



History of OECTA

ONTARIO ENGLISH
**Catholic
Teachers**
ASSOCIATION

catholicteachers.ca

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all faced the problem of earning
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History of OECTA



SR. MARY EMMANUEL

The creation of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) answered a long-felt need. The province's Catholic teachers had for years carried on their work as isolated groups. Without a unifying bond among individual Catholic teachers, there could be no official contact between them and other teacher groups working in Ontario's the elementary and secondary schools. But their aims and problems were fundamentally the same. All devoted themselves to the education of youth; all wanted to improve the education system; all faced the problem of earning a livelihood while they dedicated themselves to one of the greatest of all vocations: teaching. The salaries paid to teachers, and the conditions in which they worked testify to the public's lack of appreciation for the work of the Catholic teacher, especially the Catholic lay teacher, of that time.

In 1917, the lay separate school teachers of Toronto organized and under the guidance of Brother Rogation, negotiated a salary increase of almost 100 per cent. Although the religious teachers gave the Toronto Association moral support but never officially joined, the group continued to represent Catholic lay teachers until they decided to join the new provincial organization created in 1944.

For many years, the late Dr. F. J. McDonald, inspector of separate schools in Ottawa, had been convinced that the efforts and achievements of separate school teachers were neither understood nor appreciated. In 1930, under his leadership, separate school

teachers in Ottawa had set up their own local organization, which made both professional and economic gains. Despite these achievements, Dr. McDonald insisted on the benefits a provincial organization would bring to all Catholic teachers. Although teachers were aware of the call to Catholic action by His Holiness Pius XI, urging the organization of workers and other groups, especially in educational institutions, they found the task of organizing all Catholic teachers in Ontario difficult. It was only after several years of discussion that they took the first concrete steps.

The first step was to consult the Most Reverend John C. Cody, DD, then Bishop of Victoria, about the merits of forming a provincial teachers' organization. His advice dispelled doubts and fears, and contributed greatly to the success achieved. Soon after, Dr. McDonald consulted separate school inspectors of the province who encouraged the teachers to proceed with their plan. Cecilia Rowan, president of the Ottawa English Catholic Teachers' Association, and her executive wrote to the superiors of all the religious congregations teaching in Ontario. Without exception they replied that such an organization would be productive and offered wholehearted co-operation to any local group that would take the initiative. Members of the clergy were also consulted, among them Reverend Daniel Lord, SJ, and Reverend J. A. Feeney of London. The next step was to discuss the enterprise with the archbishops and the bishops of the province, with the idea of organizing along diocesan lines.

1943 to 1960

OTF and OECTA are Born

Matters had reached this stage in the autumn of 1943 when the Department of Education informed teaching groups incorporated at the time of a draft of a teaching profession act. The act proposed “automatic membership” in a federation of all teachers in the tax-supported schools of the province. If Catholic teachers had not already laid the groundwork, it is difficult to see how OECTA could have been organized in time to take its place in the new Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF).

In 1943 there were four provincial teachers’ organizations: the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF), organized in 1919; the Federation of Women Teachers’ Associations of Ontario (FWTAO), organized in 1918; the Ontario Public School Men Teachers’ Federation (OPSMTF), organized in 1921, and L’ Association des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO), organized in 1939. The Ontario Teachers’ Council established by the first three groups had for some time been studying the possibilities of a teaching profession act, which would require that all teachers in tax-supported schools belong to a provincial professional organization to be known as the Ontario Teachers’ Federation. A draft of the proposed act was drawn up and circulated among the teachers of the province. The Ottawa Catholic teachers’ executive found that the draft gave the province’s Catholic teachers the choice of becoming members of OTF through one of the three groups in the Ontario Teachers’ Council or of forming a new group.

The Department of Education sent out ballots to all Catholic teachers asking them to vote on the two alternatives. Ottawa consulted the executive of AEFO, and the two decided it would be advisable for both to join the Ontario Teachers’ Federation, representing all Catholic teachers in the province. Fearing that many English Catholic teachers might not know of the proposal to form an English Catholic teachers’ Association, the Ottawa organization sent explanatory letters to principals and teachers, urging them to vote for a Catholic teachers’ group. The result of this vote was conclusive and convinced the Department of Education that in addition to OSSTF, FWTAO and OPSMTF, the proposed act would have to make provisions for all teachers in Ontario’s separate schools.

Expansion Begins

Meanwhile, the work of organizing English Catholic teachers went on. A meeting of diocesan delegates took place on February 18, 1944 in Ottawa, attended by teachers from Windsor, London, Belleville, Kingston, Toronto, Peterborough, Pembroke, Cornwall, Alexandria and Ottawa. Dr. F. J. McDonald and Inspector C. P. Matthews of Kingston were present to lend their support and Reverend Vincent A. Priester, executive director of the Ontario English Catholic Education Association, represented that group. Delegates decided unanimously that an English Catholic teachers’ Association should be formed with membership open to all English speaking Catholic teachers, those without Ontario certificates to be classed as associate members. A provisional executive was

chosen to hold office until Easter when a provincial meeting would be held. The first executive consisted of Margaret Lynch of Windsor, president; Mother Marie Therese, IBVM of Toronto, first vice-president; F. J. McElligott of Pembroke, second vice-president; Brother Stanislaus of London, third vice-president, and Cecilia Rowan of Ottawa, secretary.

Establishing the provincial executive was a timely step: a few weeks later the Department of Education asked OECTA to send a delegate to a Toronto meeting to discuss a fourth unit. The president, Margaret Lynch, delegated Reverend L. K. Poupore, OMI of St. Patrick’s College, Ottawa, to attend representing the English Catholic teachers of the province. He was also commissioned to hold talks with the representative of L’ Association des enseignants franco-ontariens, Mr. Roger St. Denis. They finally agreed to join OTF as two independent Catholic groups, AEFO and OECTA, since the members of AEFO did not wish to lose their identity as bilingual teachers.

Until 1968, OECTA and AEFO each had only five governors on the OTF board, unlike the other three affiliates who each had 10, for a total of 40 governors. In 1968, the English Catholic and French teachers increased their representation to 10 governors each as a result of expansion in their school systems in the late sixties.

These successful negotiations led Father Poupore to serve as chairperson of the legislation committee of OECTA from 1944 to 1952, as chairperson of the OTF legislation committee during the first year of its existence and for a second time in 1951-52. The *Teaching Profession Act* passed in June 1944, did not mention OECTA because it had not yet been incorporated: that was achieved on September 8, 1944.

OECTA’s first provincial meeting was an outstanding success: more than 600 English Catholic teachers crowded the Royal York Hotel in Toronto for two days at Easter. The large attendance, the keen interest of delegates, and their spirit of co-operation proved that all English Catholic teachers in Ontario agreed on the need for a provincial organization. Margaret Lynch had guided the preparation of OECTA’s first constitution. Copies were mailed out before the meeting to just over 20 people - the total mailing list.

At the general meeting, delegates adopted the constitution, which has formed the basis of all further revision and amendments. They ratified the temporary appointments and created the office of treasurer to which they elected Mary Prunty of Toronto. On the second day, delegates agreed to the creation of 19 districts and set their boundaries. During the next 18 years, only four districts were added and few changes were made to the original boundaries.



MARGARET LYNCH
First President
of OECTA
1944-1945

1960 to 1984



FATHER
B. W. HARRIGAN

The Early Years

The Association was fortunate in its choice of first president. Margaret Lynch's organizing ability, legal mind and sound judgment, carried the infant organization through its first trying year. It was also a demanding year for the secretary, Cecilia Rowan. At the time of the first general meeting there were only three Catholic teacher organizations, in Ottawa, Toronto and Windsor. The lay teachers of Toronto were well organized and most of the women had affiliated with the FWTAO. Only lay teachers in Windsor were

organized. The Ottawa local had existed for many years but was also composed only of lay teachers, and was not affiliated with any outside group.

The main work of the first year was to organize in each of the districts set up at Easter. Requests for information and advice poured in to Cecilia Rowan whose work that year remains a cornerstone of OECTA's organization. With no experience and little help, organizing 19 districts by mail was not easy. Lack of adequate finances allowed only \$300 for the secretary's honorarium; \$200 was added the following year for secretarial help.

During 1946-47 Father B. W. Harrigan was elected president of OTF, one of the outstanding individuals to hold that chair. He had attended the first OECTA meeting and had always taken an active part in proceedings at annual conventions and at meetings of the board of directors. In 1951-52 OECTA again provided OTF with a president, Dorothea McDonnell, who won the respect of all by her leadership during her term. In 1950 Eva Deshaw was elected to represent all separate school teachers on the Superannuation Commission. Many others served OECTA on the board and committees of OTF in its early days: Reverend E. C. Garvey, CSB of Assumption College in Windsor; Reverend L. K. Poupore, OMI of St. Patrick's College in Ottawa; Mother Francesca, SP of Kingston; Sister Lucretia, CSJ of Peterborough; Sister Maureen, GSIC of Ottawa; Sister Mary Lenore, SP of Belleville; Ray Bergin of Ottawa; Alicia Martin of Windsor; Joseph Doyle of Toronto; and Patrick Perdue of Kitchener. When Sister Mary Lenore became president of OECTA and later assumed the presidency of OTF, it settled a thorny question once and for all: a sister could be elected to high office in her professional organization.

OECTA officially came of age in 1949 when a full-time secretary, Marion Tyrrell, was appointed. A year later, the Association moved to Federation House on Prince Arthur Avenue in Toronto. Then in June 1960, the office, with a staff of five, rented space at 1260 Bay Street.



OECTA AGM 1958

OECTA Matures

The OECTA's silver anniversary year witnessed a membership of approximately 14,000, a secretariat staff of six and an office staff of 13. To mark the silver anniversary, the provincial Association provided certificates of recognition for presentation at the district level to all retired members and to all those with 25 years or more of teaching experience.



In 1973 the Association's second full-time director, Mary C. Babcock retired. OECTA paid a special tribute to her at its annual meeting, as did His Holiness by way of the Bene Merenti Papal Medal in recognition of her significant contribution to Catholic education. Her successor, Frank Griffin, assumed the directorship in a period characterized by the large number of serious issues faced by all members of the Association.

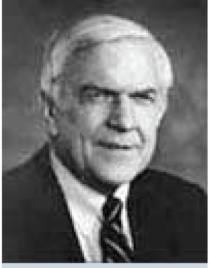
In July 1975, after a period of unprecedented turmoil marked by mass resignation, the *School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act* (Bill 100) became law, providing legislation for the negotiations process and giving teachers the right to strike. As the 70s concluded and the 80s began, a myriad of issues - economic restraints, declining enrolment, surplus of teachers, back-to-basics trends, aging teacher population, teacher stress and burnout - were the focus for much Association activity.



