

APRIL 2017

@OECTA

ONTARIO ENGLISH
Catholic
Teachers
ASSOCIATION

AGM 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

MOVING THE ASSOCIATION FORWARD



**WE'RE ALL IN
THIS TOGETHER**

**NAOMI KLEIN TALKS ABOUT THE
CLIMATE CRISIS**

**GOVERNMENT IN THE
TIME OF TRUMP**
THE CRISIS OF CONSTITUTIONS

PLUS:

Addressing students' violent behaviour
Integrating Catholicity into your secondary teaching
Continuing the fight for women's rights
OTPP's infrastructure investments

AQ COURSES

MENU









• Spring 2017 •









COURSES START April 3, 2017
 COURSES END June 16, 2017

• Summer 2017 •

REGISTRATION OPENS April 6, 2017
 REGISTRATION CLOSES June 2, 2017
 COURSES START July 4, 2017
 COURSES END July 28, 2017

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-  Guidance Specialist
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-  Kindergarten
-  Librarianship

-  Mathematics (also available as modules for Part I)
-  Reading (also available as modules for Part I)
-  Religious Education (also available as modules for Part II)
-  Special Education
-  Teaching Students with Communication Needs Autism (also available as modules)
-  Student Assessment and Evaluation (also available as modules)
-  Teaching Combined Grades (also available as modules)
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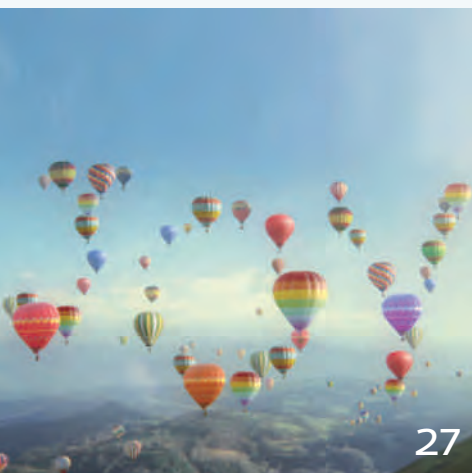
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ONTARIO ENGLISH
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I hope that most of you were able to enjoy a rejuvenating March Break and a blessed Easter. The beginning of 2017 has been a busy time in your classrooms and an incredibly active few months for your Association.

In late January, we reached an agreement with the Government of Ontario and the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association to extend our 2014-17 collective agreement until August 31, 2019. I believe the agreement is in the best interests of Catholic teachers and our students, and I am pleased that members gave it such strong support, with 87 per cent voting in favour of ratification. I want to thank our Provincial Bargaining Team, who put in many hours in a short period to bring the deal to fruition, as well as our Provincial Office staff, who worked tirelessly to ensure that members were able to participate in our

democratic process and cast ballots in the province-wide ratification vote.

I know the extension agreement came at an awkward time for members in the Niagara and Thunder Bay elementary and occasional units, who have struggled to reach local terms for the 2014-17 agreement. The Association has worked hard to move these negotiations along, but the management lawyer representing these particular boards has been a huge impediment, and the reality of local bargaining is that there is only so much the government, the provincial trustees' association, or the OECTA Provincial Office can do to encourage a resolution. In Thunder Bay, elementary teachers were able to conclude terms only after taking strike action and enduring a brief lockout. In Niagara, the school board locked out elementary teachers while negotiations were ongoing, after refusing the teachers' offer to send the remaining issues to voluntary binding arbitration. A tentative agreement was reached, but not before teachers and students missed a week of classroom time.

The solidarity that Catholic teachers have shown throughout these ordeals has been inspiring. Your presence on picket lines and on social media have helped to educate the public and buoy the spirits of the teachers who have been forced out of their classrooms. We will continue to support one another as the Association does everything it can to help occasional teachers in Niagara and Thunder Bay reach fair agreements as soon as possible.

It is always impressive to see hundreds of delegates from across the province come together to represent their fellow members at our Annual General Meeting. This year's event was remarkably positive and productive, with constructive debate and a large number of resolutions dealt with. As you know from my messages over the past few months, the key issue this year was our member fee. I am glad that delegates heeded the message and took bold action to secure the Association's fiscal foundation.

Delegates at the AGM were also among the first to preview the results of a year-long exercise to examine our public image and renew the way we talk about who we are, what we do, and why it matters. The rest of the membership was given an opportunity to hear about the plan in our first-ever Facebook Live stream and Telephone Town Hall event. The goal of the new initiative is to highlight the values being taught and demonstrated every day by Catholic teachers, students, and graduates. By now, you should have received a copy of the *Life is the Test* guidebook, which is meant to get you thinking about the kinds of stories you want to share, and give you some information on how to share them. I am looking forward to hearing more of your stories in the months and years ahead.

As an Association, we have been doing a great deal lately to promote the values of inclusion and equality. In March, I was honoured to take part in Equal Voice's Daughters of the Vote, which celebrated the 100th anniversary of women's formal federal political engagement in Canada, along with the 150th anniversary of Confederation, by choosing one woman from every federal riding to represent their community and communicate their vision for Canada. The Association sponsored the event, enabling 25 participants to attend, and I joined with teachers from across the country to facilitate discussions on women's empowerment and political engagement. Later in the month, I travelled to the United Nations in New York to participate in the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women, where we discussed global solutions to enhance women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

Catholic teachers are dedicated professionals who make extraordinary contributions to society. We are also at the forefront of movements to advance labour rights and social justice, joining with likeminded organizations to pursue common goals in Ontario, across Canada, and around the world. As we move forward, let us be proud of the work we do and the impact we have on our communities: we teach lessons for life, because life is the ultimate test.

Ann Hawkins

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Cover: Delegates of Peterborough VNC unit at the AGM 2017.

UP FRONT



SPRING TEACHERS DAY AT THE SHAW FESTIVAL

On May 12, the Shaw Festival will host its Spring Teachers Day. Open to all English, arts, history, physical education, and special education teachers, the event promises an exciting and engaging day of inspiring workshops, and delicious food and drink.

Visit <http://bit.ly/2oY8QTq> to learn more, and to register.



JOIN A PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE

Get more involved in the Association! Provincial committees provide opportunities for teachers to contribute their expertise, be creative, and develop new interests, while serving the needs of members. Small teams work on projects of their choice that can be completed within the school year. The deadline to apply is May 1, so do not delay!

For more information, and to apply, visit catholicteachers.ca.



APPLY FOR A BURSARY

Each year, the Association provides bursaries to members. A maximum bursary of up to \$1,000 may be awarded to an individual member. Members currently in the pre-degree categories who are taking undergraduate courses shall be given priority as applicants. Members who wish to pursue post-graduate studies or professional development activities as lifelong learning shall also be eligible for a bursary.

Visit catholicteachers.ca by May 1 to learn more and apply.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS COMMON GOOD CONFERENCE

The biennial Common Good Conference will run July 6 and 7. The theme this year is “Celebrating our Diversity: Sharing our Story.”

Check catholicteachers.ca in the near future for information on keynote speakers, workshops, and how to register.



CLAIM YOUR SCHOOL SUPPLY TAX CREDIT

Last year, in response to lobbying by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, the federal government introduced the refundable tax credit, allowing eligible teachers to claim a 15 per cent credit on up to \$1,000 in supply purchases every year.

Visit the CRA website at <http://bit.ly/2cPOimJ> to learn more about eligibility and find out how to claim the credit.



REGISTER FOR A SUMMER AQ COURSE

Registration for summer AQ courses is now open! Summer courses will run from July 4 to July 28. Visit catholicteachers.ca in the For Your Career section for a full list of course offerings and links to register. Registration closes June 2.

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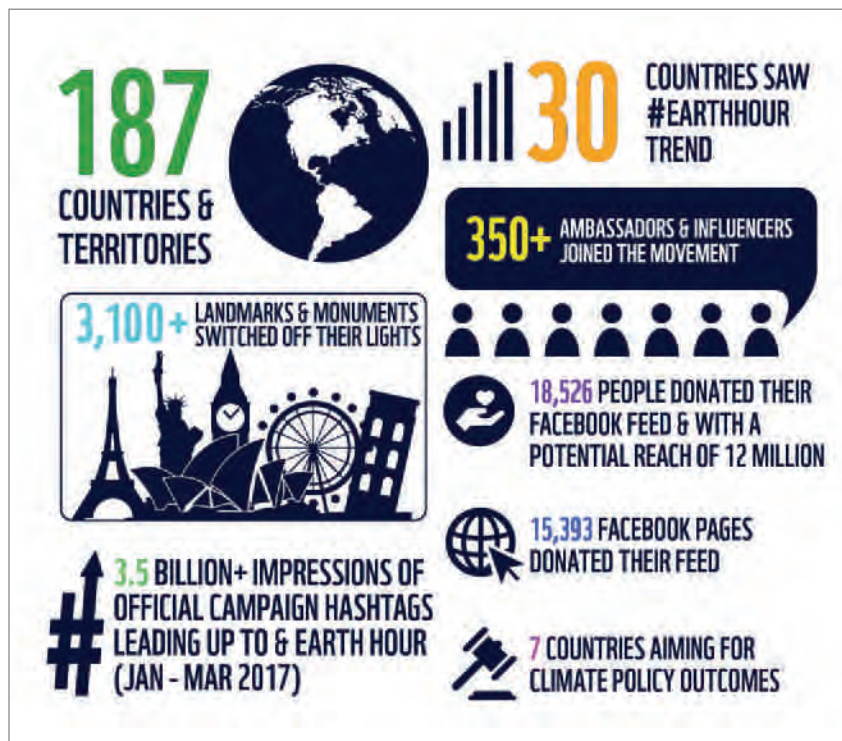
OECTA INDEX

By Mark Tagliaferri

On Saturday, March 25, a record 187 countries and territories, including 3,000 landmarks, took part in Earth Hour 2017, organized by the World Wildlife Federation. The event encourages people, businesses, and landmarks to set aside one hour to switch off their lights. The initiative is not entirely meant as a method of energy conservation; just as importantly, the organizers claim, Earth Hour is designed to make a statement about the importance of climate action.

In Canada, residents from across the country took part, from 8:30-9:30 p.m. In British Columbia, BC Hydro says residents saved 24 megawatt hours of electricity, and reduced the provincial electricity load by 0.3 per cent. In Ontario, Alectra Utilities' System Control Centres reported a four per cent electricity consumption reduction. In Toronto, electricity use dipped by 2.8 per cent, though this is a slightly lower figure than the 3.2 per cent recorded last year.

Globally, Earth Hour was a resounding success. The infographic below depicts some of this year's highlights.



Mark Tagliaferri is Communications Specialist in the Communications department at the OECTA Provincial Office.

