

INTERACTION

VOLUME 29, ISSUE 1 | OCTOBER 2026

A MESSAGE FROM THE OTF PRESIDENT



Setting the table for publicly funded education

It is a privilege to write my first column as OTF President. I begin with confidence in what Ontario's teachers can accomplish together.

Of late, the news is awash with talk of collective bargaining and that arena is the exclusive purview of OTF's four Affiliates; it does not reside within OTF's legislated mandate. That distinction matters. OTF's role is to help set the table: advocating for research-based and experience-informed policies, coordinating joint work where appropriate and useful, and amplifying the voice of the profession and its members adding a provincial lens. OTF, as the umbrella Federation, is strongest not when four Affiliates become the same, but when four distinct voices of the Affiliates find a common note.

That note includes a call for reinvestment in publicly funded education. Ontario's publicly funded education system is being starved. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives calculates that, since 2018–2019, funding has fallen \$6.5 billion behind inflation and enrolment growth.

Public education is not a tap. The government cannot trickle funding to the system for years, and expect magical results to appear. It takes time to fill the tub: to recruit and retain teachers, rebuild supports, restore programs, and create the conditions where students thrive. Yet it can be drained quickly. An educated society is the warm water in which we all live; when the system is starved, that water cools.

Privatization rarely arrives carrying a sign. It may appear as a platform or procurement choice. The new \$750 classroom supplies program is a prime example. A restricted, Staples-operated portal, where our members have identified higher prices, cannot replace adequate, predictable systemic funding. It is a procurement announcement, not a system plan. UNESCO warns that poorly regulated private education can widen the divide between rich and poor. A strong publicly funded education system does the opposite; it closes gaps and raises us all up. Excellent education cannot be reserved for those who can afford it; it must be accessible to all.

The long view is required in teacher education. Moving to a 12-month program may reduce barriers, but quality preparation and meaningful practicum experience must remain central fixtures of the program. The provision for transitional certificates, which licenses candidates before completing their professional preparation, should end.

OTF will continue to support its members, and defend publicly funded education, something we have done since 1944.

Yours in education,

Nathan

Nathan Core, President





A MESSAGE FROM THE OTF SECRETARY-TREASURER

Acknowledging the leavers and the joiners

“When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which opened for us.”

—Alexander Graham Bell

This summer, my family and I had the pleasure of travelling to our eldest son’s destination wedding. What, you may already be (fairly) asking, does that have to do with OTF’s work? Well, allow me to connect those two dots.

The wedding experience was an illustrative reminder that we should strive to surround ourselves with those people who are cheerleaders for our grandest goals and aspirations and are eager to help us realize our dreams, big or small. That is not to say that we should muster a chorus of “yes, people”; that’s a recipe for “group think.” Rather, it does mean acting with intention to assemble a “coalition of the willing,” those who are committed to fulfilling OTF’s legislated mandate and objects.

In the last year, we bid adieu to three long-serving crew members (Michelle, Patricia and, most recently, Lindy), all of whom left OTF to join the ranks of the retired. Together, these three served OTF and its members for just over 97 years. Let me pause there. Yes, you read right ... nearly a century of combined service! That’s the stuff of legends.

As Paulo Coelho, Brazilian lyricist and novelist, once observed: “If you’re brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello.” We gratefully acknowledge the dedicated service of our “leavers,” all of whom began their careers decades before my arrival at OTF. At the same time, we warmly welcome aboard our “joiners”: Alexis, Shaba and Wai-Kin.

We continue to assemble a crew committed to advancing the work of the Federation. Our newest staff members aren’t just knowledgeable and skilled; they are already reinforcing a work culture that allows us individually and collectively to perform our best work.

So, the newest iteration of our staff team has oars in the water, readying and steadying ourselves for the seas ahead, whether calm or stormy.

As each of you prepares for your next voyage—whether that means you are leaving or joining the profession—may the wind be always at your back.