MARCHING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, 1980

At the end of 1981, OECTA's third full-time director, Frank Griffin retired after making a memorable contribution to the Association. In his 16 years he witnessed tremendous growth not only in membership, but also in professional maturity and scope of involvement. Among the achievements of the period, which gave him most satisfaction were Bill 100 giving teachers the right to strike, the creation of the Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO), the establishment of the religious education courses and the provision in Bill 82 for Catholic schools to teach students with developmental disabilities.

1984 to 1990



FATHER
J. FRANK KAVANAGH

Father J. Frank Kavanagh, OMI, assumed the executive director's position in 1981. A former president of OECTA and OTF, Father Kavanagh had worked effectively for years on committees developing the Catholic community's position on extension of the separate school system to Grade 13. Under his leadership, the Association grew in membership and faced new issues of increasing complexity. In 1984, the celebration of the organization's 40th anniversary was a time to reflect on the past, and to contemplate and be challenged by the future.

Completion Achieved

Ontario Premier William G. Davis' statement on June 12, 1984 launched a significant challenge. "Therefore, it is the Government's intention to permit the Roman Catholic school boards to establish a full range of elementary and secondary education and, as part of the public system, to be funded accordingly." Bill 30 would extend funding to Grade 13 in the separate schools of the province.



PREMIER WILLIAM
DAVIS, 1984



April 1, 1989: Former OECTA president Marie Kennedy, flanked by Robert Nixon, Treasurer of Ontario, addresses more than 25,000 teachers at rally for OTF to have full and equal partnership in the administration of the teachers' pension.



Teachers march against
pornography

That commitment, confirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada on June 25, 1987 directed OECTA to continue to fulfill the two-fold mandate of Catholic education:

1. to provide an educational experience for Catholic youth that is:
 - a) academically superlative;
 - b) boldly contemporary; and
2. to provide an education that provides an experience of the Good News of Christ by being:
 - a) openly Christian and Catholic; and
 - b) increasingly a hope filled vision of life.

1990 to 1995

The Challenge Continues



JAMES CAREY

In the fall of 1990, James Carey left his position with OTF to become OECTA's general secretary when Father Kavanagh retired. A provincial past president of OECTA, he assumed leadership of an organization of just over 30,000 members. He was "on deck" in 1990 when Mary Babcock, retired OECTA director, became the first woman and teacher to receive the Medal of Honour from the Catholic Education Foundation of Ontario for outstanding contributions to Catholic education in Ontario. Although the '90s saw the beginning of financially difficult

years, OECTA continued to serve the separate school teachers of Ontario. In 1991, an agreement signed by OECTA and the Ontario Catholic Occasional Teachers' Association allowed occasional teachers to become members of OECTA, whose membership then rose to over 35,000. Collective bargaining strategists were asked to find "creative" solutions as the provincial government and school boards cried poor. For the first time in many years, the council of presidents in June 1992 considered major cutbacks as it faced the task of striking a balanced budget. At the end of the 1992-93 school year, Premier Bob Rae introduced the "Social Contract" to reduce government debt. OECTA entered into discussions to protect the negotiated settlements of local units and the teachers' pension plan. As late as June 1995, negotiators throughout the province still faced uphill battles as they tried to recover the financial ground lost through government's freeze of teachers' salary increments.

Despite these hardships, members discovered reserves of energy and hope to celebrate the Association's 50th anniversary in 1993-94. There was much to celebrate. Although the struggle for fair funding of separate schools continued, the Association now boasted 60 units and 88 branch affiliates comprised of some 32,000 statutory members. AGM 1994, held in Ottawa, OECTA's birthplace, provided the occasion for a gala celebration recognizing half a century of devotion to the welfare of Catholic teachers in Ontario.

To complete its golden anniversary year, the Association moved to acquire a permanent home. At AGM 1992, delegates voted to establish a building fund by diverting money from the reserve fund in order to purchase a permanent home for OECTA within five years. Several units had also purchased buildings. A special council of presidents meeting on December 3, 1994 voted to buy the premises at 65 St. Clair East, which the Association now occupies. The official blessing by the Most Rev. M. F. Ustrzycki, DD took place on February 3, 1995.



Father Thomas Berry, environmentalist and author of *The Universe Story*, was a speaker at OECTA's Christian Curriculum Development Conference.

1995 to 1999

New Government – New Challenges

The election of a majority Conservative government on June 8, 1995 presented the Association with a new set of challenges. Led by Mike Harris, the provincial government promised to preserve funding for education in the classroom, while reducing costs by eliminating the so-called fat in the system. Teachers did not have long to wait to understand the scope of the proposed government cuts. Junior Kindergarten, Grade 13 (OAC), Adult Education were among threatened programs. Teachers in all publicly funded schools across the province feared for the future of the educational system and for their jobs.



On January 13, 1996, 37,000 teachers led by OECTA, assembled at Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto and marched to Queen's Park to protest \$400 million in proposed cuts to education funding.

As the extent of the government's debt reduction plans became clearer, the education sector and the labour movement forged new links to fight sweeping lay-offs and cuts to social programs. OECTA organized a Rally for Education at Queen's Park on January 13, 1996, which attracted some 37,000 demonstrators in an historic peaceful display of opposition to the government's policies and its vision for Ontario. Successful days of protest organized by the Ontario Federation of Labour, which OECTA had joined in 1995, started in London on December 11, and moved on to Hamilton on February 23-24 when 100,000 turned out for the largest demonstration in Canadian history, to Kitchener on April 19, and Peterborough on June 24. As the 1995-96 school year drew to a close, members had become aware of the magnitude of the struggle to change the direction of government policies. Led by Claire Ross, who succeeded James Carey as general secretary on January 1, 1996, the Association was gearing up for the fight.

We Won't Back Down

The rallying cry "We won't back down" from a song by Tom Petty, which punctuates the video produced by OECTA to continue the momentum of its successful Queen's Park Rally became the theme of 1996-97. The Conservative government's second year in power challenged OECTA and the other affiliates of the Ontario Teachers' Federation with a constant barrage of "crises" demanding quick yet thoughtful responses.

Throughout the province, the effort to regain ground lost during the three years of the Social Contract absorbed the energy and attention of most units. Although only the Brant elementary branch affiliate was forced to resort to a full strike, many units achieved new contracts only on the eve of walkouts. By June 30, 1997 all OECTA branch affiliates with settlements had managed to buy back the increment through grueling negotiations. At the provincial level, OECTA worked with traditional and new partners against the provincial government's attacks on the public sector and on labour. Late in April, after a filibuster failed to prevent the passage of Bill 103

creating the “Megacity” of Toronto, the Conservative government rammed through Bill 104, the *Fewer School Boards Act*, which amalgamated the 129 school boards in the province, creating 66 regional boards. Opposition to the new law flooded in from all sides - from school boards, trustees, parent organizations and all affiliates of OTF. Despite the groundswell of anger roused by the bill, the government majority ensured its passage. The Education Improvement Commission created by the new law immediately set to work to effect changes in the province. OTF and all affiliates except AEFO launched a court challenge of the commission’s claim of jurisdiction in areas usually reserved for collective bargaining.



1997: OFL-sponsored rallies across Ontario, such as this one in North Bay, gave critics of the Harris government many opportunities to demonstrate their disapproval.

Rumours about the provincial government’s plans to overturn teachers’ collective bargaining rights multiplied throughout the spring and summer, as the Harris government postponed the introduction of this legislation from month to month. However, another piece of legislation, Bill 136, the *Public Sector Transition Stability Act*, showed which way the wind was blowing by proposing to wipe out the bargaining rights of public employees whose workplaces are merged. As a member of the Ontario Federation of Labour, OECTA joined other unions from the private and public sectors to mount a Common Front against Bill 136. At the same time, the Association, along with OTF devoted considerable resources to planning the response to what was anticipated to be an attempt to turn back the clock on teachers’ hard-won bargaining rights.

The Fight of Our Lives



MARSHALL JARVIS
OECTA PRESIDENT
1997-99

Local presidents, called to a special meeting of OECTA’s council of presidents barely a week after the start of the 1997-98 school year, were in no doubt that the Harris government and the education system. At the end of the summer, the Ministry of Education and Training had revealed to OTF and the five affiliates its legislative plans - Bill 160 - to control every aspect of teachers’ working conditions and to centralize power over education spending at Queen’s Park. As Marshall Jarvis, who had succeeded Marilies Rettig as OECTA president on July 1, 1997, told the council, “The government attack

on our profession will set in motion the greatest mobilization of teachers in the history of this province.” While education minister John Snobelen proclaimed, “I don’t believe there’s a possibility of a strike,” the affiliates and OTF continued to organize their membership for a province-wide shut-down of schools if the government did not retreat from the position set out in the new legislation. By September 19, under pressure from the teaching profession, labour and concerned citizens, the government had promised some significant changes to its plans, including retaining principals and vice-principals within the federations, maintaining the existing teacher federation structure, and teachers’ right to strike. However, Bill 160, the so-called *Education Quality Improvement Act* remained a devastating attack on Ontario’s education system. By repealing Bill 100, the *School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act*, by stripping school boards of their power to tax, by seizing control of local spending and opening collective agreements, the provincial government was intent on extracting hundreds of millions of dollars from the education system - even if it meant reducing it to narrow mediocrity.

Province-wide Political Protest

Over the next few weeks, tens of thousands of teachers rallied to the fight against Bill 160. From Toronto’s Maple Leaf Gardens, to Hamilton’s Cops Coliseum, to Red Lake, Moosonee and Sault Ste. Marie, rallies and all-affiliate meetings everywhere drew crowds of educators, and growing numbers of parents and other Ontarians opposed to the Harris government’s policies, which many were calling anti-democratic.

By the third week in October, it was obvious that the province would not change key elements in Bill 160. A cabinet shuffle earlier in the month had replaced John Snobelen as education minister, but his successor, Dave Johnson, was proving just as obdurate. On Wednesday, October 23, word went out to all OTF members in the province: a province-wide political protest shutting down all schools would start on Monday, October 27, if last-ditch talks with the minister failed.