APRIL

Summer AQ Courses
Registration Opens

April 6

Day of Pink

April 12

Good Friday

April 14

Easter Sunday

April 16

Earth Day

April 22

Day of Mourning

April 28

Get Your Head Out of Your Apps
Technology Conference

April 28, 29

MAY

May Day

May 1

Mother's Day

May 14

Victoria Day

May 22

JUNE

Summer AQ
Registration Closes

June 2

Summer Council of Presidents
Meeting

June 8, 9

EVENTS

EXTENSION AGREEMENT RATIFIED

In late 2016, the Association was invited to meet with representatives of the Government of Ontario and the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) to discuss the possible extension of our 2014-17 collective agreement. As the talks progressed, OECTA's Provincial Bargaining Team was able to negotiate a number of gains to address concerns the Association has heard from Catholic teachers over the past few years, including the need for salary increases above the rate of inflation and investments in staffing to help at-risk students. An extension agreement was signed on January 25.

After the agreement was approved by the Provincial Executive and recommended by the Council of Presidents (the same governing body that had initially authorized the bargaining team to enter into discussions), members had the opportunity to weigh in directly, in a province-wide vote on March 1 and 2. The agreement was heartily endorsed, with 87 per cent voting in favour of ratification. This means that the central and local terms of the 2014-17 collective agreement will be in place until August 31, 2019, with some important new terms taking effect on September 1, 2017. Information about the new terms is available in the Members' Area at catholicteachers.ca.

The extension agreement required amendments to the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act*, to allow for collective agreements lasting five years. When the new legislation was introduced, the government took the opportunity to introduce several other changes, stemming from consultations undertaken last year with various stakeholders, including the Association. Further feedback was provided to the government, but the new laws moved through the legislature without much debate. The Association will continue to hold discussions with the government and OCSTA regarding some of the difficulties faced during negotiations for the 2014-17 agreement.

TWO STEPS CLOSER TO COMPLETED 2014-17 AGREEMENTS

After initiating rotating strikes, then being locked out by their employer, the Thunder Bay Elementary Unit was able to reach an agreement with the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board, which was ratified by the membership on February 16, 2017.

The Niagara Catholic District School Board locked out its elementary teachers for a full week in March before agreeing to return to the table and negotiating an agreement. Niagara Elementary Unit members voted in favour of ratifying their agreement on March 28, 2017.

With these two contracts completed, only two units remain outstanding – Thunder Bay Occasional and Niagara Elementary Occasional.

LESSONS FOR LIFE LAUNCH



David Doze from Pilot PMR and Ann Hawkins, President of OECTA on Facebook Live / Telephone Town Hall

On Monday, March 27, the Association held its first ever Facebook Live / Telephone Town Hall. Co-hosted by President Ann Hawkins and David Doze of the public relations firm Pilot PMR, the event unveiled some new initiatives that the Association is undertaking to promote the positive contributions Catholic teachers make in classrooms and communities across the province. More background on the initiative is laid out in the "Our Story" article in the October 2016 issue of @OECTA.

The hour-long event included a discussion between President Hawkins and Mr. Doze about the importance of these contributions, and premiered three short videos that demonstrate some of the many ways that Catholic teachers change lives and contribute to social good. The videos can be found by visiting: catholicteachers.ca/Lessons-For-Life, where you can also navigate to a handy Member Toolkit.

The co-hosts encouraged members to send in their own positive stories to lessonsforlife@catholicteachers.ca, and indicated that some of these stories will be featured on our website and in other publications.

Most importantly, the event provided an opportunity for members to pose questions to President Hawkins and Mr. Doze about the Association's efforts.

In all, almost 2,000 people participated, either on Facebook or by phone. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with several commenters asking for more events like this in the future.

If you missed the event and want to view the conversation, the full video is available on the OECTA Facebook page.

SURVEY SAYS...

SURVEY OF MEMBERS' COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES

In January, the Communications and Public Relations Committee undertook a survey of the membership in order to explore Catholic teachers' communications preferences. The survey had three goals: (1) to better understand how and what communications members receive from the Association; (2) to inquire as to how members prefer to be communicated with; and (3) to see if current media consumption patterns offer any insights as to how we, as an Association, can improve our communication efforts in the future.

The invitation was sent by email to every member for whom the Association has an email address. Just under 5,000 members participated, which is a great response rate for a member survey.

Three quarters of members are "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with the Association's efforts to keep them informed, and feel that current communications are "just right" in terms of content and frequency. Nine per cent feel that information is too long and overly detailed; on the flipside, 10 per cent feel it is too short or not detailed enough. One per cent indicated they are "very dissatisfied."

The overwhelming majority of members (92 per cent) indicated that email is their main source of information from the Association, both at the provincial and local levels. Word-of-mouth communication via staff reps or colleagues, as well as @OECTA magazine, followed as the next best go-to sources for Association news. Not surprisingly then, on a go forward basis, 85 per cent want to continue to receive information via email, and want the Association to consider ways to make this more efficient. A further 23 per cent want to see greater, more accessible content on the website, and five per cent want greater information coming through their staff rep.

New social media platforms, such as Snapchat and Instagram, are not popular with members; however, nearly half indicated they actively engage on Facebook, and more than half use texts to communicate on a daily basis. Some members say that receiving information into different email accounts (personal vs. school board) is a hindrance, while others note their preference for text message or alerts to their phone to let them know that information is available. Many respondents suggested using a mobile app, or other new technology, which can push information out to members, rather than requiring them to go somewhere to retrieve it.

It is important to note that sensitive or confidential materials from the Association MUST be sent to personal emails rather than school board accounts, and/or posted securely. But all of the responses will be considered, to ensure that we are doing our best to keep Catholic teachers informed and connected.



SURVEY OF MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

The Association has been undertaking various efforts to define and describe the important role Catholic teachers play in Ontario. Rather than a short-term "project," these initiatives are part of an evolving approach to how we express our collective identity and unique value.

To make sure we are capturing members' perspectives and getting the messages right, in November 2016 the Association commissioned Pollara Strategic Insights to conduct a comprehensive survey, covering a range of issues pertaining to members' opinions and perceptions of Catholic education. In all, 2,526 OECTA members participated in the study, and the sample was representative of OECTA's overall membership demographics.

Although the survey probed a number of topics, two broad themes emerged as particularly interesting and important. The first theme focused on members' impressions of the Catholic education system. As one might expect, **nearly 90 per cent of respondents felt there was a noticeable difference between Catholic and public education, with "difference in faith" naturally being the most popular response (72 per cent).** Beyond this, however, a sizable number of respondents noted that what differentiates Catholic education is that it promotes a "feeling of community," and "values."

In discussing the Catholic education system, an interesting dichotomy emerged. On one hand, it is clear that members feel positive about themselves as Catholic teachers and about the Catholic education system in general. **Ninety-five per cent of respondents indicated that the quality of Catholic education is either “good” or “very good.”**

However, despite this sense of positivity and self-perceived uniqueness, members expressed concern that Ontarians do not share this view. In fact, **only one-quarter of respondents felt that they are viewed positively by the general public in Ontario.**

Exploring this contrast led to a second key theme: “Defending the Catholic system.” The vast majority of respondents agreed that it is important to speak positively about the Catholic education system (89 per cent), with an identical proportion saying they already do this “occasionally” or “often.” However, when the survey drilled down on who members are willing to speak with, it became apparent that many members are **reluctant to speak to anyone outside of family and friends.** This is important, especially considering that **71 per cent of respondents encounter negative comments about the Catholic school system,** while only 28 per cent feel very confident in defending the system against these attacks.

Looking at all this data together allows us to paint a picture of how Catholic teachers perceive themselves, the Catholic education system, as well as the general public – and how this interplay influences Catholic teachers’ actions. Although members are proud of their role as Catholic teachers, and feel the system of Catholic education is effective, they nevertheless remain hesitant to defend the system openly.

The ideals of community and social justice drive our identity as Catholic teachers, with faith being the underlying support or core value.

Some respondent comments include:

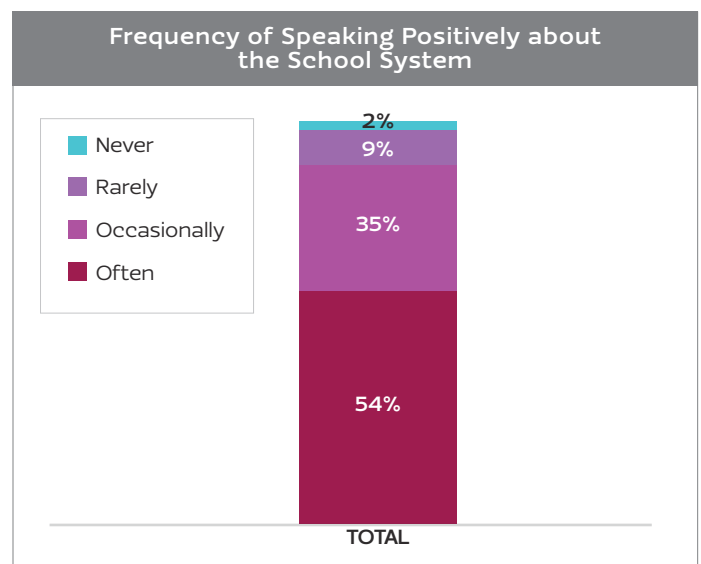
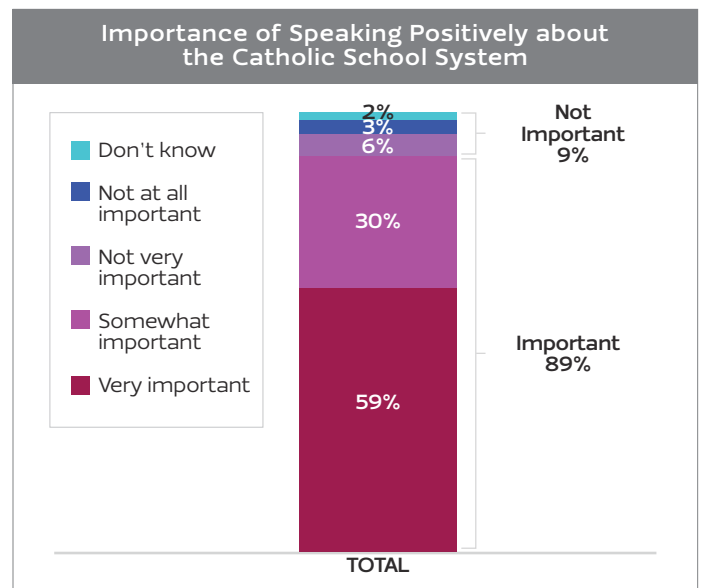
“I grew up in the system and I love the values and culture that is taught. It is a supportive and creative environment where students thrive.”

“I believe that examining current issues through a Catholic lens lends itself to critical thinking and conversation.”

As an association, we have already taken this information to heart, and it is informing how we articulate Catholic teachers’ value in Ontario. More than just being uncomfortable for members to do, we know that “defending” the system is

not really effective for changing peoples’ attitudes. Further research we have undertaken tells us that “defining” who we are, and sharing our stories in a positive way, is more engaging and welcome. With this in mind, we launched **lessonsforlife@catholicteachers.ca**, where teachers can send in positive stories about the benefits Catholic teachers bring to society at large. We’ll be showcasing some of these stories on our website, **catholicteachers.ca**, and in publications.