Yours in education,

Ian S. Pettigrew, *Secretary-Treasurer*

Honouring Steven McGirr

At the 2026 Annual Meeting of the OTF Board of Governors, Steven McGirr was honoured with a plaque in recognition of his 12 years of exemplary leadership to the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan Board (OTPPB) in his capacity as Director and most recently Chair of the OTPPB.



L to R: Ian S. Pettigrew—OTF Secretary-Treasurer; Steven McGirr—Chair, Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan Board; and Chris Cowley—OTF President 2025–2026

ONTARIO TEACHERS' PENSION PLAN

Pension Workshops for Members

Fall 2026

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

Preparing to Retire

(for members within five years of retirement)

You've spent your career building one of your most valuable retirement benefits. As retirement approaches, join us to learn how your pension can help support the future you've worked hard to achieve.

Our interactive and informative webinar will provide you with everything you need to prepare for retirement with confidence. You'll learn what to expect when applying for your pension, key decisions to consider, and the tools and resources available to support you every step of the way.

Each webinar will be the same. Please choose a date and click to register. Spaces are on a first-come, first-served basis; there isn't a waitlist. Sign up today to reserve your spot.

Preparing to Retire (90 mins + Q&A)

October

Thursday, October 15, 2026 @ 6 p.m.

Tuesday, October 20, 2026 @ 5 p.m.

Tuesday, October 27, 2026 @ 5 p.m.

Thursday, October 29, 2026 @ 6 p.m.

November

Tuesday, November 10, 2026 @ 5 p.m.

Thursday, November 12, 2026 @ 6 p.m.

Séances en français

Jeudi 22 octobre 2026 à 18 h 00

Mardi 17 novembre 2026 à 17 h 00



Being A Member—Your Life as a Teacher

(for early to mid-career members)

Learn how you're building retirement income you can count on for life.

Designed for early to mid-career members, this engaging webinar will help you better understand how your defined benefit pension works and the important role it can play in your future financial security.

You'll also explore how key life events and decisions, such as survivor benefits, spousal breakdown, leaving teaching and preparing for retirement, can affect your future income and the choices you make throughout your career.

Whether retirement is years away or already on your radar, you'll leave with a stronger understanding of how you're building a secure, predictable income for life.

Webinar: Being a Member (90 mins + Q&A)

October

Thursday, October 8, 2026 @ 6 p.m.

November

Tuesday, November 3, 2026 @ 5 p.m.

Thursday, November 19, 2026 @ 6 p.m.

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

New micro-webinars ... see page 4

The *Ici on parle français* PD Grants for FSL educators returns for 2026–2027!

Looking for an opportunity to explore new ideas, deepen your professional learning, and connect with fellow French as a Second Language (FSL) educators?

The [Ici on parle français PD Grants for FSL educators](#) is back for another year!

Whether you have a professional learning goal you'd like to pursue independently, or you're interested in collaborating with colleagues, this program provides funding to support meaningful professional growth and innovative learning experiences.

You may apply as:

- Individuals for grants of up to \$250, or
- Collaborative learning teams of two to four educators for grants of up to \$500 per team member (to a maximum of \$2,000 per team).

PD grants can be used in a variety of ways, including exploring innovative teaching practices, engaging in professional inquiry, attending learning opportunities, and collaborating with colleagues to enhance FSL education.



Don't miss this opportunity to invest in your professional learning and bring new ideas back to your classroom and school community.

Learn more about the [Ici on parle français PD Grants for FSL educators](#) and application process.

- **Application deadline:**
Friday, October 16, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.
- **Notification of successful applicants:**
mid-November 2026.

Apply today and let OTF support your professional learning journey!

The [Ici on parle français PD Grants for FSL educators](#) opportunity is only offered to those working in English-language school boards.