The talks went nowhere, despite Justice Charles Dubin’s attempt to mediate. Picket lines were in place early Monday morning, and with few exceptions, 126,000 teachers in Ontario’s publicly funded schools joined the political protest, the largest work-stoppage in North American history. Spirits were high, as public backing for teachers grew, despite the closed schools. Support from Ontario’s bishops, from the Ontario Federation of Labour and its many member unions, from parent groups and from the general public inspired OECTA members and their OTF colleagues to keep up the struggle. The decision by Justice James MacPherson not to grant the government’s request for an injunction to stop the protest encouraged teachers to renewed efforts. MacPherson refused to say the protest was illegal, noting that the issues raised by Bill 160 are very serious, placing it “on a plane very close to the Charter.” With no end to the protest in sight, the government reacted vindictively. Just six weeks after announcing that principals and vice-principals could stay within teachers’ federations, it reversed itself, declaring they were out as of January 1, 1998. During negotiations held at a secret location, government officials rejected teachers’ proposals

on key issues such as instructional time and class size. Talks broke down on Tuesday night, November 4. Faced with the government's total unwillingness to compromise on any issue, OECTA members remained committed to the protest, flooding their provincial office with thousands of phone calls insisting that schools stay closed.



1997: Following a rally at Maple Leaf Gardens, more than 25,000 teachers burst onto College Street and marched to Queen's Park for an emotional candle-light vigil, organized by OECTA.

On November 6, FWTAO, OPSTF and AEFO announced that their members would return to work on Monday, November 10. Local presidents of OECTA and OSSTF decided over the weekend that their members too would return to work on November 10.

Thousands of teachers rallying at Queen's Park in the fall of 1997 were dismayed by government's lack of respect for the teaching profession. Teachers' return to school did not mean an end to the campaign against Bill 160. The protest had exposed the real agenda behind the bill: to facilitate government efforts to cut hundreds of millions of dollars from education. The revelation that the performance goals of the deputy minister of education included additional cuts of \$667 million to elementary and secondary schools convinced many doubters that financial motives were driving the government's reform plans. The political protest had won unprecedented backing from the public, despite the inconvenience of closed schools. In order to build on this public support, OECTA immediately developed a range of new strategies to fight the Harris government. In an attempt to influence the Legislature, the Association promised a constitutional challenge of the new funding provisions in the bill, and committed itself to joining OTF's court challenge of the provisions affecting principals and vice-principals. Members supported parents' apple-green ribbon campaign for publicly-funded education and continued to picket the constituency offices of Conservative MPPs. Despite all these efforts, the Conservative majority at Queen's Park ensured the passage of Bill 160 on Monday, December 1.

New Political Action



The ferment of political activity continued nevertheless. OECTA set its sights on the next provincial election, in the hope of ensuring a pro-education government. In a campaign it dubbed "Seize the Day," the Association encouraged members to join a political party and work to elect pro-education candidates in

their areas. The campaign included forging links to a wide variety of groups, including labour councils and social justice organizations. Political action was to take many forms, including flying picket squads, a boycott of businesses supporting only the Tories, and a report card to track cuts to education.

Although perhaps less visible than its political activities in 1997-98, OECTA's work on behalf of the professional and personal interests of its members continued apace. Government initiatives, such as secondary school reform, standardized testing, the province-wide elementary school report card, and the introduction of new curricula, kept the Association on its toes. The work of relatively new players in education, such as the Ontario College of Teachers, the Education Improvement Commission and the Evaluation Quality Assessment Office, challenged the Association to develop productive relationships with these institutions in order to protect teachers, their students - the whole education system.

The 1998 Annual General Meeting confirmed members' support for the policies and actions of their provincial leaders. Soon after, however, these leaders faced new hurdles, which set the tone for the Association's efforts over the next few months. The courts upheld the government's removal of principals and vice-principals from their federations, a judgment OTF soon decided to appeal. Then, on March 25, Minister of Education and Training Dave Johnson released the long-awaited new funding model for education. It confirmed OECTA's worst fears by placing all education funding in provincial hands, and imposing cuts in many areas including junior kindergarten, adult education, school administration and maintenance. School boards throughout the province quickly began to sound the alarm over financial shortfalls. Many boards signaled their intention to strip teachers' collective agreements in order to cope with the budgetary constraints imposed by the new funding formula.

Teachers' Pension Plan

A critical issue the provincial government forced to the negotiating table was the Teachers' Pension Plan. Under a veiled threat of unilateral legislative changes, Queen's Park insisted on talks outside the scope of the Pension Partnership rules in order to obtain relief from its own financial obligations to the plan. The firm stand maintained by OTF negotiators at the talks yielded an agreement which protects the integrity of the pension plan, while enhancing many of its provisions and securing a renewable 85-factor for members. Early May saw the introduction of the Harris government's third budget. While superficially positive, it continued the long-term assault on education by reducing the education tax on commercial and industrial properties, with no detailed commitment from the government to replace the funds from other sources. While OECTA and its legal counsel worked intensely to prepare for the June 17 start of hearings into the constitutional challenge of school boards' loss of the power to tax, another disturbing, although distant prospect, loomed before the Association leadership. Mounting evidence seemed to indicate that elements in Ontario's Catholic community were working towards the goal of remaking the publicly funded Catholic school system into a network of Charter Schools. The possibility of a struggle within the Catholic

community over the future of the separate schools was alarming, to the say the least. Surveying the school year that was winding to a close, and the challenges yet to come, it was inevitable that the thoughts of many at OECTA turned to the ancient curse: May you live in interesting times.

OECTA'S Constitutional Challenge of Bill 160



1997: Political protest at Queen's Park

The hearings into OECTA's legal challenge of the *Education Quality Improvement Act* (Bill 160) began June 17, 1998 in Toronto. OECTA argued that Bill 160 contravenes the *Constitution Act* of 1867, which guarantees Roman Catholics the right to exclusive management and control of separate school boards, by abolishing the right of Roman Catholic school boards to tax separate school supporters and by transferring the power to control and direct separate school expenditures to the Minister of Education and Lieutenant Governor-in-Council.

The Supreme Court of Canada has consistently upheld the right of separate schools to tax their supporters as part of the bundle of protected rights and privileges under s.93 (1) of the *Constitution Act*. By depriving separate school boards of their governance rights, the government has undermined separate school supporters' right to govern their own schools. Now, local boards have lost their decision-making authority and are limited to implementing directives from Queen's Park. The provincial government alone sets the mill rate, fixes the spending ceiling, allocates funds to boards on a line-by-line basis, and controls curriculum. As a result, separate school boards are effectively managed by non-Catholic outside majority interests.

On July 22, 1998, Justice Peter Cumming of the Ontario Court of Justice (General Division) ruled that Bill 160 violates the constitutional right of the Roman Catholic community to tax with respect to denominational schools. The Court agreed that "Inherent to the right of a separate school system is the right of management and control." The Court further held the right to tax is a stand-alone right protected by s.93, which is necessary to guarantee the autonomy of a separate, denominational school system by preserving the independent right to finance the system.

The guarantees to proportional funding and enhanced funding provided by Bill 160 are not sufficient to meet the Government's constitutional obligations, said Judge Cumming. "The Government's approach makes the Roman Catholic community hostage to the

provincial government as to the extent of financing of the separate school system. Theoretically, the provincial government could slash funding substantially to the point that the Roman Catholic community held the view that there was inadequate funding in providing the educational opportunity sought by them for their children. However, so long as there was proportional funding and consequential equality of educational opportunity with the public system there would be no independent means to enhance the financial resources of the separate school system." As a result of Mr. Justice Cumming's ruling, Bill 160 was declared unconstitutional and of no force and effect to the extent that it relates to or affects separate school supporters' right to raise taxes with respect to denominational schools. OECTA immediately called for substantial changes in the Ontario government's education reforms in both publicly-funded school systems. However, OECTA did not oppose the request made by the provincial government on August 13, 1998 to delay restoring education powers to the Catholic community while the province appealed the court decision. The Association recognized that a piecemeal implementation of the court's decision would not serve the best interests of the students or the entire system. During four days of hearings in November 1998, the Ontario Court of Appeal listened to the government's arguments that funding equity as provided by Bill 160 satisfies the constitutional requirements of s.93 of the *Constitution Act*. OECTA continued to argue that, while equity is important, the right to tax is essential to protect the core constitutional value granted in 1867 - the right to separateness - and that it makes real the right of separate school trustees to manage and govern their educational system. The hearings before the Ontario Court of Appeal concluded on November 19, 1998. On April 27, 1999 the judges of the Ontario Court of Appeal overturned the ruling by Mr. Justice Peter Cumming that Bill 160 violated the rights of Catholics in Ontario. In essence, the Appeal Court said that what counts is not the ability to raise taxes, but the fact that separate schools are being funded fairly by the province under Bill 160. Catholics never had the right to tax, just the right to fair funding, the judges said.

Trustees Pact With Government

In OECTA's opinion, the ruling meant that the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association which had sided with the government in defending Bill 160, had lost the long-term battle to protect Ontario's Catholic school system. The trustees' pact with the government based on their having 'put in abeyance' their right to tax in exchange for equitable funding now had no legal foundation, since the court had declared that the right to tax was non-existent. According to OECTA's legal counsel the ruling meant that governance of the separate school system has effectively been narrowed, with the so-called non-denominational aspects transferred to majority interest outside the control of Roman Catholic ratepayers. In their submissions to the Appeal Court judges, the trustees had supported this division of the school system into denominational and non-denominational aspects. The way was therefore legally open for the government to move to one publicly funded school system using the compelling influences of the funding model to shape and mold the two systems into one. As if to confirm that view, on the heels of the Appeal Court ruling the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the Toronto District School Board and the Ontario Public School

Boards' Association issued a statement, part of which read: "Today's court decision renders meaningless the constitutional rights guaranteed to Catholics. Is it now time to examine the issue of one publicly-funded education system?" OECTA immediately decided that it must seek leave from the Supreme Court of Canada to appeal the Court of Appeals ruling. "If the Appeal Court decision is allowed to stand, a Catholic mini-system could be all that's left of our present separate school system," said OECTA president Marshall Jarvis. "The mini-system is the core protected value, not the system as a whole. The government could decide that if religious education courses are offered together with certain other Catholic trappings such as school chaplains, the obligation of government to meet its constitutional test is satisfied."

Bargaining Under Bill 160

During the fall of 1998, OECTA faced major bargaining challenges as a result of Bill 160 and the government's inadequate funding formula for education. Catholic school boards took a very aggressive approach to bargaining, unilaterally changing terms and conditions of employment. OECTA refused to work under such changes. As a result, three units went out on strike, while another four were locked out for refusing to bend to the will of the employer. For the first time in OECTA's history, the provincial government intervened in collective bargaining, legislating teachers back to school under Bill 62. Under the back-to-work legislation, unresolved matters were referred to government-appointed arbitrators compelled by law to consider boards' self-described ability-to-pay when they made their decisions. In all cases that went to arbitration, the arbitrator decided in the boards' favour. The arbitrators described themselves as constrained by the new system to give the employers what they wanted. As a result, regressive working conditions were imposed. OECTA members in these Catholic school boards struggled under heavy workloads, while major curriculum reforms were occurring at both the elementary and secondary levels. Not surprisingly, school boards that had imposed the heaviest workloads in the province began to see an exodus of secondary teachers from their schools, as members found jobs in boards offering more favourable working conditions. In the case of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, this led to discussions, which produced an agreement in late March 1999 that secondary teachers there would return to their desired 6/8 workload in September 1999, stemming the outflow of teachers to other boards. However, across the province bargaining continued to be an uphill battle, although teachers' increased mobility under the *Ontario Labour Relations Act* and the teacher shortage slightly eased the struggle to preserve working conditions that OECTA had negotiated over several decades.