Ultimately, surveys such as this help us to better understand your perceptions, opinions, and some of the barriers you face – so that we can better support you and bolster the perception of Catholic education across the province.





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AGM 2017 HIGHLIGHTS



Highlights

The Association's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held March 11 to 13 in Toronto. More than 600 delegates were in attendance, representing Catholic teachers from across the province.

With this year's meeting coming shortly after ratification of the extension agreement, President Ann Hawkins answered questions about the agreement from members, and talked about how the Association will continue discussions with the Government of Ontario and the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association regarding the difficulties experienced during the negotiations for the 2014-17 agreement. Delegates also expressed solidarity with the local bargaining units still working to negotiate local terms for the 2014-17 agreement.

The issue of violence in the classroom was another major point of discussion. President Hawkins called it "the number one topic" that members of the Provincial Executive hear about on a daily basis, and urged teachers to complete the necessary reporting procedures, to ensure that administrators and the government appreciate the scale of the problem. President Hawkins also updated delegates on the Association's efforts to lobby the Ministry of Labour to increase training and staffing for health and safety inspectors in the education system. "Addressing the issue of violence in the classroom" was also added to the Association's Key Priorities for 2017-18, which were approved by the delegates.

The LGBTQ Work Group completed its mandate and delivered its final report. The group found strong evidence that OECTA members support their colleagues and will continue fighting to protect the rights of LGBTQ Catholic teachers. This was also an opportunity to unveil some visible signs of the Association's support, including door hangers, flags, and pop-up banners, some of which will be on display in schools and at rallies, community events, and Association meetings.

Among the delegates' key tasks was to elect members of the Provincial Executive for 2017-18. The following elected officers will be on next year's executive:

- Liz Stuart, President
- Ann Hawkins, Past President
- Warren Grafton, First Vice-President
- Barb Dobrowolski, Second Vice-President
- Andrew Donihee, Third Vice-President
- Michel Derikx, Treasurer
- Anthony Rocchio, Councillor
- Rene Jansen in de Wal, Councillor
- Chris Cowley, OTF Table Officer



New Provincial Executive and OTF Governors for 2017-2018

Rick Belisle, Chris Cowley, Tracey Pecarski, Sean Roberts, and Andrew Robertson were elected to two-year terms as OTF Governors.

Guest Speakers

Several guest speakers addressed the assembly. Heather Smith, President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), opened her remarks by stating that teachers recognize the contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people and are committed to the process of reconciliation. After detailing the incredible range of contributions that teachers make to student success and well-being, Ms. Smith emphasized CTF's position that public education is a cornerstone of democracy, and that we cannot allow our education systems to be privatized in any way.

Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education, thanked Catholic teachers for our service to Ontario's students and families, and reiterated the government's unequivocal support for publicly funded Catholic education. Minister Hunter also committed to further engaging on student and teacher well-being, stressing that it is not about quantifying complex issues, but developing



Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education

a better understanding. Specifically, the Minister expressed a desire to collaborate with teachers on concrete solutions to the problem of violence in the classroom. Upon questioning from delegates, the Minister said the government will take the time needed to formulate a comprehensive plan, but agreed that the slow process for dealing with individual students or incidents is unacceptable.

Hassan Yussuff, President of the Canadian Labour Congress, thanked Catholic teachers for our contributions to education and the labour movement, and expressed his support for Ontario's publicly funded Catholic education system. He then recounted some major victories for Canadian workers over the past couple of years: the defeat of the Harper government; a comprehensive ban on asbestos;



Hassan Yussuff, President of the Canadian Labour Congress

the expansion of the Canada Pension Plan, reversal of the age threshold for Old Age Security, and increase in the Guaranteed Income Supplement; and court victories enshrining the right to form a union, the right to collective bargaining, the right to strike, and the right to negotiate working conditions. Mr. Yussuff said that because Canada's labour movement exists to protect and promote all workers, upcoming campaigns will focus on a national pharmacare program, proactive pay equity legislation, the rights of migrant workers, and the shift to a green economy.

Angela DePalma (Chair) and Joe Jamieson (Deputy Registrar) of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) spoke of the College's desire to increase the number of teachers participating in Council elections, both running as candidates and casting votes. They also talked about recent moves by the Council to respond to teacher concerns about attestations in cases related to the *Child and Family Services Act*, and reported that the Council rejected moves that would have allowed for the indefinite retention of notations on teachers' records. After noting that OCT is no longer running the Member Perks discount program, Ms. DePalma answered questions about the use of member fees, saying that the College would continue seeking to better serve teachers, for example by responding to areas of interest in future Professional Advisories.

Resolutions

This year's Annual General Meeting was one of the most productive in recent memory. Out of 95 resolutions submitted 66 were dealt with, of which 35 were carried. The list of resolutions carried can be found in the AGM section of the Members' Area at catholicteachers.ca.

New Committee Structure

Over the past year, the Provincial Executive has taken a close look at the structure and operation of the Association's standing committees, with the goal of streamlining overlapping mandates and making the committees better reflect and respond to the Association's priorities. A series of resolutions was presented to the Annual General Meeting, all of which were passed by the delegates.

The following committees have clear mandates and will remain status quo for the time being:

- Audit
- Awards
- Educational Aid
- Finance
- Health & Safety
- Human Rights
- Legislation
- Long-Term Disability
- Personnel
- Program and Structures
- Status of Women
- Teacher Education Network

There will be four new committees:

- **Catholic Education and Curriculum** will replace Catholic Education, Elementary Schools, and Secondary Schools. The committee will connect the ongoing enrichment of the faith dimension, which is the essence of the Catholic education community, to the curriculum in Catholic schools.
- **Collective Bargaining** will replace the existing Collective Bargaining, Continuing Education, Elementary Schools, Occasional Teachers, and Secondary Schools committees. Much of the work arising from these committees is related to collective bargaining. The new committee will include representation from the constituent groups.
- **Member Engagement** will replace Beginning Teachers, Communications and Public Relations, and Political Advisory. Engaging members in the workings of the Association and the broader political process is the principle concern of this committee. This is will be increasingly vital, as we work to tell the story of the importance of Catholic teachers, ensure that governments remain supportive of publicly funded Catholic education, and develop broader campaigns to promote labour rights and social justice.
- **Teacher Development** will replace Beginning Teachers and Professional Development Steering. The focus of this committee will be the professional learning needs of members throughout their career. The committee will be recommending writing projects and project teams to the Provincial Executive and giving input regarding the Association's teacher development resources and conferences such as the Beginning Teachers Conference. The committee will have additional beginning teacher representation.

With Beginning Teachers no longer a stand-alone committee, and to ensure that the voice and needs of beginning teachers continue to be heard, the Association committed to designating one representative on each committee to a member who is by definition a beginning teacher.

Furthermore, as part of the restructuring, the definition of "beginning teacher" has been expanded. Whereas it once made sense to define beginning teachers as members in their first five years of teaching, it is common now for teachers to begin their careers by working daily or long-term occasional assignments for five years or more. Expanding the definition to members in their first ten years of teaching means there will be better representation for those who have recently been hired as permanent teachers, giving the relevant committees important perspective on the views and needs of this group.

MEMBER FEE BREAKS NEW GROUND WITH INDEXING

The annual member fee is the main source of revenue for the provincial Association. It is also the main source of revenue for local OECTA units, with 45 per cent going to fund unit operations and release officers.

The fee amount is decided at the Annual General Meeting. Resolutions regarding the fee are typically put forward by the Finance Committee, the Provincial Executive, and/or individual units, and can be debated at length during AGM. Delegates have the authority to maintain the current fee or set a new fee.

This year, delegates undertook consideration of the fee against a backdrop of a nearly \$1 million deficit in the General Fund, as well as an additional pressure of \$3 million in unfunded liabilities in three other funds. As the Treasurer outlined in his report, the severe decline in membership experienced last year, which contributed greatly to the deficit in the General Fund, is not expected to rebound significantly this year. At this point, the Association is projecting a return of only 78 of the 724 members lost. The new provincial extension agreement will provide another 300 full-time equivalent positions, but even this will not go far enough to address the deficit and the unfunded liabilities.

Understanding these fiscal pressures, and wanting to be able to restore some of the budget items that have been cut in recent years, delegates approved an increase of \$100 to the base fee.

Delegates also expressed a desire to reduce the amount of time spent debating the fee at each AGM, by establishing a solid fiscal foundation for the Association moving forward. To that end, they also approved automatic percentage increases to the fee that are in line with any negotiated salary increases. If there are any in-year increases, those will be reflected in the following year's fee, limiting any fee increases to once a year. For example, as the new provincial extension agreement provides for a 1.5 per cent salary increase in this fiscal year, next year's fee for regular day school teachers will be \$1,116.50

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \$1,000 - 2017-18 \text{ base fee} \\
 & \quad + \\
 & \$100.00 - \text{fee increase passed at AGM 2017} \\
 & \quad + \\
 & \$16.50 - \text{salary indexing approved at AGM 2017} \\
 & \quad = \\
 & \mathbf{\$1,116.50 \text{ base fee for 2017-18}}
 \end{aligned}$$

The provincial extension agreement lays out the salary increases for the term of the agreement. As a result, members can know what their base fee will look like for the next two years. However, the fees outlined in the chart below are only projections. The indexing does not take away the ability of future AGMs to consider and change the fee, based on any resolutions submitted.

2017-18				
	Base Fee	Variable Fee		
Regular Day school Salary	(\$1,100+1.5%)	MPF 0.12%	Reserve 0.13%	Total
\$50,000	\$1,116.50	\$60	\$65	\$1,241.50
\$75,000	\$1,116.50	\$90	\$98	\$1,304.50
\$97,000	\$1,116.50	\$116.40	\$126.10	\$1,359.00
2018-19				
	Base Fee	Variable Fee		
Regular Day school Salary	(\$1,116.50+1.5%)	MPF 0.12%	Reserve 0.13%	Total
\$50,000	\$1,133.00	\$60	\$65	\$1,258.00
\$75,000	\$1,133.00	\$90	\$98	\$1,321.00
\$97,000	\$1,133.00	\$116.40	\$126.10	\$1,375.50
2019-20				
	Base Fee	Variable Fee		
Regular Day school Salary	(\$1,133+2.5%)	MPF 0.12%	Reserve 0.13%	Total
\$50,000	\$1,161.00	\$60	\$65	\$1,286.00
\$75,000	\$1,161.00	\$90	\$98	\$1,349.00
\$97,000	\$1,161.00	\$116.40	\$126.10	\$1,403.50

AWARDS

Congratulations!

OECTA's past presidents, along with the Provincial Executive and more than 800 guests, attended the Annual Dinner, where five individuals were honoured for their contributions to the Association, Catholic education, the teaching profession, and the labour movement. The recipients are pictured with OECTA President Ann Hawkins and General Secretary Marshall Jarvis.

Life memberships are granted to former active members who have given distinguished service at the provincial level or for their local unit. These members have devoted their professional lives with generosity and dedication to the service of Catholic education in Ontario.