Pension micro-webinars

ONTARIO TEACHERS' PENSION PLAN

Micro-webinar: Your Pension Explained

(for early to mid-career members)

Get to know one of the most valuable benefits you're building. Consider this your Pension 101. Designed for early to mid-career members, this engaging webinar will help you understand how your defined benefit pension works, what makes it valuable, how your contributions and pension are calculated, and ways to maximize your pension benefit throughout your career.

Your Pension Explained (30 mins.)

October

Wednesday, October 14, 2026 @ 5 p.m.

November

Wednesday, November 11, 2026 @ 6 p.m.

Micro-webinar: Taking Time Off Work

(for early to mid-career members)

Whether you're taking a leave now or planning for the future, understanding your buyback options can help you make informed decisions about your retirement income. Learn how time away from work may affect your pension, which leaves may be eligible for a buyback and how buying back eligible time can help strengthen your future retirement income.

Taking Time Off Work (30 mins.)

October

Wednesday, October 21, 2026 @ 6 p.m.

November

Wednesday, November 4, 2026 @ 5 p.m.

OTF MEMBER PROFILE: DELPHIN TEMBWE LOFUNGE

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

Grade(s) taught: I am a special education teacher working with all levels from kindergarten to grade 6.

School: Académie de la Tamise, London

School Board: Conseil scolaire Viamonde



Years of teaching: 15 years

What motivated or inspired you to choose teaching as a career? The positive impact my own teachers had on my journey inspired and motivated me to embrace this career. For me, teaching is much more than a profession: it is a calling.

What part(s) of being a teacher give(s) you the most joy or are most rewarding? What motivates me the most in this profession is to see my students progress and succeed in their learning. There is no greater satisfaction than to see the results of our efforts and the positive impact our work has on their success.

What part(s) of the job do you find the hardest? The greatest challenge in this profession is often the lack of resources—both human and material. These resources are essential to provide adequate support for students, meet their diverse needs and promote their academic success.

What has surprised you the most about being a teacher? At university, I gained a lot of theoretical knowledge that was very useful to me in my profession. However, I have found that the teaching profession is much more complex and demanding than what most people imagine.

What's the biggest myth or misconception people have about teaching? We often hear that teachers have “too much vacation time.” However, this perception does not reflect the reality of the profession. Time that is not devoted to direct instruction is filled with numerous essential responsibilities, including lesson planning, grading, resource management, administrative tasks, professional development, and various other obligations related to student success.

What tip could you provide for a new teacher? It is important to be patient with yourself, students and colleagues because developing one's skills takes time. Some skills and practices are really only acquired with experience and perseverance.

PENSION attention!



Recently, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) shared key findings from its 2025 Member Sentiment Survey, which gathered approximately 4,300 responses from both active and retired members. The survey is used to better understand member experiences, priorities, and expectations, helping guide improvements in service and communication. At the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), we take great care in maintaining open communication with OTPP to also share members' concerns and questions that we regularly receive through in person meetings, online comments through our socials, as well as calls and emails sent by members and fielded by staff.

What both OTF and OTPP notice is that active and retired members consistently identify long-term retirement security as the highest priority, reinforcing the importance of maintaining a secure, fully funded pension plan for current and future retirees. In the OTPP survey results, investment performance of the plan ranked second, followed by member education and informed decision-making. The survey also suggests that some members are interested in how broader environmental, social and governance considerations are reflected in investment management. This echoes the anecdotal evidence gathered here at OTF and it reinforces the idea that our members' priorities align closely with the pension plan's mission of delivering reliable retirement income.

Along with that mission, it is also clear that there is a need for greater pension education, particularly among members who do not engage with the plan through either online means or member services. Less-engaged members are likely to have a weaker understanding of their pension benefits. In response, OTPP has expanded digital communications aimed at early to mid-career OTF members helping them recognize the value of their defined-benefit pension earlier in their professional lives. The goal is to

provide education and guidance that supports informed financial and retirement planning decisions. It also helps OTF and its Affiliates (AEFO, ETFO, OECTA and OSSTF/FEESO) in planning and delivering pension preparedness presentations to the teachers of the province. Members who engage with OTPP and their federations undoubtedly become more knowledgeable about their retirement benefits.