Election Fever Hits Ontario

Ontarians who heard the Conservatives promise tax cuts and increased spending on education and health care in the budget presented on May 4, knew they were witnessing the kick-off of an election campaign. So they were not surprised the next day when Premier Mike Harris announced an election for June 3. Since the publication of its political action strategy, *Seize the Day*, in March 1998, OECTA had vigorously engaged in creating new alliances with labour, anti-poverty groups and parent organizations. Along

with other labour groups and the Ontario Teachers' Federation, the Association adopted a strategic voting policy designed to topple the government of Mike Harris. They targeted the ridings of vulnerable Tory incumbents in order to elect Liberals or New Democrats, parties seen to be pro-people and pro-education. OECTA committed substantial human and financial resources to campaign activities, including television, radio and billboard advertising across the province.



On June 3, 1999, Ontario residents gave Premier Mike Harris a second straight majority government. In a reorganized legislature, reduced to 103 seats from 130, the Conservatives won 59 ridings, with 45.2 per cent of the popular vote. The Liberals captured 35 seats (39.8 per cent of the vote) and the NDP, nine seats (12.5 per cent of the vote). The next day, OECTA president Marshall Jarvis announced to the June council of presidents that the

Association would immediately review the mechanisms through which it worked with the provincial government in order to forge a new, more positive relationship. Jarvis told presidents that the welfare of teachers and students was of paramount importance to the Association, which would encourage the government to collaborate with teachers to restore confidence and stability in the education system.

2000 to 2003

Optimism Proves Unfounded

OECTA president Jim Smith, who had taken office on July 1, 1999, welcomed members back to work in September with the message that the labour peace prevailing among teachers in Catholic schools would help them focus on their students. He described the mood as one of “cautious optimism,” noting that the new Minister of Education, Janet Ecker, had sent positive signals about building a constructive relationship with teachers. For their part, hundreds of OECTA members who had taken advantage of the newly created Summer Institutes, a partnership between OTF and the province offering professional development opportunities, returned to their classrooms with renewed (and contagious) vigour.

However, optimism quickly turned to dismay when Premier Mike Harris reaffirmed his election promise to impose a written test of competence on all teachers, starting in June 2000. The struggle against “teacher testing” permeated the whole year. Opposition to the provincial government’s plan united stakeholders in the English Catholic educational community who endorsed a framework for professional learning developed by OECTA, which included voluntary professional development and ongoing classroom evaluation of teachers by their boards. OECTA vigorously lobbied the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ministry of Education on behalf of this framework. In April, when the college released its report, *Maintaining, Ensuring and Demonstrating Competency in the Teaching Profession* to the Ministry of Education, the Association was relieved to see that it too recommended performance review rather than testing of certified teachers. By mid-April, a showdown over teacher testing seemed inevitable, with the Harris government lined up against the teaching profession’s governing body, in addition to OTF and all its affiliates.

Cuts to Education Funding

In November, dismay turned to outrage when a leaked cabinet document revealed how the government planned to cut a further \$800 million from the education system. Premier Mike Harris refused to deny the possibility of further cuts, citing administrative fat and the need for “more resources in the classroom.”

Against this backdrop of growing disillusionment, units and provincial collective bargaining staff undertook negotiations, which delivered some positive results. Secondary school teachers in Hamilton, Dufferin-Peel and Huron-Superior endorsed agreements, which, among other provisions, provided wage increases, while maintaining the 6/8 workload.

Unfortunately, OECTA’s successes in collective bargaining did not go unnoticed at the Ministry of Education. Before the AGM in March, when high school teachers in the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District Board ratified a settlement that also gave them 6/8, ministry officials pressured trustees not to ratify the deal negotiated by board negotiators. Soon after, OECTA filed charges against the Government of Ontario and the school board under the *Labour Relations Act*, alleging that government representatives directly interfered in the negotiations process, and that the board had not bargained with teachers in good faith.

The week before AGM found Minister of Education, Janet Ecker in Durham, where she told a meeting of parents and school board officials that before the next school year, she intended to ensure students’ right to extra-curricular activities and to define more narrowly the meaning of instructional time. Elsewhere in the province, Premier Harris mused out loud that extra-curricular activities should be compulsory for teachers.

Those provocative comments caused teachers’ rumblings of dissatisfaction and anger to boil over during the first minutes of AGM. An overwhelming majority of delegates voted to tell the minister of education, who was scheduled to address the meeting later that morning, to stay away.

In the first week of April, the provincial government followed up its vague threats with the publication of *Program/Policy Memorandum 125*, narrowly defining instructional time in secondary schools. The new definition was designed to eliminate teaching positions from the secondary panel by ensuring only regular, credited programs were counted in each teacher’s weekly 1,250 minutes of instructional time. On-calls and unscheduled time spent on remediation or advising students, were out.

Despite PPM 125, OECTA and the public secondary school teachers’ federation decided it was business as usual in bargaining. Their success at the table convinced the ministry only weeks after the introduction of PPM 125, that this administrative measure was unequal to the task of thwarting the unions’ negotiators. As a result, the ministry introduced Bill 74, the *Education Accountability Act*, on May 10.

Punitive, Demoralizing Legislation

The new legislation changed the *Education Act* to require that secondary school teachers teach 6.67 eligible courses a year; that school boards provide co-instructional (usually called extra-curricular) activities and teachers be required to participate. The new Act gave principals the authority to assign the so-called co-instructional activities, “on school days and on days during the school year that are not school days; during any part of any day during the school year; on school premises and elsewhere.” It gave the province more authority to ensure board compliance, including the so-called Henry VIII clause, which deprives those targeted of their right to recourse to the courts.

Bill 74 provoked anger and opposition from a wide variety of groups in- and outside education circles. The Ontario Association of Social Workers, the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Sisters of St. Joseph of London questioned the motivation and the lack of democratic principle underlying the bill. OTF called for its withdrawal, while the Canadian Teachers’ Federation condemned it. Trustees, principals and supervisory officers said it would damage the education system. Even the Toronto Sun, a newspaper usually sympathetic to the Harris government, thoroughly criticized the law.

Surprised, perhaps, by the broad dissatisfaction with Bill 74, the

minister of education introduced amendments to soothe some of the sting of its most controversial clauses. Under these amendments, the regulations on compulsory extra-curricular activities for the elementary and secondary panels are now separate, and will receive royal assent only when the government requests it when a group of teachers opts for work-to-rule as a collective bargaining strategy. In addition, the hours devoted to extra-curricular activities by a teacher must be consistent with those previously volunteered.

Describing the amendments as “a sword over teachers’ heads,” OECTA president Jim Smith and other opponents of Bill 74 continued to demand its withdrawal. Meanwhile, the province continued to interfere in bargaining, rejecting a staffing plan put forward by the Toronto secondary teachers who remained convinced it met government standards.

Bill 74 was adopted by the Ontario Legislature on June 20. Jim Smith warned that OECTA would not tolerate contract-stripping by boards tempted to take advantage of the new legislation by imposing changes not required by law. As the summer began, the prospects for peace between teachers and the Harris government had never seemed dimmer.

Bargaining Uphill Under Bill 74

Throughout the summer, bargaining that went on in OECTA units could only be classified as an uphill struggle. The Association’s objective throughout was “status quo plus.” Not surprisingly, some Catholic school boards attempted contract stripping to which OECTA responded vigorously. Several units took strike votes to protect against attacks on planning and preparation time. OECTA imposed pink lists on four Catholic district school boards (Algonquin-Lakeshore, Eastern Ontario, Northeastern, and Thunder Bay) as teachers began lawful sanctions under the *Ontario Labour Relations Act*. In late October, the Toronto Catholic board joined the pink list as elementary teachers there began a legal work-to-rule sanction. The Sudbury Elementary unit also resorted to work-to-rule when the board arbitrarily cut planning and preparation time. The lock-out that swiftly followed, ended when teachers and their employer struck a deal before Christmas. The “status quo plus” goal remained uppermost in negotiators’ minds.

In many schools across the province, extra-curricular activities disappeared, as teachers faced with increased workloads chose to forego these voluntary activities. The Education Improvement Commission (EIC) acknowledged the widespread unrest in its final report, released in December. The commission identified a positive climate for learning as a key to students’ success and recommended that the minister of education set in motion an appropriate strategy to resolve the labour unrest.

The provincial government responded on January 11, 2001, by creating an advisory group consisting mainly of Tory supporters who were asked to recommend measures to ensure students had improved access to extra-curricular activities. Much to the surprise of most observers, the group took an independent tack in its recommendations. It agreed that extra-curricular activities should

remain voluntary, urging the government to withdraw the un-proclaimed sections of Bill 74 that made teachers’ participation in these activities mandatory.

Promising to restore extra-curricular activities, the minister of education announced new initiatives to give school boards greater flexibility to address teachers’ concerns. The measures included more money for school boards’ local priorities, permission to vary class sizes at the secondary level and a redefinition of instructional time. Unfortunately, as details of the government’s strategy began to emerge, it became clear that the changes proposed would not lighten the workload enough to make a difference.

To cap off the year, the minister of education introduced Bill 80, the *Stability and Excellence in Education Act*. This omnibus bill, which also instituted the new teacher testing scheme, made it compulsory for teachers and school boards to sign three-year contracts. Meanwhile, the province insisted it would only provide education funding one year at a time. The teacher re-certification portion of Bill 80 required teachers to complete 14 courses in each five-year cycle to maintain their right to teach. After passage of the bill, the details of the testing program - for example, the cost and location of the courses - remained to be fleshed out, although 40,000 randomly selected teachers were supposed to start the first five-year cycle in September 2001. As the school year ended, there were rumblings from a number of teacher federations that their members might refuse to comply with the new re-certification policy.

OECTA Loses Constitutional Challenge

During the fall, lawyers for OECTA prepared for the Supreme Court hearing of the Association’s constitutional challenge of Bill 160. At the hearing, which took place on November 8, 2000, OECTA argued that Bill 160, the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, threatens minority denominational rights because it gives exclusive control over funding for the separate school system to the Ontario cabinet. On March 8, 2001, the Supreme Court released its ruling, which stated that the Harris government acted within its rights when it centralized power over education through Bill 160. The bill does not violate the constitutional rights of Ontario Catholics to control their own school system, said the court. While disappointed in the ruling, OECTA reaffirmed the commitment of Ontario’s Catholic teachers to protecting the denominational integrity of their school system.