Doug McCarthy - a former teacher, principal, elected officer in the London-Middlesex Unit, and leading member of the Associations' Speakers Bureau. (1)

Grace da Silva - former teacher, release officer in the Waterloo Unit, and staff member at Provincial Office. (2)

Honorary memberships are conferred on individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the Association or to Catholic education.

Gail Oleszkowicz - support staff member at Provincial Office for nearly four decades. (3)

The Pearse Shannon Memorial Association Service Award

honours a current or past OECTA president or bargaining unit president who has made an outstanding contribution to the Association.

Rose Procopio - Dufferin-Peel Elementary Unit member and president. (4)

The Fintan Kilbride Memorial Social Justice Recognition Award

is meant to honour an individual who has demonstrated significant personal commitment to the achievement of social justice.

James Ryan - Toronto Elementary Unit member, former member of the unit executive, and two-time OECTA president. (5)

Read the full bios of all the winners at catholicteachers.ca in the For Your Benefit section, under Awards.



WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Naomi Klein's AGM 2017 Keynote Address

By Mark Tagliaferri

Author, speaker, climate and social activist, public intellectual, mother: Naomi Klein wears a lot of hats. But as she gave the keynote address to AGM 2017 delegates, it became clear that Klein sees these roles as seamless and interchangeable. In many ways, this theme of interconnectivity underscored her speech.

Klein began by playing a short video clip from her recent documentary on the Great Barrier Reef, and the destruction it has endured due to environmental change. The clip prominently featured her son, a decision that was not easy for Klein to make. After the clip ended, Klein explained that her decision to include her son was intertwined with her decision to make a documentary in the first place.

Discussing the project's origins – which align with her award-winning book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* – Klein detailed how the climate decisions we're making today have interconnected and intergenerational consequences. For instance, she explained that the extreme weather we've caused doesn't just affect temperatures - it also depletes vegetation, which triggers mass-migration, which then leads to socio-political conflict, etc. All the while, politicians have ignored the rights of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

In a broader sense, Klein's motivation sprang from a sense of tragedy: her son wouldn't get to have the same experiences with, or connection to the environment that she had while growing up. "It's a form of theft," she said, "a form of violence in slow motion."

Klein wasted little time before addressing the 600-pound elephant in the room. Her documentary was released November 7, one day before the US election: "I thought this would push President Clinton to be more active on climate change... how wrong I was."

Despite the shock US election result, Klein insisted that Canadians need to wrap our collective head around what's going on south of the border, noting that Canada is particularly affected because of our economic integration with the US. From a Canadian perspective, Klein's fear isn't that Canadians will support US climate positions – she worries more that we'll adjust our expectations too much, lower our hopes, and normalize Trump. This, she warned, would negate the bold and ambitious actions that Canadians must take to battle climate change.

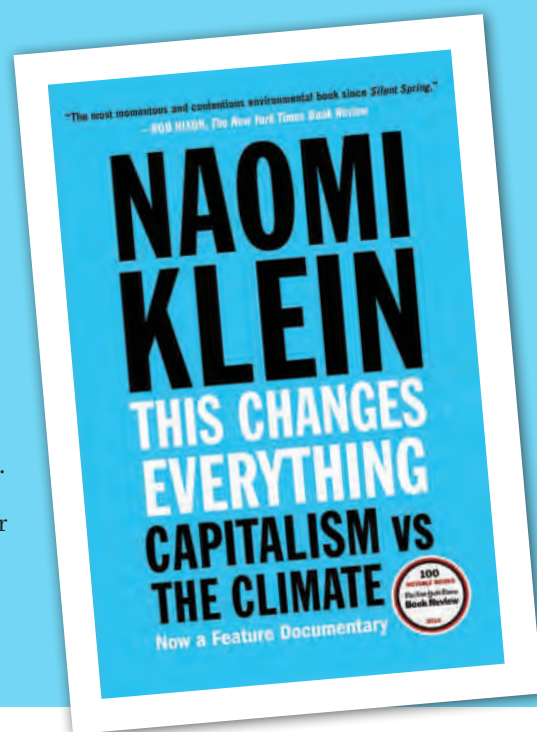
You could hear the AGM audience gasp as Klein rattled off "Trump's assault on the environment" – the Dakota Access and Keystone pipelines, a rollback of coal protections, the appointment of former Exxon Mobil executive Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State, Scott Pruitt's plans to dismantle the Environmental Protection Agency. The list went on and on.

But Klein wasn't there to litigate Trump on climate change. Her message was about, and for, Canadians. Her warning was clear: "The bar has been lowered so much that it's easy [for Canadians] to feel high, and become paralyzed by superiority." Since the election of Prime Minister Trudeau,

Canadians have basked in a sort-of "not-Harper/Trump" mentality. It's time to stop being smug, Klein exclaimed.

Although Canada is largely without the full-on climate denial one sees in the US, Klein argued that we suffer from a different kind of denial. According to the statistics Klein presented, the climate action that Canada took under Harper, and has continued under Trudeau, would only achieve one-third of what needs to be done to maintain temperature increases of under two degrees (the agreement Canada made in last year's Paris Accord).

As if this weren't bad enough, Klein went on to explain that we're on pace to only achieve one-tenth of our already-too-low objectives. To show the absurdity and danger of the



“We're slamming our foot on the accelerator when we should be pumping the brakes.”

situation, Klein outlined a plausible scenario in which our efforts to reduce CO2 emissions would end up producing more megatons of CO2 than we've promised to reduce.

This, Klein declared, is not the picture of a country weaning itself off fossil fuels. “We're slamming our foot on the accelerator when we should be pumping the brakes.”

In the final section of her address, Klein heralded a call to action. “We need to change the parameters of what's considered politically possible,” she said. “The fact is that what's considered politically possible is morally, ethically, and socially unacceptable.”

Although she lamented that Canadians have procrastinated on the issue for decades, she remains hopeful that it's not too late to change. But she added, because of that procrastination we now need radical change if the situation is to be resolved.

Klein noted feeling some sense of optimism: the Energy East pipeline is at a standstill; there has been widespread resistance to Kinder Morgan; and 50 First Nations from Canada and the US have pledged to block all government activities that further threaten the environment.

In this pursuit, teachers have an especially important role to play, argued Klein. Within their classrooms, teachers must be part of the non-carbon solution, and must educate students to understand the difference between a politician's projected image, on one hand, and the



Naomi Klein speaking at AGM 2017

substance of their policies, on the other hand. She said that Catholic teachers are particularly well-placed to take on this responsibility, with the guidance of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato si'*. On matters outside the classroom, Klein praised OTEPP for divesting from Enbridge after the protests at Standing Rock, and encouraged further investment decisions along ethical lines.

In her final analysis, Klein admits that the situation is challenging; but she remains hopeful. “We can do it!” she exclaimed emphatically. “We have to change the political will. And we need integrated solutions that bring down emissions and fight inequality at every level.” Unfortunately, tweets are not

enough, “we need a shift in worldview from taking to *caretaking*.”

Klein's keynote address was well received by AGM delegates, who gave her a prolonged and enthusiastic standing ovation. As the applause faded, she offered her final words: “Science and Indigenous culture are saying the same things about the climate – science and culture have aligned. We must recognize this interconnection, and interconnectedness. We must have the courage to chart our own course.”

Mark Tagliaferri is Communications Specialist in the Communications department at the OECTA Provincial Office.

ACTING FOR EDUCATION

Nova Scotia teachers take a stand for respect and better working conditions

By Adam Lemieux

“Education is the greatest gift we can give to one another,” said Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil, upon his election in 2013. “It is the great equalizer of this country.” Given this lofty rhetoric from the province’s leader, we can appreciate how frustrating it has been for the teachers and other education workers of the Nova Scotia Teachers’ Union (NSTU), who fought for almost two years in an attempt to reach a fair contract with the government that recognizes their vital contributions to Nova Scotia’s students and society.

Their previous contract expired on July 31, 2015. Bargaining has been complicated by legislation, passed in December 2015, which would impose a wage package for most of Nova Scotia’s public sector workers, including a two-year wage freeze and the elimination of “service awards” paid out upon retirement. The law has not yet been enacted, but NSTU’s bargaining teams have felt severely restrained in negotiating monetary issues, which has left bargaining to focus largely on matters related to teachers’ working conditions. Teachers have been seeking improvements to class sizes, planning time, and job descriptions, among other things. However, the government has been unwilling to acknowledge and give credit for the considerable duties and pressures that teachers are expected to manage.

A first tentative agreement was reached in December 2015, but NSTU members voted 61 per cent against the deal. Another agreement was reached in October 2016, but that time 70 per cent were not in favour. After the second vote, NSTU President Liette Doucet said it was clear that “the concerns of

poor working conditions and not being treated as professionals influenced members as they voted against the agreement.”

The blatant lack of regard from the government has only escalated over the past few months. In November, NSTU members responded to the government’s refusal to enter into conciliation by initiating work-to-rule job action. While the conditions were certainly stringent, they were in keeping with teachers’ duties under Nova Scotia’s *Education Act*. Moreover, although they were only required to give 48 hours’ notice, NSTU announced their intentions a full week in advance, so that students, families, and the government could prepare. Nevertheless, the government argued that student safety and well-being were at risk, and took the extraordinary measure of closing schools to students, while insisting that teachers report to work. As teachers took to social media, posting pictures of their empty classrooms under the hashtag **#ReadyToTeach**, demonstrations were organized across the province. The government quickly backed down from its position.

Several intense days of mediator-assisted negotiations resulted in a third tentative agreement this past January. It did little to quell the unrest. Things reached a head when Premier McNeil and NSTU publicly disagreed about the interpretation of a new provision giving teachers two additional days of paid leave. In early February, NSTU members voted 78.5 per cent against ratification of the agreement. According to Doucet, the results made clear that teachers still believed the government was not going far





enough “in addressing the real classroom concerns that affect teachers and students.”

The government was not inclined to go any further. Days after the unsuccessful ratification vote, Premier McNeil introduced Bill 75, which imposed a settlement on the teachers. The legislated contract included the formation of a council on classroom conditions, which the NSTU had negotiated, but with much less union involvement than had previously been agreed to. Teachers decried the bill as an affront to their bargaining rights and the needs of Nova Scotia’s public education system, even launching their first-ever strike. Meanwhile, opposition leaders pressed the government on whether they had set funds aside for the inevitable Supreme Court challenge. Teachers are still deciding how to move forward with their job action, but for now it appears that they will have no further success in persuading the government to address their concerns.

Even though teachers across Canada won several crucial legal battles last year, which affirmed the right to collectively bargain a range of matters that impact working conditions, there is still so much to be done to convince governments and the public that these issues are central to the success of public education, and that teachers’ voices must be heard. The situation in Nova Scotia is a striking reminder that we must remain vigilant and united. As we continue to offer solidarity to our colleagues in the Maritimes, we must also consider how to make it clear to everyone that education cannot be a great gift, or a great equalizer, if teachers and other education workers are not treated with the respect they deserve.

Adam Lemieux is Executive Resource Assistant at the OECTA Provincial Office.

Lessons for Life





Catholic teachers prepare students for the ultimate test - *life*.

