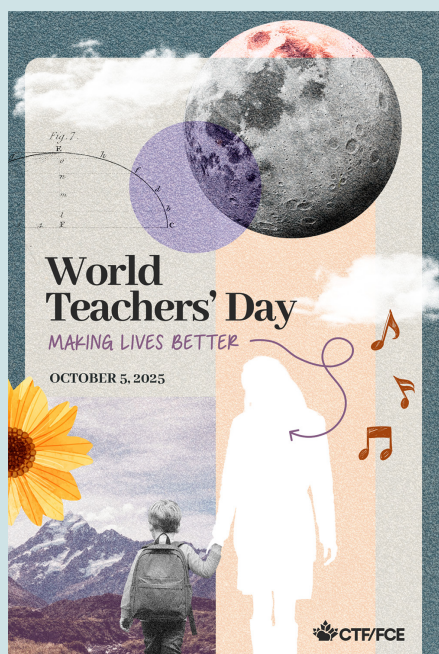


## OUR ICI ON PARLE FRANÇAIS PD GRANT PROGRAM IS BACK THIS YEAR!

Once again, participants can partner with other French as a Second Language (FSL) teachers in a collaborative learning team of two to four teachers or apply for an individual grant. 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.

PD grants can be used in a variety of ways. [Find out more about the Ici on parle français 2025–26 grant program.](#)

**Apply for a grant by 5:00 p.m., Thursday, October 16, 2025.**  
*Successful applicants will be notified by mid-November 2025.*



## "MAKING LIVES BETTER" WORLD TEACHERS' DAY 2025

Annually on the 5th of October, we recognize World Teachers' Day. However, at OTF we believe teachers should be celebrated every day for their commitment to a profession that, although rewarding, is simultaneously very challenging.

Teachers play a pivotal role in helping to shape a successful future for their students including being responsible participants in a democratic society.

We are proud of our members for their dedication and daily contributions to publicly funded education in Ontario.

**Happy World Teachers' Day!**

# welcoming

## GERMAN DELEGATION



*L to R: OTF President, Chris Cowley welcomes the Minister of Education for the German State of Rhineland-Palatinate, Sven Teuber*



OTF President Chris Cowley, Secretary-Treasurer Ian S. Pettigrew and senior staff were pleased to welcome a visiting delegation from Germany in mid-September, including the Minister of Education for the German

State of Rhineland-Palatinate, Sven Teuber, as well as several representatives from the Bertelsmann Foundation, the University of Heidelberg and the German Centre for Education and Opportunities.