Tax Credit for Private Schools Surprises Province

The provincial budget released on May 10, 2001, surprised voters with the promise of a tax credit that would rise to \$3,500 for parents who send their child to private school. OECTA said the tax provision could save the province millions of dollars by encouraging an exodus from public schools, downloading the cost of education onto parents. At public hearings into the plan, OECTA argued that the tax credit plan lacked accountability and favoured the well-to-do, while siphoning money from the public school systems. Despite widespread public opposition, the tax credit became law at the end of June, as it was only part of the larger budget bill.

Harris Government Introduces Bill 80



2002: Teachers protest government's teacher re-certification plan.

To cap off the year, the minister introduced Bill 80, the *Stability and Excellence in Education Act*. This omnibus bill, which also instituted the new teacher testing scheme, made it compulsory for teachers and school boards to sign three-year contracts, while the province insisted it would only provide funding one year at a time. In order to postpone having its own members fall under the new three-year rule, the Association began round-the-clock bargaining until midnight, June 30.

As Bill 80 came into effect, over 95 per cent of members had collective agreements in place for the next year or two years. The teacher re-certification portion of the bill requires teachers to complete 14 courses in each five-year cycle to maintain their right to teach. After passage of the bill, the details of the testing program remained to be fleshed out, although 40,000 randomly selected teachers were supposed to start the first five-year cycle in September 2001.

OECTA began sounding the alarm on re-certification in August, advising members to continue with their individual professional development plans rather than hasten to comply with the College of Teachers' Professional Learning Plan. At a special meeting of unit presidents on September 29, the Provincial Executive and local leaders affirmed their opposition to re-certification. They decided that OECTA would not apply for provider status, while at the same time continuing to develop an array of high quality professional development activities.

The elements of a protest began to take shape, with members advised to return to the college their notice of membership in the first cohort while continuing their personal PD. OECTA also committed itself to backing members who might experience difficulties down the road as a result of their stand against re-certification.

At the November Council of Presidents, the Association launched a Solidarity Campaign in order to involve all members in the protest against re-certification, not just those in the first cohort. As part of the campaign, members wrote thousands of letters of protest to the college, the Minister of Education and the leaders of the official opposition parties. The Association lobbied school boards, faculties

of education, public and private sector organizations, asking them either not to apply or to renounce provider status at the college. A special council meeting held on December 1 reaffirmed OECTA's resistance.

While opposition to re-certification grew, the province provided a companion piece to the *Stability and Excellence in Education Act*, introducing Bill 110, the *Quality in the Classroom Act* on October 15, 2001. The bill included the Qualifying Test for new graduates of faculties of education, which OECTA judged unnecessary and inequitable, informing the Ministry of Education that members would not help with developing or marking the test.

In the new year, the faculties of education became a central focus of OECTA's activities. The Association tried to convince them to give up provider status in return for OECTA's support for the faculties' stand against the Qualifying Test. When its threat of a boycott of student teachers failed to sway the faculties, OECTA directed members to refuse to accept these students in their classes. At AGM 2002, delegates affirmed their support for OECTA's actions against re-certification, in addition to approving a boycott of AQ courses in targeted faculties of education.

Ernie Eves Replaces Harris

This activity on the education front took place in the context of the provincial Conservatives' leadership race. Premier Mike Harris had surprised the province by announcing his resignation on October 10. A number of candidates quickly stepped forward, anxious to fill his shoes. Ernie Eves, the former Finance Minister in the Harris government, won the leadership on March 23, 2002 by proposing a more centrist vision of the province. He named Elizabeth Witmer, a former teacher and school trustee as Minister of Education. OECTA immediately invited the new minister to begin a dialogue. The minister accepted an invitation to address the June Council of Presidents, which was sufficiently impressed by her conciliatory tone to impose a moratorium on the student teacher boycott.

Another promising signal came in the Speech from the Throne, when the government announced the creation of a task force to review "ways to improve fairness, certainty and stability" in the funding formula. In addition, the minister wrote to the presidents of the teachers federations, inviting them to provide input into the re-certification plan by the end of July.

Government Imposes Professional Learning Plan

The optimism inspired by these government moves was tempered with some bitterness resulting from the Ministry of Education's decision to link funding of the highly successful summer professional development program (Summer Institutes) to federations' support for the re-certification plan. Because of its unwavering opposition to re-certification, OECTA decided to go it alone, announcing on May 10 its intention to offer its own summer PD courses. Response from the local units was enthusiastic

By the first week in July, more than one thousand members had

signed up for 43 courses offered at 17 locations across the province. The numbers proved the Association's belief, often asserted during



Teachers say the Ontario College of Teachers has failed to represent the teaching profession or to stand by its own research-based vision of teacher professional development.

the fight against re-certification, that teachers are very willing to voluntarily assume responsibility for their own professional development, and do not need the threat of de-certification to sign up for courses that meet their needs.

It seemed to many in OECTA that much of the 2002-03 school year was spent in waiting – waiting for the provincial government to set an election date (it never happened); waiting to hear Dr. Mordechai Rozanski's report on fairness in the education funding formula; and then waiting to learn if the Conservative government would boost school funding. Although OECTA had kicked off September 2002 by announcing the success of its own summer PD program, the Association could not record any progress in the struggle against re-certification.

Minister of Education Elizabeth Witmer had requested that all the teachers' federations report to her by the end of July 2002 with their proposals for the Professional Learning Plan (PLP), however, she failed at any time to respond formally to their submissions. Instead, at face-to-face meetings with teacher representatives throughout the year, she reiterated that it would take legislative change to address teachers' concerns – something the government was not keen to undertake.



2002: Teachers protest Ontario College of Teachers' Professional Learning Plan

By the end of June 2003, hope for an end to re-certification and the PLP rested with the opposition parties, both the Liberals and the New Democrats having promised to terminate the program if they were to form the next government.

As OECTA and the OTF affiliates continued to press for repeal of re-certification, the College of Teachers jacked up its membership fee to pay for the expanding bureaucracy needed to administer the PLP. Teachers already cynical about the so-called "arms-length" role of the college could only shake their heads at this rise that, combined with a previous fee hike, added up to a 34 per cent increase since the college opened its doors in 1996. Despite widespread disenchantment with its operations, the college pressed ahead with the election of its third governing council. Members voted online between March 3 and April 4, 2003, with a lacklustre voter response rate of 4.4 per cent. Here too, teachers continued to pin their hope for reform on a change in the governing provincial party.

Teachers already stressed by the demands of the PLP faced an exacting new system of performance appraisal that took effect in September 2002. The *Quality in the Classroom Act* (Bill 110) began requiring principals or vice-principals to review teacher performance in three-year cycles, taking into consideration a long list of competencies and "look fors." As part of the process, school boards must also survey parents and students concerning teacher communication effectiveness. The system's potential to undermine teachers' right to due process meant that OECTA negotiators began immediately to address performance appraisal at the bargaining table, while the number of grievances filed because of the new process promised to explode as teachers questioned how they had been rated by their supervisors. Implementation of the new requirement for a criminal record check of all teachers further complicated their lives.

Rozanski Report

The task force on education funding headed by Dr. Mordechai Rozanski released its findings on December 10, 2002. The report confirmed what teachers, parents and much of the general public had believed for several years, that education in Ontario had been systematically under-funded since 1995. Adjusted for inflation and enrolment, education funding levels for 2002-03 were actually \$2.2 billion less than in 1994, Rozanski reported. He recommended that an additional \$1.8 billion be injected into the school system over the following three years.

Dr. Rozanski also advised that the ministry update the benchmark costs for all components of the funding formula (the Foundation Grant, the Special Purpose Grants, the Pupil Accommodation Grant) to reflect costs through August 2003, and that mechanisms be developed for annually reviewing and updating the benchmarks and for conducting a more comprehensive overall review every five years. The government's response was scattershot, with boosts to funding for transportation and teachers' salaries announced soon after Dr. Rozanski's report was made public in order to quell rising criticism of the funding formula. However, by the end of the school year there had been no movement on key issues raised by the task force, such as a review of the benchmarks. The government's

education policies suffered another blow, in January, when a team of OISE/U of T researchers – Kenneth Leithwood, Michael Fullan and Nancy Watson – released *The Schools We Need*, which gave a failing grade to provincial education policies. While the authors of the “policy audit” said Ontario’s new curriculum, as well as province-wide testing benefit the system, they nevertheless concluded that poor implementation had blunted their impact. They reported that the public does not want a radical overhaul of the public education system; teachers are demoralized and there is a shortage of principals, and funding is insufficient and the funding formula too inflexible. One particularly damning comment targets the centralization of education funding, governance and curriculum, saying the trend has gone too far, and that schools and districts need local solutions developed within a provincial policy framework. The authors also take aim at the Professional Learning Plan (re-certification), saying the current approach to teacher testing is a waste of scarce educational resources.

June 2003 came and went with only rumour as a guide to the date of the next provincial election. Ernie Eves’ government had steadily lost ground in public opinion in the previous 10 months, as one policy decision after another seemed to highlight vacillating poor judgement in the top ranks of provincial Tory insiders. Decisions ranging from back-peddling on hydro privatization to the province-wide cap on hydro rates and the restoration of the timetable, to increase tax credits for private schools, all contributed to the impression of a rudderless government. Relocating the budget speech from Queen’s Park to an automotive plant owned by major Conservative supporter Magna International further eroded the government’s credibility, and left them scrambling to devise ways to recover lost ground before spring 2004, when they will be forced to face the electorate.

Back-to-Work Legislation

On the collective bargaining front, Simcoe-Muskoka Elementary and Secondary, Windsor-Essex Elementary and Toronto Elementary were OECTA hot spots this year. Teachers in all four units ended up on the picket line after months of uphill bargaining failed to produce settlements. The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board locked out its elementary teachers on May 5, after they initiated a work-to-rule campaign on April 27. Fortunately, the dispute was short-lived, as the mediator led the parties to a settlement in talks on May 8-9. In the case of Toronto Elementary, the school board chose to lock out teachers when they did not bend to the board’s wishes. The Toronto Catholic District School board then refused to re-open schools until after the government passed back-to-work legislation on June 4. Once students had returned to class, both parties agreed upon an arbitrator and four days of arbitration hearings were set to start on July 17, with a decision expected no later than September 10.