The values that Catholic teachers promote – like fairness, compassion, respect, concern for social justice and the environment – benefit our students and society as a whole. As Catholic teachers, we ensure these values are included in what we teach each and every day. They are lessons for the life our students are going to choose. And we are seeing the results.

Graduates of Ontario's Catholic schools vote in elections, donate to charities and volunteer in their communities at very high rates. Our students are not just good at math and science. They are learning what it means to be resilient in the face of a challenge and to live as active and engaged members of their community.

Now we want to hear from you. What are you and your students doing to help out in your community? What's the best thing you have done in your classroom to promote respect and inclusion? How do you prepare your students to deal with failure? What is your class doing to make the world more sustainable?

[Write to us and tell us your "lessons for life" story: lessonsforlife@catholicteachers.ca.](mailto:lessonsforlife@catholicteachers.ca)
[We'll be sharing some of these stories on our website at www.catholicteachers.ca.](http://www.catholicteachers.ca)

DOCUMENTATION, DESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK, AND PORTFOLIO BUILDING – FIRST STEPS

By Anthony Carabache



Is it possible to capture a student’s “Aha!” moment, provide quality feedback to that student, and then upload that capture to a student portfolio?

At first, this capturing and documenting of an “Aha!” moment seems difficult. But it’s not impossible. This article outlines some very simple steps, using two tools, which will allow you to capture student learning, provide descriptive feedback, and build a student portfolio.

To be successful, there are three prerequisites you must satisfy:

1. You must have access to one working board-issued device, for example an iPad, Chromebook, MacBook, iPod, or Surface. (WiFi is optional.)
2. That device must have a voice recorder installed.
3. Your lesson plan must call for a class discussion, in groups or pairs.

Note: An “old-school” Dictaphone MP3 recorder can be found online for as little as \$25 and would work just as well.

With these three criteria met, here are some simple steps to follow.

Initiate the Discussion:

Have the students break out into groups or pairs to discuss the problem at hand. You may decide to have pre-written prompts already on their desks to drive the conversation. You may also have a timer at the front of the room that plays a gentle sound at the end of every five minutes.

Capturing Student Thinking:

Place a device at one or two of the groups’ areas of discussion and activate the sound recorder. Especially at the secondary level, you may want to let the students know ahead of time that you are only interested in hearing their thoughts about the questions.

While one or two devices are recording the respective groups, tour around the class and jot a few notes about the other groups – focus on highlighting the conversation between the students. It’s helpful to keep track of students’ points of interest, and note any deeper discussions that emerge from their conversations.

Descriptive Feedback:

The beauty of listening to your students rationalizing orally is that it unlocks opportunities for them that other modalities may have hindered. You may choose to plug in your own earphones and jot notes while listening, or you may decide to record a response for them using a voice recorder.

If you want to learn more about descriptive feedback, visit EduGAINS and look for the “Assessment for Learning” video series. The Viewing Guide can be found at: <http://bit.ly/2goxtl5>

Uploading/Building the Portfolio

As you know, the portfolio is no longer mandated in Kindergarten to Grade 6, but storing student thinking captured by MP3 can easily be placed in a portfolio at a later time. To do this effectively, open the application that has the MP3 stored and upload to one of the following:

- a. Your board email account, then move the file into a local folder on your district computer.
- b. D2L users can now upload that file to D2L from their local folder.
- c. Your board Google Drive (GDrive) or Google Classroom (GAFE) account.
- d. Your board OneDrive account.

A video example of this process can be found at: catholicteachers.ca/For-Your-Classroom/Curriculum-Resources

Disclaimer:

At first, you certainly will not capture all of your students’ thinking this way – nor should you try. In your first attempt, the goal should be to capture the thinking of one or two groups. Once you are comfortable, build lessons that allow you to slowly move the devices around to different groups. Remember that you know your class best.

Give yourself the entire school year to practice this technique, which may often require tweaking and adjustments.

I would love to hear feedback about this technique from classroom practitioners.

Anthony Carabache is a member of the Professional Development department at the OECTA Provincial Office.

INTEGRATING CATHOLICITY INTO YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE

Online supports for secondary teachers

By Claire Laughlin

At this year's AGM, the Association launched a new initiative that includes a redesigned and renamed website celebrating the fact that we are all Catholic teachers. As the *Life is the Test* teachers' guide (which has been sent to all members) says, "The values that Catholic teachers promote – like fairness, compassion, respect, concern for social justice and the environment – are things that all Ontarians embrace, regardless of their faith. These values – and the benefits they bring not only to Catholic students but to society as a whole – lie at the heart of what we do."

While we all have a story about why we chose this role of service, each of us fulfils the role in our own unique way. Moreover, each of us fulfils a unique role within our school. Particularly at the secondary level, we know that integrating Catholic teachings and Catholic values can be more difficult in some courses than others. But your Association is here to help you access resources that can assist you in infusing Catholicity in any course you teach.

Currently, the Association is a partner in the Catholic Curriculum Corporation (CCC) and also supports the Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum

Corporation (EOCCC). Professional Development department staff are involved in both of these initiatives. Each of the curriculum corporations is comprised both of Catholic school board representatives and Catholic teachers and are divided into individual councils that produce resources. Here are some specific secondary resources for you to explore, from the CCC:

- **The Catholic Film Reader: Reading and Making/Film Media Text with Meaning**
- **Footprints: The Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations in the 21st Century**
- **Mental Health: Hope, Dignity and Our Compassionate Response – A Grade 9-10 Resource**
- **Secondary Critical Thinking Tasks and Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations**
- **We Are All Teachers of Our Faith: Infusing Catholicity into Secondary School Courses**

Additional CCC resources related to specific secondary courses at the

applied and academic levels, including geography, history, civics, career studies, foundations of math, and science are available for download at: <http://bit.ly/2paS93v>

A number of resources can also be downloaded from the EOCC website, including:

- **Planting Seeds for Success: Exploring Learning Skills and Work Habits from a Catholic Perspective**
- **Sharing the Way: An Introduction to the Aboriginal World. A backgrounder for all teachers**

Go to <http://bit.ly/2nMiqnQ> to check out these and a number of other secondary resources.

Use these resources to help weave Catholic values and teachings into all that you do! Prepare your students for the ultimate test: life.

Claire Laughlin is a member of the Professional Development department at the OECTA Provincial Office.



ADDRESSING STUDENTS' VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

By Joe Pece

Staff in the Counselling and Member Services department speak to an ever-increasing number of members who have to deal with violent students in their classrooms or schools. As such, it was not surprising that delegates at the Annual General Meeting flagged this issue as particularly important, especially during discussion of the Association's key priorities for 2017-18.

When it comes to violence in our classrooms and schools, there are many areas that could be improved. One of those areas is the use of the Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form Part I. The incident reporting form is one of a number of existing mechanisms and policies that, if effectively used, can help teachers deal with some of the situations they face. This article is meant to remind teachers of some of your rights and responsibilities regarding the management of a violent student.

Responding and reporting are critical

The *Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act* requires all school staff to report to their principal when there is an incident that can, or will, lead to suspension and/or expulsion. For this, staff must use the Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form Part I. As simple as this sounds, we hear about many situations where reporting is not done. Maybe the teacher finds the paperwork too cumbersome; perhaps, in the past, their principal has not followed up or addressed the situation; or maybe the teacher is not sure as to whether the incident qualifies as a behaviour that can lead to suspension, and therefore does not feel the need to file paperwork. Regardless, not filling out the form is problematic, especially when incidents have a negative impact on the school climate – like racist, sexist, or homophobic comments, or other types of bullying/cyberbullying. If there is additional violent behaviour, but the initial incident has not been reported, then there is no basis upon which greater action can be taken to deal with this student. Violence must be viewed as a spectrum of behaviour – all of the above noted behaviours are part of that violence spectrum.

When teachers (or any employee of the school board that works with children) report these violent behaviours on the Safe Schools Reporting Form Part I, principals are required to investigate the incident and report back to the teacher(s) on the Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form Part II. This is the law. Both teachers and principals risk professional liabilities at the Ontario College of Teachers for failure to comply. Beyond the threat of professional liability, however, reporting earlier rather than later provides greater opportunity to address these issues, should the behaviour continue or increase in intensity.

Remember to keep a copy of the form you submit for your own records.

Policy and Program Memorandum (PPM) 128, introduced in 2012, established the Provincial Code of Conduct, which requires all school boards to implement a local school board code of conduct. The code describes the types of behaviours that must be reported, who must do the reporting, and how the reporting must be done. For discipline to be effective and schools to remain safe, teachers and administrators need a clear and detailed record of all unacceptable behaviour. Reporting will help ensure that students who are the target of negative behaviour receive appropriate supports and interventions. Responding when incidents take place can also help prevent their escalation and repetition. Furthermore, reporting enables schools to address parents' questions and concerns about their children's behaviour or victimization.

The application of discipline for these behaviours must be applied according to the progressive discipline policies within the Provincial Code of Conduct and the local school board safe schools policies. Without consistent reporting, we cannot expect that the most severe penalty should be imposed.

PPMs 141 and 142 deal with the return to school of students who have a history of violent behaviour, and have been expelled or been on long-term suspension. In these scenarios, a student safety plan is to be developed that includes vital information, such as a description of the unsafe behaviours; preventative or instructional strategies; how to get immediate assistance; steps to protect the student, other students, and staff from harm; crisis response; first aid and emergency procedures; and reporting requirements. The student safety plan can also be used in situations where a student with special needs has been identified as having a history of violent behaviour. If there is enough reporting/evidence on file of the continuous nature of a student's violent behaviour, a student safety plan can be created, for any student.

The student safety plan is a work in progress and should be developed by the principal in consultation with staff who are in contact with that student on a daily basis, along with special education staff, health and safety representatives, parents or guardians, and any relevant community agencies.

As a teacher, you have the right to request that your principal develop a student safety plan for a violent student. However, you will need documented proof of violent behaviours (i.e. you will need the evidence of a completed Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form Part I).

It is also important to understand that a school or board's "incident form" is generally meant for lesser infractions or offences that will not lead to suspension. It is not a substitute for the Ministry-mandated Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form Part I. The school or board forms are not legally required; they will not necessarily be considered as evidence in the application of progressive discipline, and they do not trigger the other legally required follow-ups that the official form does. Teachers should insist on filling out the official Safe Schools Incident Reporting Form Part I for any incident where a suspension or expulsion must be considered.

The Safe Schools provisions in the *Education Act* can lead to appropriate handling of violence in our schools. Should you experience situations where there is a shortfall with reporting of violent incidents and/or the implementation of a proper student safety plan, please contact your local OECTA unit office or the OECTA Provincial Office for advice and direction. Unsure what the Safe Schools Reporting Form Part I looks like or for which behaviours suspension or expulsion must be considered? Check out the Safety in Schools subsection, under For Your Career, at catholicteachers.ca.

Member survey coming

We understand that despite all of the above, the threat and occurrence of violent incidents in classrooms and schools is a very real problem. The Association has been lobbying the government to take more and stronger steps to help curb these incidents. To help with our efforts, and to gain a clear understanding of what members are encountering, we will be surveying every member for their feedback on this issue. Look for a survey coming from the Association to your personal email around the end of April. You are encouraged to fill it out. We will be using the responses to put forward insightful and productive proposals to the government.

