

INSIGHT 21

June 2011

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation - District 21 Teachers

district21.ca

Let us not take thought for our separate interests, but let us help one another.



At this time of year we're all counting days, but these lucky folks are not counting down the days to the end of the school year, but instead their careers. Now is a time to congratulate and celebrate your peers who spent years advocating and fighting for better working conditions for education workers across the province. We will miss them, and hope to see all of them joining our Active Retired Membership group this fall.

PENSION DECISION MADE

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) has reported a projected \$17.2B funding shortfall. The joint sponsors of the OTPP, OTF and the Government of Ontario, have decided to address this shortfall by filing a valuation this year. Significant discussion has taken place with the Plan management about the potential future impact of assumptions such as longevity, interest rates and investment returns which determine the Plan's value and ensure its viability for current and future contributors. The proposal to file this year is in the best interests of plan members and will mitigate the impact on pension benefits of an even larger projected shortfall for a required filing in 2012.

Although a filed valuation is not required until 2012 (we filed in 2009), the decision of the Partners to file this year will permit us to address the current shortfall and seek alternative avenues for funding the Plan to minimize potential future shortfalls before we choose to file again.

To address the 2011 projected funding shortfall, the Partners and OTPP Management are proposing the following amendments to the plan:

- A contribution rate increase of 1.1% to be phased in with increments of 0.4%, 0.35% and 0.35% respectively, in each of the next three years.

- Invoking Conditional Inflation Protection (CIP) at 40% for contributors who retire after 2009. Based on this proposal for filing, and in the absence of future changes to the Plan, these pensioners will receive 60% of the annual cost-of-living (CPI) adjustment on the portion of their pensions for credited service earned after 2009. The portion of their pensions for credited service earned before 2010 will remain fully adjusted to inflation.

In accordance with Bylaw 21.1.1.5, OSSTF/FEESO conducted a vote asking members to endorse or not endorse the plan amendments jointly recommended by the Partners to address the funding shortfall. All OSSTF/FEESO members who are contributors to the OTPP (including OT's, PSSPs and ESS) were eligible to vote. The votes were conducted locally, and the deadline for submitting local results was noon, Friday, June 10th.

All affected Districts reported their pension voting data, and the majority voted to endorse the above proposal. An OTF Board of Governors' Conference Call was conducted Friday evening and, based on the OSSTF/FEESO vote, all ten OSSTF/FEESO Governors voted in favour of the proposal. The proposal was subsequently passed by the OTF Board of Governors.

THROWING STONES

Anthony Marco

The recent dictate by the Ontario College of Teachers on use of electronic communication and social media reinforces many long-standing beliefs of teacher unions in terms of casting a wide net to protect teachers against potential disciplinary issues. Even those beliefs have evolved however, from archaic recommendations of “no electronic communications” with anyone or “no signing up for a social network”, to ones of ensuring education is available to illuminate the perils, pitfalls and promise of such media.

The College re-affirmed highly cautious recommendations for keeping teachers safe, including: not being friends with students on social networks, not texting students, and not becoming engaged in personal email or chat conversations with students. These recommendations are based on real-world risks to teachers based on discipline and criminal charges where evidence has been garnered through electronic communications. As a body responsible for upholding the professional image of teachers, while the first-glance cautions may seem overly restrictive, they are an “advisory”.

As engaged members of our culture, educators are becoming active, engaged members of social networks

and avid content creators online. Many who have been using social networks for long periods of time have the experience to draw lines between “professional” and “social”. There are many web networking tools that are quite appropriate, monitored, and approved by school boards to engage student with methods that are parallel to the experiences they receive on social networks. In fact, they can even be used to model appropriate behaviours on such platforms.

In the same way that real world social (non-professional) interactions with students are cautioned against, the same lines need to be drawn in the digital world.

The advisory reiterates the College’s long-standing mantra that “Teaching is a public profession. Canada’s Supreme Court ruled that teachers’ off-duty conduct, even when not directly related to students, is relevant to their suitability to teach.”

This ominous standard for most teachers has been exacerbated by a nebulous standard of what conduct makes one unsuitable. The constant evolution of digital culture make the standards even more difficult to define. Any person can call the College of Teachers in Ontario and file a complaint at any time and the College has to investigate. The

cautionary tone of the advisory is completely warranted in terms of protecting teachers in Ontario.