Simcoe-Muskoka’s elementary and secondary members resisted their board’s claw-back efforts, with high school teachers finally forced back to the classroom by back-to-work legislation. The elementary teachers saw the writing on the wall and returned to class voluntarily, accepting the same provisions for arbitration as

their secondary colleagues, including a say in the choice of arbitrator. In the final analysis, the Simcoe Muskoka members’ decision to reject anything but a “Status Quo plus” agreement resulted in their making gains under arbitration that the board had consistently refused to grant them in negotiations.

Nevertheless, the year ended on a high note, despite the hardships faced by OECTA and its members in the preceding months. Once again, the Association’s Summer Program (in only its second year of operation) promised to be an outstanding success. As one of its final decisions, the Provincial Executive voted to increase the funding to the program, which had been swamped with applications from elementary and secondary members anxious to take courses during the summer months. The unprecedented response from around the province proved beyond a doubt OECTA’s contention that teachers will willingly volunteer their time for professional activities designed for teachers by teachers, which will benefit their students and themselves.

2003 to 2006

New Era of Genuine Consultation



2005: OECTA President Donna Marie Kennedy speaks with reporters at OECTA's AGM.

Premier Eves announced on September 2, 2003 that Ontarians would go to the polls on October 2. OECTA and its partners in education, labour and the social justice community were primed and ready to go with advertising campaigns and literature advocating the election of a new government, one that would be education-friendly and that would reverse the us-against-them policies of

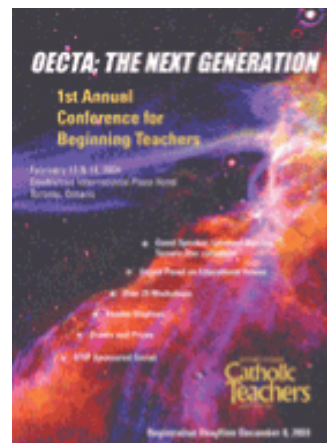
the Conservatives that had devastated the province's social and physical infrastructure. The Association devoted unprecedented financial resources to the campaign, money that had been set aside in a political action fund by decision of the Annual General Meeting in 2002.

The results on October 2 surprised even the most hopeful. Voters gave an overwhelming majority to the Ontario Liberals led by Dalton McGuinty. The Speech from the Throne on November 19 set the tone for the new government, with promises to end re-certification, revitalize the College of Teachers, repeal the tax credit for private schools and the seniors' education tax credit, and create real partnerships with the province's education stakeholders. In December alone, the province saw new money for school boards (partial fulfillment of the Rozanski recommendations), a moratorium on school closures, the *Fiscal Responsibility Act* that repealed the private school tax credit as well as the seniors' exemption from the education portion of the property tax, and on the 19th, a letter from the Minister of Education announcing the end of re-certification. The Premier announced his plan to cap class sizes on April 22, 2004. On May 13, when Gerard Kennedy stood in the Legislature to introduce the *Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act*, teachers could only heave a sigh of relief that the struggle against 'teacher testing,' waged so diligently since 2001 was over. The solidarity demonstrated by members of OECTA and all the OTF affiliates had paid off, with a minimal PLP compliance rate and the Liberals' fulfillment of their election promise to cancel the program. The new era of genuine consultation with the government included the Education Partnership Table, designed to obtain broad insights from all education stakeholders, which met for the first time on March 6.

The Liberals also acted in areas that touch "the common good," the focus of so much of OECTA's political action campaign. They increased the minimum wage and the corporate income tax rate, boosted tobacco taxes, allocated \$56 million for affordable housing, froze college and university tuition, and more. The budget of May 18 dashed the hopes of many for investment in areas outside health and education, as the government struggled with a \$6.2 billion debt inherited from its predecessor, however the Association remained hopeful that the priority given to education by the Liberals would translate into enhanced learning and working conditions for students and teachers across the province.

Politics Not OECTA's Only Focus

Politics were not OECTA's only focus in 2003-04. In February, the Association's first annual conference for beginning teachers, "OECTA: The Next Generation," attracted 330 members in their first five years of teaching. With 26 workshops, ample time for socializing, an expert panel on educational issues and an open forum, 'OECTA is listening,' the conference received rave reviews. Recognizing the event as an important step towards meeting the needs of beginning teachers, the Association committed to organizing a second conference in February 2005.



The success of Summer Program 2003 (registration had increased by 124 per cent over the previous year) motivated the Association to organize a summer PD program for 2004. Titles of the courses to be offered to elementary and secondary school teachers in July and August included: Art for all Ages and Abilities; Integrating Computer Technology in the Elementary Classroom Gr. 1-8; Teaching Civics, History, Law and Politics; and Grade 12 Religion Program: In Search of the Good.



The general unease that had affected the province's teaching profession since 1995 continued to be reflected in the growing number of grievances, long term disability cases, investigations, and other calls for help that confronted staff in the Contract Services and the Counselling and Member Services departments. Health and safety issues remained high on OECTA's agenda as preparations accelerated throughout the year for the second biennial provincial conference on the subject, to be held in August.

The pace of collective bargaining continued steady during the year as provincial staff and local bargaining teams negotiated the last agreements that would end on August 31, 2004. Starting on September 1, as legislated by the *Stability and Excellence in Education Act* (2001), three-year agreements for teachers were to become the law. The next round of bargaining promised to be challenging with all 80 OECTA contracts open simultaneously.

Service: OECTA's Watchword in 2004-05

Service continued to be OECTA's watchword in 2004-05. After a



busy July and August that saw both OECTA Summer Program 2004 and the second Biennial Health and Safety Conference attract enthusiastic members, the school year started with heightened expectations of how teachers would fare during the second year of the Liberal government. Passage of Bill 82, the *Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act*, and reform of the College of Teachers' structure to place control in the hands of classroom teachers were just two of the Association's goals for the coming months.

The PLP finally became history on December 16, when the Act cancelling the program received Royal Assent. It had taken a deal among the House Leaders in the Ontario Legislature to end weeks of procedural wrangling that had stalled the legislation. OECTA lobbied tirelessly to ensure the bill's final passage. Keeping the lines of communication open with the McGuinty Liberals proved time-consuming as Education Minister Gerard Kennedy acted on many fronts simultaneously, attempting to fulfill campaign promises and repair damage inflicted by his Conservative predecessors.

In fulfillment of the government's ambitious education plans, the minister peppered the year with announcements — funding for smaller classes, creation of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat; new focus on boys' literacy challenges; \$280 million to repair, expand or replace schools; a new policy on school closures; \$70 million for French-language schools; dedicated funding for school libraries; a fresh focus on safe schools including anti-bullying policies; removal of junk food from elementary schools' vending machines; \$20 million to open up schools to non-profit community groups; the Parent Voice in Education Project, to find new ways for parental involvement in education; “re-shaping” the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO); and much more. According to the government, 2004-05 saw the “second full year of an extraordinary \$8.3 billion four-year investment” in publicly funded JK to 12 schools.



OECTA was in constant communication with the Ministry of Education during this time. As a long-term political goal of the Association is the promotion of publicly funded education, great effort was devoted to providing feedback on new initiatives. Reform of the College of Teachers was the subject of many conversations with the minister, however, the government did not appear to be in any hurry to live up to that campaign promise and no legislation was introduced. In addition, OECTA

participated in working tables on Literacy and Numeracy, Learning to 18, Special Education, and Teacher Development, as well as the Partnership Table, all set up to help the Ministry of Education develop new policy. OECTA found some of its provincial resources considerably stretched as the government lived up to its promise to consult not only more, but more meaningfully.

With the date of the next provincial election already set for October 4, 2007, OECTA's long-term political action plan was taking shape during this time. The Association continued to view the election of an “education friendly” government as the only way to ensure a strong publicly-funded education system, a powerful instrument in reducing poverty and inequality, as well as laying the foundation for economic growth and democracy. The political action plan approved by the Provincial Executive and endorsed by the November 2004 Council of Presidents, took a three-pronged approach: lobbying and government relations; public relations campaigns; and member education. One element of the plan, a fact sheet for MPPs with the title *OECTA Speaks On...*, proved extremely popular from its earliest days. OECTA was represented at every political convention held by the Liberals, the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives during the 2004-05 school year.

At the Association's second annual conference for beginning teachers in February, some 300 members in their first five years of teaching attended workshops on topics such as, communicating with parents and classroom management. They welcomed as keynote speaker, former Ontario NDP leader, Stephen Lewis, the United Nations' special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, who launched an impassioned plea for aid to help the millions suffering in sub-Saharan Africa. In the field, members continued to benefit from preventive workshops focusing on resolving conflict, teacher liability, and appropriate and professional relationships. At the same time, the Association provided assistance to thousands of members in difficulty with, for example, long-term disability appeals or defense against charges arising from their work.

Against this backdrop, collective bargaining remained a constant. By February 2005, talks at the local level were progressing very slowly or not at all. Only four of 80 OECTA local bargaining units had settled contracts covering the 2004-05 school year. The situation was similar in all OTF affiliates except for AEFO, which had settled all its agreements in the fall. Meanwhile, the government introduced Bill 167 changing the mandatory term for collective agreements from three to either two or four years.

The log jam broke in April when ETFO held a news conference to announce it had settled on a provincial negotiating framework with the public school boards that would see its members agree to four-year contracts (September 1, 2004 - August 31, 2008) in return for incentives. OSSTF came to a similar agreement that it did not make public. The frameworks were to be given concrete expression through local negotiations with a June 1 deadline. The incentives would mean more teachers in the classroom and more help for students. Improved student performance was to be the end result, along with “peace and stability” (government's favourite phrase) in the education system.

After local bargaining unit presidents convened in a special session in Toronto gave the go-ahead for OECTA to bargain its own framework, the Association opened talks with the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. When many all-nighters failed to produce the desired accord, the Association pushed ahead at local bargaining tables, supported by memos to Catholic school boards from the Minister and the Deputy Minister outlining bargaining policy for four-year deals. A major sticking point was OECTA's insistence that members achieve salary parity with coterminous public boards effective August 31, 2004. When this was assured and the other incentives were in place, local negotiators supported by provincial staff began to reach settlements. OECTA met the June 1 deadline, with 43 bargaining units settled with four-year agreements. The few bargaining units that already had two-year agreements in place concluded additional two-year deals to qualify for incentives, as did all but one group of teachers employed by school authorities. Because negotiations for occasional teacher locals had been delayed by the intense activity required to meet the June deadlines, these talks continued into the summer. The vast majority of members could return to the classroom in September with their employment conditions established for the following three years.