Joe Pece is Department Head in the Counselling and Member Services department at the OECTA Provincial Office.



SAFETY IN
SCHOOLS

WHAT YOU
NEED
TO KNOW

YOUR DUTIES TO
RESPOND
AND REPORT

STRANGE BUT TRUE LEGAL *News*

By Charlene Theodore

A public school teachers union was successful in arguing for the reinstatement of a member who had been terminated by the Grand Erie District School Board. What's strange is not the termination, but the circumstances behind it. This particular member was terminated after the employer learned of their involvement in a multinational cheese smuggling ring. This case combines some of my favourite things: the legal debate underlying the application of progressive discipline, and cheese.

This is a unique set of facts, but they are linked to a serious and common question: When can a worker be fired for off-duty conduct? Every day, people across the country get arrested or have run-ins with the law, whether it's driving under the influence, getting into fights, or other infractions. The process is stressful, but if you work in a relatively anonymous occupation you can at least know that your job is likely safe. However, if you are a teacher, lawyer, doctor, or if you work in the media, you face different scrutiny.

The teacher's involvement in the criminal activity was not in question – a police investigation had clearly uncovered participation in a multinational cheese-smuggling ring. The teacher was offered and accepted an opportunity to testify against another participant in the smuggling ring in exchange for immunity.

The individual was a newly hired full-time teacher, but they had a long employment history with the school board as an occasional teacher. The smuggling ring had been in operation from 2008 to 2012; it involved the member and two police officers, who purchased cheese in the United States and smuggled the product back to Canada to avoid the 245 per cent duty on dairy items. The cheese was later sold to third parties.

After the teacher was terminated, the union grieved the decision and the matter went to arbitration. In order to be successful at arbitration, the board had to show a connection between the off-duty conduct and the teaching position. The board argued that there was strong correlation between the teacher's criminal activity and his teaching position, as the role of teacher is held up to higher standards in previous case law, and in society generally. The board also cited the Ontario College of Teachers' Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession.

The board relied in particular on the fact that the teacher in question was hired at a facility where he worked exclusively with young offenders. The board also asserted that the teacher did not apologize for his actions to his employer and that these were aggravating factors supporting termination.

Legal counsel for the union relied on the 1967 case of *Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers Int'l Union, Local 9-670 v. Millhaven*

Fibres Ltd., which sets out the test for the nexus between off-duty misconduct and an employer's business interests. Union counsel successfully argued there was no undue harm to the board's reputation because there was little-to-no media attention on the arrest and subsequent trial. They also argued the fact that the teacher had not been charged and had cooperated with police was a mitigating factor. The union took the position that the teacher was remorseful and that there was no evidence of a public outcry that would damage the board's reputation if he were to continue to teach.

In ruling in favour of the union, the arbitrator acknowledged the higher standard placed on teachers when it comes to off-duty conduct. The arbitrator did not think the fact that the teacher was not charged was a compelling argument, noting that the conduct of the teacher was egregious enough to create the nexus required to consider termination. However, he noted the actions warranted a form of discipline short of termination.

Although characterizing the teacher's actions as serious misconduct that was deserving of discipline, and recognizing the potential for harm to the board's reputation, the arbitrator held that dismissal was excessive in the circumstances considering the teacher's expression of remorse, and that the misconduct did not negatively impact his ability to do his job – the school board had not established that he was no longer fit to be a role model for students as a result of his off-duty actions. The arbitrator substituted the termination with a nine-month unpaid suspension.

While this was a positive result for a fellow teacher and union member, I do not expect that many other arbitrators would rule the same way in comparable circumstances. When determining whether off-duty conduct warrants disciplinary sanctions or termination, the *Millhaven* case offers a set of factors to consider:

- Does the off-duty conduct damage the employer's reputation?
- Does the off-duty conduct prevent the worker from performing their duties on a go-forward basis?
- Does the off-duty conduct affect the ability of other employees to work with the person in question?
- Is the off-duty conduct a serious breach of the Criminal Code?
- Does the off-duty conduct affect the ability of the employer to manage its workplace as it sees fit?

In most cases, teachers are adversely affected by the high moral standard placed upon the profession. While similar cases involving criminal conduct in other professions such as firefighting and health care have had decisions in reinstating workers, I think for teachers this case is the exception to the rule.

Charlene Theodore is in-house Legal Counsel at the OECTA Provincial Office.

CULTIVATING *Joy*

By Michelle Despault

In the last issue, I wrote about resolving to create a life of joy and abundance, and noted that a key step in this process is to purge yourself of anything in your life that does not bring you joy. This time I want to look at the flip-side: cultivating joy in our lives. Here are some ideas about things we can do to help joy be more present in our lives.

Stop being so serious

The other day, after our daily fight with our toddler to get him to eat something – anything! – for dinner, my husband told me that he is going to enter our son in the hot dog eating contest they are having at his daycare. My completely serious response: “Hot dogs aren’t very healthy!” Obviously, he was making a joke. My son could never win an eating contest, nor would any daycare ever put on such a contest. But to me, it wasn’t funny. When and how did this happen? When did everything in life become such a serious undertaking? When did I lose my sense of humour?

We aren’t meant to be so serious all the time – and doing so only makes life seem like more of a struggle, not less. Our white-knuckled grip on life that has us trying to control every situation and outcome is leading to epidemic levels of stress-related ailments and disease, and is literally sucking the joy out of our lives. When we start to relax and worry less, we can be present to the enjoyment and entertainment in our interactions with other people, and the activities we fill our time with.

Do something you enjoy

We spend so much of our time in the service of others that it is important that we take time, preferably every day but at least once a week, to do something that we enjoy. This could be anything – from reading a book, to taking a class, to spending time in solitude – as long as it is something you do specifically and only for you.

Play

In *The Power of Vulnerability*, Brené Brown talks about play as a critical and missing component of cultivating joy and happiness in our lives. In this context, we are not talking about organized sports or anything undertaken out of competition, or with a specific goal or achievement in mind. Instead, this is play simply for the sake of play – time spent on activities with no agenda other than enjoyment. It could be singing and dancing, snowball fights, or board games with friends – whatever is fun for you! Consider how and where you can add more playtime in your life.

Forget about looking good

There’s a famous quote that says, “Dance like no one is watching and sing like no one is listening.” We did this freely and easily as children because deriving joy out of life was our only goal. Somewhere along the way, however, our ego took over and we

started to believe that it was uncool, silly, or even humiliating to take these kinds of actions unless we are alone in the shower or we have a legitimate shot of being a finalist on “America’s Got Talent.” Why? Stop letting what other people might think block your enjoyment of life!

Give up comparison and judgement

Mark Twain said, “Comparison is the death of joy.” And I believe it. We live in a world in which comparison is the foundation for our assessment of value. It’s hard to be filled with joy when you believe you’re not _____ (good, strong, worthy, etc.) enough. Likewise, when we judge other people, things, and events, we are buying into the notion of comparative assessment. Noticing and reducing the amount of comparison and judgement we engage in will start to free us up to embrace whatever point we’re at in our lives, and experience freely the joy that comes along with that.

Choose love

There will always be challenging situations and difficult people to deal with. When you find yourself in these moments, choose to approach them with love and compassion for yourself and others. In *May Cause Miracles*, author Gabrielle Bernstein asks us to consider what a loving response would look like, as opposed to one fueled by fear, anger, and resentment. Furthermore, choose to surround yourself with people, circumstances, and events that (more often than not) will encourage the experience of more joy and love in your life.

Michelle Despault is Director in the Communications department at the OECTA Provincial Office.



REFLECTIONS ON *Easter*

Bless the Lord

By Tina-Marie Lockyer

The quiet solitude of Lent, when we try to add prayers, fast, and give more to others, grants us time to reflect on our personal faith journey. It allows us to consider how we have prepared for the Easter season. Easter is a time of rebirth and renewal; we celebrate this time in the Catholic Church because although Christ died for us, it is through His resurrection that we are alive and filled with His Holy Spirit.

At Easter I always think of how fortunate I am to be in a parish filled with people who share the same love of Jesus Christ as I do. We are wholly blessed to live in our country where we have so many opportunities to share Christ with others, and for this we can thank God. Everything I have at Easter, at all times, is because God has chosen this time and this day to give it to me. We are what God has made us in our soul and body. The song “10,000 Reasons”, based on Psalm 103:1-5, comes to mind when I begin to count my many blessings.

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with loving kindness and compassion; who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle.”

We are renewed in Christ at Easter and like the eagle we can soar. We are asked to spread the good news of the gospel when we leave mass; now is the time! Bring back the Alleluia and celebrate that God is good and that He blesses your life every day. ♦

Changes

By Michel Derikx

When I was a young boy, Christmas meant the world to me. It was the time of year when my senses were overwhelmed with changes. Changes at home as we added a tree adorned with cherished decorations, and a well-used nativity scene to our living room (we were reminded not to touch one of the kings that had been broken a Christmas or two before). There were changes at school as the classroom weathered a storm of paper snowflakes that dangled from the ceiling amidst countless links of green and red paper chains that would have rivalled anything old Jacob Marley dragged about. And then there were the changes in Leamington's FW Woolworth store: a fresh infusion of must-have toys, the likes of which we had not seen before; Christmas cards with wonderful wishes in sparkling print; and seasonal wrapping paper full of Santas, snowmen, trees, and wreaths. Changes were all about me. I was awash in change and I loved it.

And, of course, there was change in the church. The songs were different. They were different not just in words, but rather in the very way they were now being proclaimed by those around me. The decorations were different, too. The smells were different – more candles and more incense. The priest's vestments were different: the ordinary green was gone, replaced by a very solemn shade of purple, except of course on Gaudete Sunday, when they sprang to life with colour. Even the people, inside and outside of church, behaved in a way that was different. God had given us His Son, Jesus, and that gift gave us Christmas,

which was, in my mind, about the best thing that God could have ever given us.

And then, at some point in my life, I found that Easter had unexpectedly become more meaningful to me than Christmas. Quietly, softly, I felt I was called to a deeper understanding, a rebirth in my relationship with Jesus, and with God. As is said in John 3:8, “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

It is not that I loved Christmas any less, it's just that I seemed to have come to love Easter even more, and I am not sure I can even explain why. I sometimes wonder if it was a renewal of faith, or a rebirth of spirit. Regardless, the realization and understanding of what God has given me, and what I am being offered by God, is often overwhelming. It can fill me with joy and in the very same moment move me to tears. It causes me to wonder why He loves me so.

Whether my epiphany came as a result of age, or whether it was through God's intervention into my heart, a passage that once told me of the coming of a child so powerfully tells me now of a father's love when he surrendered what was most precious to him, to show his love to the rest of his children: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). ♦

Resurrection People

By Alana Cernjul

As Lent nears its end and we enter into the season of Easter, we are face to face with the centrality of our faith: the Paschal Mystery. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brings us a fullness in our understanding of God. That we can strive for the Kingdom in this life, and be promised it in the next is, simply put, awesome. It is therefore not surprising that even the secular imagery of Easter represents this new life, from the blossoming of spring flowers coming up through the awakening earth, to fluttering butterflies finding flight after bursting through a cocoon.