Teachers should not, however, have to take a “glass houses” approach to becoming vital contributors to on-line discussions, or content creators. Teachers still have constitutional rights to *“freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication.”* The advisory ends by asking teachers to consider the following ambiguous question: *“How does my online presence – that which I control and that which is posted by others – reflect my professionalism, and how does it reflect the teaching profession?”*

Such a question is patently ridiculous as it asks teachers to pre-suppose the thoughts of others on their professional standards. The College does not offer concrete examples in the advisory. To hold such a standard/threat over the heads of teachers like the Sword of Damocles gives a clear indication of why many teachers still shy away from social networking as a whole, and why there seems to be such a disconnect from those who sit in disbelief at why teachers (and public boards) are hamstrung in serving the needs of a student base that uses the web as a primary communication medium.

Requests for Extension of Vacation Time

It is important that our members are aware that the Board disapproves of members requesting unpaid days for the purpose of extending a vacation (Christmas holidays, March break, Summer holidays, etc.). Unless there is a compassionate reason, the Board has informed us that these will be denied. Members should not plan travel outside of regular vacation periods prior to requesting approval from Scott Sincerbox, Superintendent of Human Resources. If they do, they risk paying travel cancellation fees, and/or discipline if they do not report to work. Members should also be reminded that our contract prohibits the use of personal leave days to extend a holiday period.

Teacher In Charge

Members who wish to act as Teachers-In-Charge are reminded that our contract is clear that this can only occur if all administrators are out of the building. This is also voluntary, except in an emergency, and an Occasional Teacher must be called to replace the Teacher-in-Charge.

TICs are not required to discipline or evaluate other teachers. Be advised that when a Teacher accepts the TIC as the supervisor of the school, they are at that moment acting as the owner of the building, and will be subject by the law to charges and fines. These fines are not covered by OSBIE, The Ontario School Boards’ Insurance Exchange which provides commercial general liability coverage to any teach-

er who acts as a designate for the principal or vice principal as per the Education Act and Bill 157.

Like a Principal and Vice-Principal, TICs are expected to follow all of the legislation and policies that govern education in Ontario, including the Education Act, Fire Codes, Occupational Health and Safety Act, and Ministry policy. They are also expected to uphold HWDSB policy. However, TICs do not receive training from the Board in any of these areas, even though they take on this responsibility when they volunteer, and can be disciplined should they fail in these duties.

District 21 advises teachers to weigh the above very carefully prior to taking on the role of a TIC.

Dealing with Assault in the Workplace

Chantal Mancini

Teachers should be aware that they are not expected to tolerate assault and aggression in the workplace. Workers have the right to be safe. The following is adapted from our provincial organization's website.

What is assault?

Assault is an act of verbal aggression, or an act or threat of physical aggression, which produces damaging or hurtful results.

What should I do if I am assaulted?

1. Immediately report the incident to administration and the police. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO GET THE PERMISSION OF ADMINISTRATION TO CONTACT THE POLICE.** Everyone has the

right to call the police.

2. Seek medical attention, if necessary.
3. Notify your Branch President who will notify the District 21 Office, or alternatively, call us directly.
4. Document what took place before, during, and after the assault. Include names of witnesses.
5. Fill out the appropriate Board incident reports.
6. Do not use sick days for job-related injury. Have administration file a Form 7 with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) to claim workers' compensation.

Who will get involved?

- The District 21 Health and Safety Officer and/or President

- The Joint H&S Committee
- The Board
- Police
- Ministry of Labour, if required.

Other notes

- Teachers have the right to refuse unsafe work, with conditions. For more information, please contact the District 21 Office.
- If legal assistance is required, the President can obtain advice from provincial office.
- Workers' rights to a safe workplace trumps student privacy. If any staff member will be working with a violent student, they have the right to know *before* they work with that student.

THE "WALTERS" AT THE AGM

Dave Delville

Walter Clarke Award

The Walter Clarke Award is given to a member of OSSTF District 21 Teachers' Unit whose work in the classroom and in the community testify to his/her outstanding qualities as a teacher. This year's recipient is **Patricia Jeffery**.

During her teaching career, Patricia has written and implemented a number of units and courses, including the soccer Academy, Basketball and Volleyball Officiating Course, Basketball Focused Physical Education Course, Grade 10 Girls Fitness Course, and a Leadership Course.

Her extracurricular coaching and volunteering has been extensive. She has coached numerous teams, including basketball, volleyball, baseball, soccer, and rugby. She has also been very active in organizing numerous

Athletic Banquets, Terry Fox Fundraisers, CPR Certificate Courses, and field trips, including taking a boys basketball team to Hawaii. Congratulations Patricia.

Walter Lunn Award

This award is given to a member of O.S.S.T.F. District 21 teachers unit, whose work within OSSTF either at the provincial or local level demonstrates a commitment to the principles of our Federation. This year, we had two recipients: **Joanne Beard and Murray Richardson**.