The Teaching Environment 2005–06

With agreements largely settled, the Association in 2005-06 turned its collective mind to the teaching environment. Along with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, OECTA commissioned a survey of bullying in the workplace. Phase one focused on bullying by students, showing that almost 40 per cent of Ontario teachers and education workers are subjected to bullying from that quarter. This conduct is characterized by a pattern of repeated disrespectful behaviour, vandalism of personal belongings, threats of physical assault, ongoing verbal abuse, racial and sexual slurs or intimidation. The teachers' Associations called on faculties of education, school administrators and boards, parent and community groups and government at all levels to help develop resources for parents to learn to recognize, address and prevent bullying behaviour, offer training for administrators, teachers and support staff, and develop Ontario schools as "bully-free" environments.

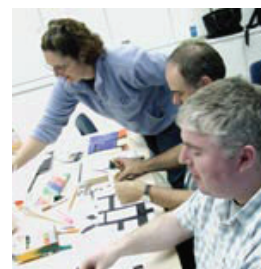
In the second phase of the survey, 30 per cent of teachers and education workers reported being bullied by a parent or guardian, 24 per cent by a superior, and 15 per cent by a colleague or co-worker. Recognizing that psychological harassment and bullying are not just school-based phenomena, the federations recommended amendments to Ontario's *Employment Standards Act* to mirror innovative sections of Quebec legislation that protect all workers against these behaviours, as well as the inclusion of bullying and harassment in Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Lobbying and discussions with government continued throughout the year.

Autumn 2005 saw the provincial government introduce a number of new programs that posed challenges for members. Where was one to slot the daily requirement of 20 minutes of physical activity into an already-overloaded curriculum? The Association applauded the cancellation of the Ontario Teachers' Qualifying Test (OTQT) for

new graduates of the faculties of education. On the other hand, the induction program designed to replace it with compulsory mentoring and professional development tied to the teacher performance appraisal process ran counter to a fundamental OECTA position. The Association always emphasizes teachers' voluntary participation in programs they judge will support their professional responsibilities. Under the Student Success Strategy, teachers were introduced to a new vocabulary. "Student success" teachers, "board-wide leaders" and "light-house programs" not recognized in collective agreements, raised stress levels, as some boards hurried to implement programs without consultation.

With the introduction of Bill 78, the omnibus *Student Performance Act*, which proposed substantial amendments to the *Education Act* and the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* and other statutes, the Association learned the extent of government intentions. The New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) to replace the OTQT remained substantially unchanged, despite the Association's lobbying. The government announced its intention to add two PD days, for a total of six annually. And a long silence in the College of Teachers portfolio ended with the announcement that in order to win the confidence of members, the number of teacher representatives on the Governing Council would be increased by six, providing a majority of one classroom teacher. However, this change was overshadowed by new conflict of interest provisions that will prevent council members from retaining a full-time role at the provincial or local level of the teacher federations. In addition, while giving teachers a majority on the council, the bill provided for the creation of a Public Interest Committee of non-OCT members to advise on matters of public interest — a slap in the face to all council members.

Most disturbing in the long-term was the extent to which Bill 78 proposed to downgrade matters from the level of statute to regulation. This provision promised to give the Minister of Education new powers in wide-ranging areas including: collection of personal data; class size; instructional time; the College of Teachers; teacher training and evaluation; and teachers' professional activity days. As OECTA cautioned in its brief to the Standing Committee on Social Policy, "Bill 78 will centralize more control over education behind closed doors at Queen's Park. As long as a government that believes in the value of a strong public education system governs Ontario, [OECTA] believes that many changes proposed in Bill 78 will be acceptable. However, we worry that without the checks and balances of parliament and public debate, a hostile government could quietly undermine the education system through regulatory change. OECTA believes the needs of the students, teachers and communities are better served when the planning, decisions and collective bargaining affecting our schools are made openly and locally, where community needs and issues are best understood and debated." Bill 78 received royal assent on June 1, 2006.



OECTA
Summer Program

While Queen's Park in particular, and government relations in general seemed to occupy much of OECTA's attention in 2005-06, the Association was active on a host of other fronts. Bargaining for

occasional teacher members continued for several months, resulting in agreements for all occasional teacher locals. The provision of professional development for teachers, by teachers continued to take on greater importance. Members who had participated in OECTA's Summer Program and other PD opportunities spread the word about these invaluable resources, whetting the membership's appetite for more. New funding from the province allowed the Association to expand its offerings for summer '06 in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and differentiated instruction, in order to support members' efforts to help students achieve success. A biennial global education conference to be held for the first time in August 2006 promised to attract a capacity crowd under the theme, "Educating for the Common Good." The work of the 2005 summer writing teams was nearing completion, with resources such as the *Associate Teacher Handbook*, and the web-based *Elementary Report Card Guide*. The 2006 edition of the biennial health and safety conference also offered essential information and training to members operating in this area.



In solidarity, OTF and CTF affiliate presidents joined thousands of striking BC teachers in front of the BC legislature on October 17, 2005.

During the 2005-06 school year, OECTA was also active in a number of areas more distant from its core concerns. The Association went to bat with financial and moral support for the British Columbia Teachers' Federation when they took job action to obtain smaller classes and more input into class composition. Student Vote received funds to support National Student Vote 2006 during the federal election campaign, to encourage students to take a greater part in the democratic process. Lobbying continued until Parliament was dissolved for the federal election to obtain amendments in copyright legislation to protect teachers' and students' free access to the Internet. After the election of the Conservative government, OECTA added its voice to the campaign to preserve the child care agreements signed by the previous federal government.

The year wound down in June with a host of announcements from the Ministry of Education designed to reinforce the government's education-positive image. These included, more funding for special education reform and for teachers' professional development, revisions to the Education Funding Formula and increased investments to reduce primary class sizes and boost high school

graduation numbers, and additional funding for French-language schools. There was little doubt that government was setting the stage for the final year of its mandate and the campaign leading up to the next provincial vote on October 4, 2007.

OECTA Speaks on...

Government Relations produced a series of information sheets that addressed a variety of educational and social justice issues, which were mailed directly to every MPP.

- Card Certification (March 2005)
- Professional Development (March 2005)
- Baby Bonus Clawback (April 2005)
- Bill 118 Falls Short (April 2005)
- Employment Insurance Reforms (May 2005)
- Federal Copyright Legislation (June 2005)
- Autism and Learning (November 2005)
- Daily Physical Activity (November 2005)
- Bullying in the Workplace (April 2006)
- New Teacher Induction (April 2006)
- College of Teachers Reform (June 2006)

2006 to 2007

Focus on Social Justice

OECTA's changing demographics led the Association to find ways for newer members to play a more active role.

In that vein, OECTA sponsored *Educating for the Common Good*, a conference organized by the Professional Development department that featured human rights activist, author and former teacher Sally Armstrong, Toronto Star political columnist Linda McQuaig and theologian Gregory Baum, all of whom encouraged teachers to continue nurturing a society that speaks out and agitates for what is right for the common good. It was OECTA's first curriculum conference since the suspension of the Christian Curriculum Development Conference in 1997.

The Health and Safety Conference in August, organized by the Contract Services department, stressed the importance of making health and safety a higher priority in schools and at the bargaining table. Safe work environments in schools require safety education, speaking up for workers' rights and taking action.

Craig Kielburger, international child rights activist and founder of *Free The Children*, emphasized the transformative power of the teacher, in his address to the February 2007 Beginning Teachers conference. The Association's popular event aimed at OECTA members with less than six years of teaching experience attracted some 450 members interested in learning more about their profession, their union and education in the broadest sense of the word.

Concern for the common good theme was also evident when OECTA members joined with other unions and organizations during Action Against Poverty Week. OECTA's message in the province-wide campaign to raise public awareness and demand action through social programs and job creation to address needs of thousands of children and their families was conveyed through a billboard "Investing in Children Pays Big Dividends," and letters to municipal and provincial governments.

For more than 40 years OECTA's Education Aid program has granted two per cent of the Association's net revenue from member fees to teacher and community organizations worldwide. Priority is given to requests from Association members or former members; affect children, teachers, schools (in that order), and have a Christian/Catholic dimension. During the 2006-07 year, OECTA approved a motion to provide amounts of money to sustain projects over a longer time period. One organization benefiting from that decision is KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, a church-based social justice movement that unites churches and religious organizations to advocate for social change.

Pension Contributions Rise

The Government of Ontario and the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), the partners in the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, reached agreement in June 2006 to increase the contribution rate of the teachers and the government to deal with a funding shortfall in the plan. The first phase of the increase took effect on January 1, 2007,

with members' contributions moving to 9.3 per cent on the first \$43,700 of earnings and 10.9 for earnings beyond \$43,700. Retirement benefits were unchanged.

Teachers are majority on OCT

For the first time since the Ontario College of Teachers was established in 1997, Ontario's classroom teachers were entitled a majority of positions on the College's Governing Council as a result of a legislative change. All candidates endorsed by OTF won their positions, including OECTA members Don Cattani, Northwest Ontario; Nick Forte, English-Language Roman Catholic Secondary; Rosemary Fontaine, Central Ontario; Brent Hamelin, South Central, and Tianna Travaglini-Babic, English-Language Roman Catholic Board Elementary. Three of the most senior College of Teachers' positions were held by current and former OECTA members: Registrar and Chief Executive Officer, Brian McGowan (former head of OECTA's PD Department), Acting Deputy Registrar, Lise Roy-Kolbusz (a former OECTA speaker) and Council Chairperson Don Cattani (former Thunder Bay Unit President).

Unprecedented Four-year Agreements

Unprecedented four-year collective agreements extending to August 2008, and negotiated with the assistance of the provincial government's framework, provided teachers with significant salary increases, 200 minutes of preparation and planning time for all elementary school teachers, with primary class sizes reduced by 20 per cent. These long-term agreements brought peace and stability to the teaching sector.

While the Association reiterated support for goals of new government programs to improve student achievement and enhance teacher professionalism and skills, it continued to defend teachers' working conditions and bargaining unit work and remained committed to ongoing local dialogue and bargaining with school boards as Ministry of Education policies were implemented throughout the term of the agreement. Aspects of the *Learning to 18 Student Success* initiatives, the New Teacher Induction Program and the Teacher Performance Appraisal process required the Association to defend members' interests. OECTA raised concerns that pilots of some alternative programs designed to keep secondary school students at risk in school, did not involve certified secondary school teachers.

Influencing Government Decisions

As a member of the Student Success Commission (SSC), a team of education leaders, teacher unions, school boards, principals and supervisory officers, OECTA was positioned to directly advise the Minister of Education of these concerns and other matters. SSC's unique mandate gave teachers direct access to the Minister of Education and opened a real opportunity to influence government decisions. In addition, OECTA pushed for the government to include a Principal Performance Appraisal process.

In direct discussions with Avis Glaze, Chief Student Achievement Officer of Ontario's Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, OECTA

reported that teachers were burdened by a mushrooming workload caused by implementation of literacy and numeracy initiatives including “critical friends” and the “diagnosticians” in the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP) initiative.