**ONTARIO
TEACHERS'**

PENSION PLAN – RÉGIME DE RETRAIT
DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANT

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

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)

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

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 2026. 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.



Éric Duguay
Beginning Teacher

**École secondaire catholique
Béatrice-Desloges**
Conseil des écoles catholiques
du Centre-Est
Orléans

[Read more](#)



Sharon Lee
Secondary Teacher

Downsview Secondary School
Toronto District School Board
Toronto

[Read more](#)



Meghan Button
Elementary Teacher

**Guardian Angels Catholic
Elementary School**
Ottawa Catholic School Board
Stittsville

[Read more](#)

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“Educators have a lasting impact on the lives of their students and the communities they serve,” said Vic Medland, CEO of OTIP. “They help students feel supported, encouraged, and confident in who they are and what they can achieve. At OTIP, we’re proud to recognize the educators whose care, leadership, and dedication help students thrive and strengthen school communities across Ontario.”

Teachers have a unique opportunity to shape a child’s educational journey during some of their most important years. Through encouragement, patience, and innovation, they help students build confidence and skills that stay with them for life,” said OTF President Nathan Core. “On behalf of OTF, congratulations to these much deserving award recipients.”

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More information on the the 2026 winners can be found at teachingawards.ca.

Watch for the 2027 OTIP Teaching Awards.
Nominations will open January 20, 2027
and close on March 31, 2027.

Visit teachingawards.ca.



OTF's Special Recognition Award 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. This year's award goes to the Coopérative Enseignants Pas à Pas (CEPAP).

CEPAP was founded in 2008 by dedicated educators to respond to significant barriers that French-speaking teachers with immigrant backgrounds face when trying to enter the Canadian education system—despite possessing the expertise, passion, and commitment to contribute to public education.

CEPAP supports newly arrived French-speaking teachers in their professional integration journey using an approach based on guidance, mentorship, professional development, and the creation of collaborative networks among members of the teaching profession. Serving as a bridge between competencies acquired abroad and the realities of Ontario's education system, CEPAP makes a concrete contribution to strengthening the public education system's capacity to welcome and integrate these qualified professionals into French-language schools.

CEPAP pursues the important goal of promoting diversity within school communities. And by recognizing the richness of the professional and cultural backgrounds of educators from diverse origins, it helps build inclusive, welcoming learning environments that reflect the diversity of Ontario's Francophone communities.

At a time when Francophone schools in minority-language settings face significant challenges related to teacher shortages and community vitality, CEPAP plays an essential role by:

- transforming the potential of French-speaking teachers from immigrant backgrounds into a tangible asset for public schools;
- helping to strengthen the capacity of the Francophone education system to meet the needs of students and communities; and
- embodying an inspiring model of inclusion, collaboration, and innovation in service of public education.

OTF is pleased to honour CEPAP for transforming individual journeys into a collective force in service of French-language public education with the Special Recognition Award.



L to R: Chris Cowley—OTF President 2025–2026; Nathalie Drolet—AEFO; Levit Koloko—CEPAP President; and Ian S. Pettigrew—OTF Secretary-Treasurer

A promotional graphic for a civic learning experience. The top half has a green background with white text: "A week-long civic learning experience in Ottawa for youth 15-18". Below this is a photo of two smiling young women wearing lanyards. The bottom half has a purple background. On the left is a white shield logo with a crown on top and the number "50" inside. To the right of the shield is the text "FORUM FOR YOUNG CANADIANS" in white. Further right is the logo for the "Fondation Rideau Hall Foundation" (RHF FRH) and the website "forum.ca".

OTF IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE ITS LATEST PUBLICATIONS

Creating Safe and Supportive Classrooms:

A Primer for Elementary Teachers

This primer provides teachers with hands-on tools to de-escalate aggression and help preempt violence before it surfaces in our classrooms.