Joanne was deputy Branch President and then Branch President at Sir John A Macdonald for about 10 years. She participated in the provincial days of action and went as far as driving to North Bay to participate in the march on Harris's turf. She always enjoys getting a huge number of staff members to the AGM and mentoring

and encouraging her colleagues to become involved with the union.

Murray was Saltfleet's Collective Bargaining Committee representative in the 1970s during the Wentworth board strike in 1977.

He was a communications officer for the OSSTF provincial takeover team, observing and reporting in a strike newsletter on the negotiations at that time.

He was Grievance Officer for three years in the 1980s and then returned to the Collective Bargaining Committee for the last 12 years, as part of Waterdown's branch executive. He is a respected and reliable voice among the Waterdown membership, always trusted to frame discussions with the wisdom and perspective that his years of service with the federation provide. Congratulations Murray.

COUNTING DOWN TO OCTOBER 6TH

Many political activists around the district already know that October 6th, 2011 is the date of our upcoming provincial election. OSSTF has always been involved in lobbying for public education and the public sector as a whole with our local representatives. We often choose to endorse candidates as a district. Such a practice often lends credence to a candidate in seeking out support from other venues. Our greatest hope, however, is that you do NOT simply take our endorsements for granted. Rather, we far prefer that teachers become involved in the political process and learn about the issues

that affect our bargaining rights and working conditions. The Election Readiness Team will be working to keep you informed of the platforms and positions of Ontario parties before Election Day, especially as they relate to the public sector. If you wish to get involved with Political Action within OSSTF, you can seek to be the Political Action representative at your school, OR, check the website at district21.ca for upcoming meetings of the Election Readiness Team. However you choose to participate, get informed, get involved, knock on doors, make phone calls, put up signs, and (above all) make sure to get out and vote.

ANOTHER AGM IS IN THE BOOKS

Chantal Mancini

On April 28th, about 280 members came out to LIUNA station to take part in our most important meeting of the year—our AGM. Members debated and voted on a number of motions, listened to and asked questions on local and provincial reports, and elected their Executive. Hot topics this year included our pension, the ongoing Accommodation and Review Committee, and Occasional Teacher issues. Members also debated some changes to our constitution and bylaws. Two key changes included moving from one-year terms to two-year terms for Executive members, and an easier process for obtaining a nomination to run for election (ten signatures rather than a Branch nomination process.) The new two-year terms reflect the majority of other Districts around the province as well as our provincial office. The new process for nominations is timely, as we are facing school closures in the near future.

We have a new face on our Executive for the next two years: we welcome Susan Corrigan, of Sir John A. Macdonald SS, as our new Political Action Of-

ficer. Glen Simm, former PAC Officer, was elected Treasurer to replace Tony Viola. Tony has served our District in a number of capacities for over 20 years, and we will greatly miss him on Executive. Of course he will continue to entertain the lucky members at Sir Allan MacNab.

Your Executive for the 2011-2013 term are as follows:

President	Chantal Mancini
1st Vice-President	Anthony Marco
Chief Negotiator	Trevor Powell
2nd Vice-President	Dan Staples
Provincial Councillor	Colleen Wray
Treasurer	Glen Simm
Secretary	Rick Tait
Communications Officer	Dave Delville
Educational Services Officer	Bobbi Pentland
Political Action Officer	Susan Corrigan
Status of Women Officer	Leanne Fraser

Congratulations to all, and a big thank you to all of our members who attended the AGM!

Some additional pictures from the OSSTF D21 Retirement Reception held at the beginning of June at St. Naum's hall on Stone Church Rd. E.. Thanks to those who attended to give thanks and congratulations to D21 members.



SUMMER NOTES

For those not lucky enough to be retiring this year, a couple of quick notes for the summer months.

SUMMER HOURS

The District Office is not staffed by release officers during the summer months. We are available to deal with emergencies as necessary. An

emergency is NOT a timetable issue or school-based issue which cannot be resolved until school activities reconvene. Should LEGAL or JOB THREATENING matters arise, call the office and leave a message, or email Chantal at osstf21pres@quickclic.net, Anthony at osstf21vp1@quickclic.net, or Trevor at osstf21cn@quickclic.net.

BENEFITS

For out of Ontario travel in the summer, it is best to carry your Benefits card, your policy number, the GreatWestLife 1-800 number and the board's phone number in case there are issues with GWL.

Have a great summer. Stay safe. And we look forward to a far off September.

Contact Insight 21 - 1423 Upper Ottawa St. Hamilton, ON, L8W 3J6 - insight21@gmail.com

Communications Officer - Dave Delville, Political Action Officer - Glen Simm

Layout by Anthony Marco, printed at JH French, 293 Mary Street North, Hamilton, Ontario