We are Resurrection people. This is what inspires me, fills me, and offers me the hope of what is to come. It's easy for winter to drag us down, and even easier to let that consume us: the bitterness, the sadness, the frustration of deadlines and report cards. Returning to school after March Break and re-entering a reality that we left behind is not always an easy feat.

The Gospel of the Transfiguration of our Lord helps us to connect the joy of the Paschal Mystery with our daily life. In the story, after travelling up the mountain with Jesus, Peter,

James, and John witness His complete transfiguration, where "his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white" (Matthew 17:2). Their faith is renewed when they hear God speak, confirming that Jesus is His Son.

When our hearts are filled with God's assurance and love, we sometimes fear what will happen if we move on, or in the case of the disciples, go back down the mountain. But Jesus convinces them that they must. And so must we. It is here that we understand our vocation to evangelize the good news and build the Kingdom on earth. For though they were rested, fulfilled, and content on the mountain, Jesus reminds the disciples that as people of life – as Resurrection people – taking time for prayer is essential, but listening to God's call in our hearts is only where we begin. Descending the mountain is where we will find true renewal as we continue our work to make real the Kingdom of God on earth. We must allow the Holy Spirit to work through us in our daily interactions and relationships. Only in this way can we fully experience the Resurrection in the promise of eternal life. With a renewed faith, we are called to "preach the Gospel at all times [and,] when necessary, use words" (St. Francis of Assisi). ♦

Alana Cernjul, Michel Derikx, and Tina-Marie Lockyer are members of the Catholic Education Committee.

ONTARIO TEACHERS' PENSION PLAN A GLOBAL LEADER IN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

By Chris Cowley

Over the past decade, Canadian public pension funds, including the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP or Teachers', for short), have been world leaders in a new frontier of investing: infrastructure. This includes assets such as clean energy projects, airports, seaports, rail lines, and toll roads. World financial markets certainly took notice when pension plans such as Teachers', the Canada Pension Plan, and Quebec's Caisse de Depot began pioneering these investments, and they are now seeking to play catch-up. This article will help to explain why these investments are important to Teachers' long-term investing strategy, while acknowledging some of the risks that come with these kinds of initiatives.

First, it is important to understand the scope of their infrastructure investments around the world. Teachers' infrastructure investments focus on having either a majority of stakes or co-controlling stakes, allowing them to adopt an active governance approach to create sustainable long-term value in their portfolio companies, with the intent of simultaneously enriching the communities they serve.

Teachers' infrastructure portfolio, which is worth more than \$15 billion, is diversified by geography, development stage, and industry, with assets broadly segmented into industry sectors such as water/waste water, gas distribution, renewable and conventional energy, and transport/logistics. More specifically, OTPP manages investments in airports, container terminals, power generation, transmission and distribution facilities, desalination (a process to remove minerals from water), natural gas distribution systems, high-speed rail, and renewable power generation assets.

A major reason behind Teachers' pursuit of these types of "liquid" assets (i.e. assets that can be converted to cash relatively easily) is the low-interest environment that has made traditional assets like government bonds and fixed income investments less desirable. It is these infrastructure investments that help to provide the returns needed to offset the unusually low interest rates that have plagued pension plans around the world since the Great Recession of 2008. These high-quality, high-value assets are located throughout the world, and help provide the returns needed to pay pensions. In Europe, OTPP's investments include: four airports; High Speed 1, which connects London to the Channel Tunnel; and Scotia Gas Network, which is the second largest supplier of natural gas in the United Kingdom. In Latin America, OTPP holds major assets providing clean water and clean energy to nations throughout the continent. In North America and the Asia-Pacific region, they have major holdings in the ports of Vancouver, New York, and New Jersey, as well as desalination facilities in Sydney, Australia.

Canada's large pension funds began flexing their international investment muscles following the introduction of tougher banking regulations after the financial crisis of 2008. New rules placed on US banks, thanks to the Dodd-Frank law (also known as the *Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act*), were designed to limit risks taken by the financial sector. Canadian pension funds, like Teachers', have been unencumbered by those rules, and have capitalized on low-risk infrastructure investment opportunities that provide strong, long-term guaranteed returns.

However, these asset classes do not come without some risk. This is why Teachers' has recently moved its risk functions to an independent department, and is also adjusting its portfolio construction to account for these risks and attempt to balance the potential downside. In a recent interview, Teachers' Chief Investment Officer Bjarne Larsen welcomed greater oversight, while maintaining that risk is part of the equation. "You have to have risk, that's how you earn a return," he said. The key is to ensure that losses will not be too great when assets or market conditions fail to meet expectations, even if that means taking a lower return at the outset. "Over time, you will be able to harness a risk premium and get the kind of return you need with diversified risk," said Larsen. "That's what we have been working on."

You may have noticed from my examples that many of Teachers' infrastructure investments are located around the world, not Canada. There are many reasons for this, but the situation may change in the coming years, as the federal and provincial governments look for partners to build and maintain infrastructure projects here at home. If some of these projects fit with the OTPP's overall investment strategy and meets established risk tolerances, Teachers' could become involved. In doing so, the plan will continue to work to deliver on its sole obligation: delivering pensions for members, now and for the future.

Chris Cowley is OTF Table Officer on the OECTA Provincial Executive and is responsible for promoting members' interests at OTF. OTF and the Government of Ontario provide direction to the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan.

MARCHING ON

The continued fight for women's rights

By Barbara Dobrowolski

I grew up taking women's equality as a given. I heard Prime Minister Justin Trudeau express the same sentiment at the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women one year ago. It used to be unthinkable to me that women's rights could take a step backward. But here we are, in a world where the President of the United States thinks descriptions of groping women is normal "locker room talk," and Vladimir Putin just signed a law decriminalizing domestic violence, immediately doubling reports of such incidents.

These events have been stark reminders that, while it might be 2017, women around the world continue to be plagued by inequities. Here are some startling statistics:

- 155 countries have laws that legally restrict women in their employment and entrepreneurship options. For example, in some countries, women cannot drive, work at night, or open businesses without their husband's permission.
- Around the world, 1.1 billion women are excluded from access to banking.
- Globally, a woman makes only 77 cents for every dollar a man makes. (It is even worse in Canada, where the wage gap is currently at 72 cents for every dollar.)
- Women spend at least twice as much time as men on unpaid work such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and the elderly.
- Only 28 per cent of employed women worldwide have any paid maternity leave.
- Half as many women as men have pensions.
- Women disproportionately occupy jobs that pay less, are part-time, and provide no benefits.
- Only four per cent of Fortune 500 companies are led by women.

And these are just the economic inequalities! There are also 460,000 sexual assaults per year in Canada. One of every five women in college or university is sexually assaulted. Of every 1,000 sexual assaults in Canada only 33 are reported, of which only three lead to conviction. Aboriginal women are 3.5 times more likely to be sexually assaulted, half of the time by someone they know. And, as we should all be aware, the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women remains a serious problem that our society is still grappling with.

Vigilance, protest, and action – that is the call to women everywhere! We cannot rest on our laurels. The Women's Marches that took place around the world in January were a manifestation of the recognized need and continued commitment of women and *men* to fight for women's equality.

Besides marching in the streets, what can we do? We can hold our governments accountable to work toward the Sustainable Development Goals they have signed. We can lobby

governments for infrastructure spending in non-traditional areas such as for quality, publicly funded childcare and eldercare, enabling women to equally participate in the workforce. We can end occupational segregation, by encouraging girls to pursue careers in male-dominated STEM areas (science, technology, engineering, and math.) We can fight for decent, living wage jobs, with pensions for all – unionization helps, as it has been amply shown that unions help to distribute wealth more equitably within organizations, industries, and countries. At the same time, we can work to shift the societal norms that largely place unpaid work burdens on women. And, above all, we can help to raise children who recognize gender equality.

As Donald Trump has unfortunately reminded us, progress on women's issues can be uneven through time and across the world. But we cannot afford to despair – this is all the more reason to double-down on our resolve, make our voices heard, and ensure that women's equality becomes a reality in our time!

The Association's Status of Women Committee has several responsibilities:

- To advise the Provincial Executive on ways to enhance the status of women in society, both nationally and internationally
- To develop recommendations for the Provincial Executive to assist units to establish programs to educate members about international women's issues
- To make recommendations to the Provincial Executive for possible action related to the status of women
- To make recommendations to the Provincial Executive on outreach to community-based women's organizations
- To inform all members of the current trends, issues, and problems as they pertain to the status of women internationally

If you are interested in joining the Status of Women Committee for 2017-18, visit catholicteachers.ca and apply by **May 1**.

Barbara Dobrowolski is Second Vice-President on the OECTA Provincial Executive.

WITH APOLOGIES TO GEORGE WASHINGTON

We (Need) the People

By Mark Tagliaferri

To this day, sitting atop a dresser in my parents' home, is one of my all-time favourite gifts: a special edition, 1:6 scale, collectible action figure of George Washington – complete with detachable telescope and scabbard! The reason the gift is special to me is that, in many ways, Washington was my entry into American history and politics. Mind you, not for the reasons you might suspect.

My interest in George didn't stem from his military exploits, or political thinking, or even his presidential policies. Instead, what I found so fascinating was the "cult of Washington," the near sacred reverence with which Americans regard him. It was almost as though Americans created a secular version of our Holy Trinity: Washington as father, the people as collective son, and the constitution as the Holy Spirit.

Each element of this triad is sacred. Unimpeachable. Untouchable, even. Amidst the extreme divisiveness in American politics everyone can at least agree in the supremacy and authority of the constitution. In fact, faith in the American system of government is thought to be so concrete and so stable that many assume it can withstand any assault – most recently and notably from Donald Trump, Commander-in-Tweet.

But I wouldn't be so sure.

Now, I'm not suggesting the United States is going to descend into anarchy, with roving gangs of death squads. Instead, what I'm saying is that the strength many are quick to ascribe to a constitution, or system of checks and balances, creates a false sense of security; and if we're not careful, the same process that's happening in America can happen here, in Canada, and undermine some of the governmental principles we take for granted.

To understand why this is, we must remember that, at its founding, the American republic was on the brink of collapse. Delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1787 agreed on practically nothing. In fact, pretty much the only thing they did agree on was that, at all costs, government must avoid splitting into political parties – what they called "factions" (and as you might expect, this agreement broke down pretty quickly).

The point is that the US Constitution and the system of government was a product of compromise. Trade-offs to ensure small states had a say; assurances that southern states could preserve their "way of life" (translation: slavery).

Even at the time, the founders were aware of these weaknesses. Privately, Washington regretted, "I wish the constitution, which is offered, had been made more perfect." Jefferson went so far as to suggest ripping up the document every 19 years, and writing it anew – to him, the context and problems of subsequent generations would be unique, and so the original document would be useless. Even the constitution's primary author, James Madison, felt that it offered little more than "parchment barriers" against potential abuses of rights.