Explored in this resource are:

- definitions of violence and aggression
- violence as a symptom in society
- principles underlying our approach to violence prevention and de-escalation
- tools for prevention and de-escalation
- de-escalation: the language to say it
- trauma informed consequences
- resources for staff who have experienced violence
- safe and affirming school cultures
- partnering with parents and caregivers
- case studies

[Download the primer](#)

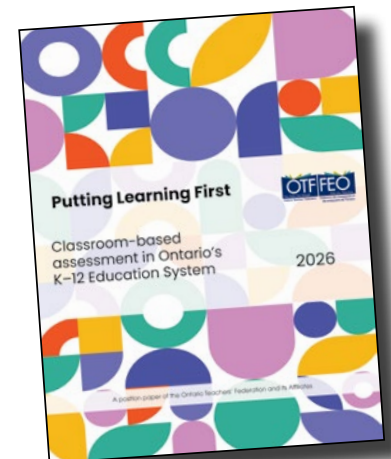


Putting Learning First—Classroom-based assessment in Ontario's K–12 Education System

A position paper of the Ontario Teachers' Federation and its Affiliates.

This paper re-asserts the positions on assessment and evaluation with recommendations on how Ontario must center and value classroom-based assessment to realize comprehensive system improvement as classroom-based assessment remains the most valid and comprehensive source of evidence for student learning.

[Download the position paper](#)

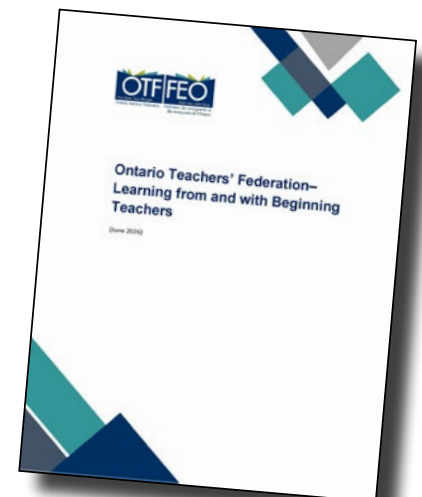


Learning from and with Beginning Teachers

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and its Affiliates are deeply committed to enhancing the preparation, recruitment, retention, mentorship and professional growth of beginning teachers. With this in mind, we engaged beginning teachers in an appreciative inquiry process via a series of focus groups from February to June 2026.

The goal of each *Learning from and with Beginning Teachers* focus group is to directly inform the continuum of professional learning and supports provided by faculties of education, school boards and teacher federations.

[Download the report](#)



DELEGATION FROM GHANA

OTF President Nathan Core, Secretary-Treasurer Ian S. Pettigrew and senior staff were pleased to welcome a visiting delegation from Ghana in September. Visiting representatives from the National Teaching Council (NTC) included Christian Addai-Poku—Registrar/CEO; Lawrence Sarpong—Director of Higher Education and Samuel Nuamah Boakye—Head of IT.

Discussions were held covering the likenesses and differences between Ontario and Ghana regarding teacher registration, certification, licensing, and professional standards; accreditation

and quality assurance of teacher education and professional development programs; continuing professional development and professional growth; teacher professionalism, ethics, accountability, and regulation; social dialogue between teacher organizations and employers; teacher motivation and reward systems; the relationship between OTF and the Ontario College of Teachers; and the respective roles of the Ministry of Education, OCT, school boards, teacher federations, and other stakeholders.



L to R: Nathan Core—OTF President; Ronda Allan—OTF Manager, Communications; Lawrence Sarpong—NTC Director of Higher Education; Moses Velasco—OTF Director, Curriculum & Assessment; Ian S. Pettigrew—OTF Secretary-Treasurer; Christian Addai-Poku—NTC Registrar/CEO; Samuel Nuamah Boakye—NTC Head of IT and Wai-Kin Chan—OTF Director, Professional Affairs