Aware that this was an experiment in government, politicians understood that to have any legitimacy, citizens needed to accept, and bind themselves to government authority. What happened over the next half-century or so might playfully be described as a 19th century PR campaign. Across the nation, popular "media" – essays, broadsides, newspaper columns, schoolbooks, sermons, speeches, biographies, parades, and more – instructed citizens on liberal and republican virtues, emphasizing the authority of the federal government. In essence, historians argue, this process converted government documents into sacred texts. By reading the constitution aloud to the family, or hanging Washington's portrait on the dining room wall, citizens were giving tacit consent to be governed by the American system. They were forging a sense of identity, legitimacy, and authority.

This was critical to holding the country together during the republic's early years, especially during the War of 1812. Yet, almost 250 years later, I fear it has produced a false sense of security.

Both in Canada and the US, our systems of government are far more fragile, and far more dependent on compromise, than we might think. Things like having regular press conferences, where journalists hold government to account; appointing – and listening to – advisors with subject expertise; speaking carefully and respectfully about the judiciary, private citizens, and military and foreign affairs. Being honest. We have come to expect these features as part of our system of government. But not one of these is enumerated or enshrined in law.

They are nothing more than custom and convention. They can be disregarded at a whim.

We have seen this in the United States, on both small and large scales. A cabinet comprised of uniquely unqualified individuals, many of whom have spent their



careers trying to destroy the very departments they now control. A creeping use of racism and mistruth in the White House's rhetoric. Firing staff who hold opposing views. The cleansing of government websites to remove any mention of climate change. A senior official, standing in front of the presidential seal, declaring, "The powers of the President... will NOT be questioned!" Any attempt at comprehensive accounting is futile: there is simply too much chaos to catalogue.

We see "checks and balances" as a self-correcting mechanism: when one branch of government pushes, the other pushes back, and voila, equilibrium restored. But this is not how it works. A disproportionate amount of power is vested in the executive, and the system relies on a willingness of all participants to compromise, as the founders did. But, as we're seeing more and more, there's little recourse when the executive simply refuses to play ball. And there's little recourse when the executive chooses to bypass traditional checks.

Consider Trump's favourite policy tool: the Executive Order. Trump is on pace to sign 102 EOs per year –the highest average ever for a president outside of the Great Depression or a World War. But it's *why* the administration is so fond of EOs, rather than introducing bills, which is so instructive. Simply put, EOs don't require Congressional approval, but they have the same legal weight. They bypass Congressional debate, and unless they are ruled explicitly unconstitutional, there's little courts can do to stop them. Viewed this way, Trump's reliance on EOs is not accidental: it's a convenient and constitutional workaround for those pesky checks and balances.

As terrifying and unprecedented as this is, it all falls completely within presidential prerogative – yet another reminder of the distinction between the written constitution and the unwritten customs we have come to take for granted.

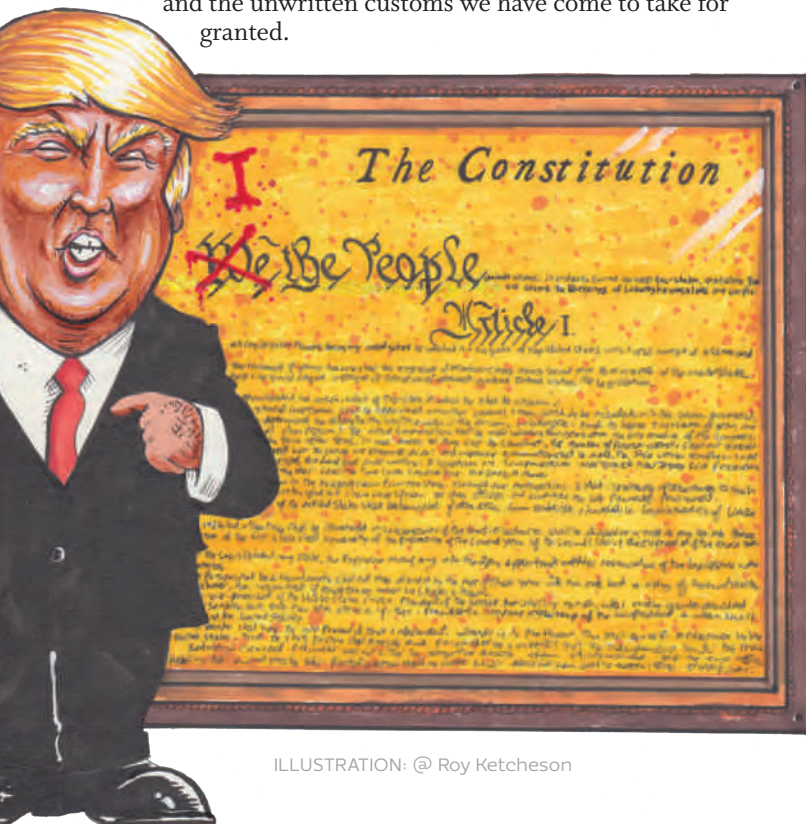


ILLUSTRATION: @ Roy Ketcheson

Certainly, the current situation in America is unique, but it is not unique to America. Before we go too far down the back-patting road of "thank goodness we're Canadian," it's worth recalling that, prior his ouster, Stephen Harper had started making inroads on his quest to erode Supreme Court authority. He and the Conservative Party had almost unilaterally started walking-back longstanding rights, and infringing upon others. As this was happening, there was little Canadian citizens could do to stop it.

Removing Harper from office didn't reverse some of the underlying forces that were set in motion. Research from EKOS found that, over the past five years there has been "a persistent and deepening pessimism among Canadians about their economic future, with racism, nativism, and xenophobia appearing as byproducts of growing economic angst and resentment." And if you believe a recent headline from the *Toronto Sun*, "Canadians Overwhelmingly Support a Values Test" for incoming immigrants – a central platform feature of Conservative leadership hopeful/Trump-whisperer, Kellie Leitch.

Through all of this, my fear is not the fall of democracy; I worry more about a shifting sense of normalcy – the things about which we become outraged, and the point at which outrage is subject to diminishing returns. Something may be shocking the first time we see it; but how about the 10th time, the 100th, the 1,000th? Trump is temporary; Leitch, likely even more so. Nevertheless, we must remain cognizant that the system will not correct itself. Governments and constitutions are neither concrete nor sacred; they are frameworks – a roof without walls, as one historian said.

However, the genius of this roof is that it is propped-up by the people. And it can be changed by the people. It is one of the few true checks enshrined in founding documents of all democracies. So we must keep fighting, voicing opposition, speaking truth to power. The incredible energy on display during the Women's March must be sustained. On a smaller scale, we must continue to use classrooms to develop engaged citizens, with critical thinking skills. In the end, as Christopher Hitchens was fond of saying, you get the rights you're willing to fight for.

I have no doubts that in his 2017 farewell address, President Obama was channeling the American founders when he said: "Our Constitution is a remarkable, beautiful gift. But it's really just a piece of parchment. It has no power on its own. We, the people, give it power." I imagine George Washington would have been proud of these words – maybe I'll ask him next time I visit my parents.

Mark Tagliaferri is Communications Specialist in the Communications department at the OECTA Provincial Office.

OUR READERS WRITE ON:

CODING

By Catherine S. Veteri, Timothy D. Miller, Mark C. Palma, Richard Annesley, and Steven Floyd

There's little point in debating the "value" of coding, or its possible applications for future employment opportunities. Coding is here, and it is becoming increasingly essential for our jobs and even our personal lives. Coding has even started to lose its aura of mystery. Now, when we find out that someone writes code, we have some understanding of how that person actually spends their time. We do not need to sell coding as a skill that's worth teaching or learning.

The issue now is actually a much more practical one. We have added to the knowledge base: new information and new skills are available to learn. But where and how do they fit in? Coding is a new language. It requires math processing skills to become proficient. At the same time, its applications are most evident in science and technology. Especially in light of the issues with the recent American election, as Catholic educators we need to be prepared to demonstrate how this skill can be used in a socially responsible way.

So, coding is not meant to "replace" knowledge in any one particular subject area – it has its own place. We can't simply substitute coding lessons in our usual math block, or cut out a certain language unit and paste it under coding. And there's still the same number of instructional hours in a day. If we're going to add something, then something must necessarily be subtracted.

This is what teachers will want to know:
 First, when am I supposed to learn this?
 Then, when am I supposed to become competent at it?
 Next, when and how am I supposed to teach it?
 Finally, will we be provided the resources that would be necessary to do this successfully?

None of these questions can be answered easily, or quickly. As we come to appreciate the importance of coding in our lives and our students' future, teachers must support one another in grappling with the many complexities of incorporating coding into our schools. This is what we have begun to do in our Collaborative Learning Community; we will continue to work to expose other teachers to coding and encourage them to use it in their classrooms.

Catherine S. Veteri, Timothy D. Miller, Mark C. Palma, Richard Annesley, and Steven Floyd participated in OECTA's Collaborative Learning Communities in 2016.

CORPORATIZATION OF EDUCATION

By Nicholas Gomez

Thirty-five years ago, when I first started teaching high school math and science, the principal at my school was an excellent teacher, but a reluctant administrator. I believe this combination actually made him a great administrator. He knew that the entire system, all the way from the classroom to the Ministry of Education, needed to exist for the sole purpose of creating happy, healthy, and motivated learners; that the system should strive to expose young people to the joy of ideas and their critical contemplation. He understood that education must be a co-operative endeavor. If it takes a village to raise a child, he viewed the education system as an extension of the village.

In contrast, many of our current difficulties in education are a result of pretending that education is a business. The value of education is enormous and difficult to quantify, but it clearly affects all of society and is a public good. It is unproductive to try and place our children on a balance sheet. I was there when Mike Harris refused to recognize principals as teachers, and instead made them managers. This began the implementation of the corporate management style (an outdated military, top-down style at that), right down into individual schools. The nearly instant effect of this was the loss of co-operation and collegiality at the school level.

Even the language of the education system has been corporatized. Superintendents of teacher personnel were replaced with human resource managers, none of whom have any experience in the classroom. Any program recommendations that are put forward today must be justified by a "business case" that focuses on the "cost structure going forward," not by how much students and teachers might benefit.

The longer-term effect of these shifts has been an increased need for information and data, and the gross expansion of a testing regime that has teachers and students spending more time and energy worrying about a single test than about their overall learning and well-being. What good is a great test score if the students aren't fulfilled, contributing members of our society?

So why the corporatization of education? The simplest answer is: to cut costs. If it works in business, it should work here too, right? But since you cannot raise the price of a priceless product, you instead look to find "savings" in one of the biggest budget lines, creating a never-ending assault on teachers' salaries and benefits.

Those of us who remember them long for the days when fervent corporate attitudes didn't interfere with the teacher's role in the classroom, and when most principals were reluctant administrators whose main concern was helping teachers develop happy, intellectually curious students, on behalf of the global village. We might not be able to stem the flow of change, but as teachers, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that our students don't feel they are just another number.

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