OECTA’s Counselling and Member Services department provided prevention workshops on a variety of topics such as Communicating with Parents, Fostering Positive Parent-Teacher Relationships, Resolving Conflict, Relationships: Appropriate and Professional, Teacher Liability, Healthy Tips for Teachers, *Safe Schools Act* – Remedy or Catastrophe, *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, and “Be Wary, Be Wise” that equipped them with skills to deal with difficult situations.

Commitment to Literacy

OECTA’s June 2007 Council of Presidents made a multi-year commitment to the summer literacy camps for Aboriginal youth launched by the Honourable James Bartleman during his years as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. Council voted to donate \$28,000 to the project, in addition to the \$5,000 annual grant made through the Educational Aid Fund.

\$4.75 Million PD Grant

In March 2006, the province provided the teachers’ federations with a two-year grant to help promote professional development related to two government focuses – literacy and numeracy, and differentiated instruction, as well as initiatives that address student success. The Association used its \$4.75 million share to expand existing programs including our summer workshops in 2006, and to provide many new PD opportunities for our members in 2006-07. OECTA developed three-day literacy, numeracy and differentiated instruction workshops that focus on differentiated instruction through developmentally appropriate practice in primary and junior mathematics and literacy. In addition, the 2006 Summer Program was expanded to include five workshops designed specially to meet these concerns.

Grant money was also spent on initiatives that addressed student success, through the following opportunities for teachers: Action Research Projects and Book Study Groups; local PD funds (\$21 per member); Teachers as Leaders Symposium (March 2007); OECTA Summer Program; Kindergarten Matters Symposium (July & August 2007), Media Literacy Symposium (November 2007), Anti-bullying Symposium (April 2008) and Courage to Serve retreat (May 2008).

Preparing for 2007 Election

OECTA Votes, a campaign to participate in Ontario’s 2007 provincial election was the focus of a political action seminar in April, attended by 150 unit presidents and political action committee (PAC) Chairpersons. Delegates learned skills to motivate members to participate effectively and lobby candidates during the campaign. OECTA’s long-term goal was to have positive ongoing relationships with government – enhanced by teacher participation. While OECTA did not instruct members how to vote, it was important that teachers were informed and able to vote for candidates who would

work with them to do what’s best for students.

OECTA Speaks on...

Government Relations produced a series of information sheets that addressed a variety of educational and social justice issues, which were mailed directly to every MPP.

Bill 52 Learning to 18 (October 2006)

Ending Child Poverty (October 2006)

Education Funding (January 2007)

2007 to 2008

Elaine Mac Neil New OECTA President



ELAINE MAC NEIL
OECTA PRESIDENT

Elaine Mac Neil, a teacher from Algonquin-Lakeshore, began her two-year term as President July 1. Mac Neil, a specialist in Religious Education had taught in the elementary and secondary panels. She had served on the OECTA Provincial Executive since 2001 and as first vice-president from 2003 to 2007. A passionate advocate for social justice, Mac Neil also represented OECTA at the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice and attended congresses of Education International. Shortly after taking office, she described her role as

advocating for the rights of members, to assist them when they're in difficulty, and to be their voice in all the places where teachers meet education and community partners.

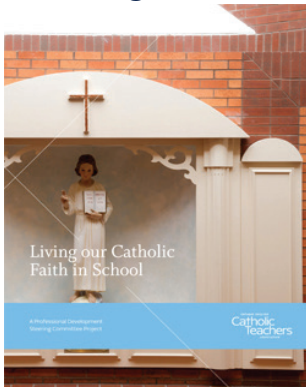
Liberals Win Majority

A fall provincial election brought a whirlwind of activity to OECTA and its Government Relations department. OECTA members joined campaign teams in many ridings, intent on electing an education-friendly government. While not all of the chosen candidates were elected, members were often critical in laying foundations for future elections. Dalton McGuinty's Liberals won a majority and their commitment to publicly funded education as a key plank in their election platform. A



much-watched race was that between Kathleen Wynne, the popular Minister of Education and MPP for Don Valley West, and John Tory, leader of the Progressive Conservatives and which resulted in Tory's defeat.

Defending Catholic Education



A crucial challenge that OECTA and the whole Catholic community faced once again was the Conservative's campaign promise to provide funding for faith-based, private schools. The issue ignited lengthy debate in the media throughout the election, and with some calling for a single publicly funded school system and an end to public funds for Catholic education.

The re-election of the education-friendly government was not a cure-all for problems facing education in Ontario. Every day, OECTA members continued to face excessive workloads – which the Association addressed through consultation, grievances, and at the bargaining table.

Full-day Kindergarten

In November 2007, the Ontario government announced the appointment of Dr. Charles Pascal to study the feasibility of full-day Kindergarten for 4- and 5-year-olds, and to report in 2009. OECTA's paper on the matter, emphasized support for full-day Kindergarten, and advised that the best program would be delivered by certified teachers within the current education system structures.

An issue central to OECTA's activities was government emphasis on testing. OECTA argued against relying on Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) test scores as the sole measure of student, staff and school success. Large-scale testing that cost an estimated \$50 million annually on EQAO, crushes teacher innovation and harms students, OECTA said.

OECTA Resists SEF

The Association advised the government that before any new education initiatives are introduced, teachers wanted time to integrate current ones. OECTA opposed the prescriptive nature of programs that focused more on testing students and appraising teacher performances than developing the whole child through a curriculum that also includes art, music, drama and physical education.

There was increasing resistance to the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) program, intended to be a collegial way of improving teacher learning. Teachers were concerned that the SEF processes were being used for evaluation, undermined teacher autonomy and professionalism regarding teaching, learning and assessment, and undermined collegiality, mentoring, and team building. OECTA warned that it would resist evaluative process associated with SEF.



The Association continued to use the balance of the province's \$4.75 million PD grant for member PD opportunities, beginning with a fall conference *Called by Name*, a bullying prevention symposium, which was offered in Toronto in September, followed in spring 2008 by five regional bullying prevention symposia. The workshops were tailored for elementary and secondary school teachers to support their efforts to create safe and caring learning and working

2009 to 2010

environments. A December 2007 Media Literacy Symposium addressed the challenges of media, a powerful cultural force. The government PD grant also covered costs for OECTA members to participate in *Courage to Serve* retreat, a spiritual formation program for educators and a leadership opportunity offered by OECTA in May and August 2008.

Status of Women Committee

At the 2008 Annual General Meeting in March, delegates voted to make the Status of Women Work Group a permanent standing committee of the Association. Among its responsibilities, the committee will advise the Provincial Executive on ways to advocate for and enhance the status of women in society both national and internationally. In her remarks to delegates, OECTA President Elaine Mac Neil noted that women's poverty in Canada is at its highest rate in two decades.



4-Year Framework

OECTA reached a framework agreement with the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) for new 2008-2012 collective agreements on May 1, 2008. Talks between teachers and boards were facilitated by the Ontario government, at a Provincial Discussion Table. All unions in the education sector were involved in similar discussions with boards at provincial tables. Under the framework, teachers would receive three per cent raises in each year of the agreement. Boards promised to restrict the size of Grades 4-8 classes, and the province will provide funds for increased hiring of specialist teachers for art, music and other subjects. Catholic school boards and OECTA bargaining units were given until November 30, 2008 to iron out the details of their local agreements. As the school year ended, a recession appeared to be looming for Ontario. Enrolment was declining, Catholic schools were closing, and thousands had lost employment in the manufacturing sector.

OECTA Speaks on...

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Collaboration for Success (November 2007)

Poverty Reduction (November 2007)

Culture of Testing (January 2008)

Elementary Workload (January 2008)

School Safety (April 2008)

Our Social Justice History (CLC 2008)

65th Anniversary 1944-2009

Since OECTA's first provincial meeting, which took place over the Easter weekend in 1944, the Association has grown in membership, stronger and in effectiveness protecting member interests alongside changing teaching legislation, that recognizes the increasing complexity of the teaching profession.

James Ryan New OECTA President



JAMES RYAN
OECTA PRESIDENT

James Ryan, a teacher from Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers (TECT) unit, began his two-year term as President on July 1, 2009. Ryan taught in both the elementary and secondary panels, worked as a special education resource teacher and has also taught in the adolescent psychiatric division at Sunnybrook Hospital.

Before being elected to OECTA Provincial, Ryan was a member of the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers' North York Sub-unit executive. From 1997-2000, he served as an

OTF Governor and was elected as a Councillor to the OECTA Provincial Executive in 2002.

Keenly interested in social justice and labour rights, Ryan has served as co-chair of the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice, and as a member of CTF's Human Rights and Diversity Committee, the Ontario Federation of Labour's Education is a Right Committee, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund (Canada) Steering Committee, and the Canadian Labour Congress' Human Rights Committee.

One of Ryan's first official engagements as OECTA President was a visit to Onegaming First Nation near Nestor Falls, Ontario, to spend a day at the Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camp that OECTA has sponsored for two years. Over half of the 130 students participated in the summer literacy camp, which is operated by Frontier College. Aboriginal knowledge, customs, cultures and history are reflected in the design and delivery of the program, with an overarching theme that emphasizes the fun of reading and writing.

Marshall Jarvis New General Secretary

Marshall Jarvis began his term as OECTA General Secretary on February 17, 2009.



Jarvis brings local, provincial and national experience to his role. His face and name became familiar to many Ontarians during his term as OECTA President from 1997 to 1999. Just weeks into that term, the Harris government introduced the *Education Quality Improvement Act* (Bill 160), that cut almost \$2 billion from Ontario's education budget and triggered an unprecedented province-wide conflict.

A former high school math and science teacher at Sacred Heart Catholic High School in York region, Jarvis served in various capacities on the Executive and on the Board of Governors of the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) between 1993 and 2005.

He first joined the OECTA staff as an Executive Assistant in the Contract Service Department in 2005. Prior to becoming General Secretary, Jarvis was an Executive Assistant in OECTA's Counselling and Member Services Department.

Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Shortfall in Valuation

An independent actuary's annual funding valuation showed a \$19 billion deficit as of January 1, 2008. Such a deficit valuation filed with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) would have resulted in an increase in pension premiums from 11 per cent of teachers' gross salary to 16 per cent. The increase would have to have been in place for the next 15 years and would have been devastating for most working teachers. OECTA and its OTF affiliates agreed to implement conditional indexation, in affect after 2009, to address a Plan deficit.

Full-Day Learning – Kindergarten Lobby

Promised by the Liberals in 2007 and officially announced in 2009, the Early Learning Kindergarten Program (ELKP) for four-and five-year-olds will cost Ontario taxpayers \$1.5 billion when fully implemented in 2015.

OECTA has a great deal to be proud of regarding the ELKP. In a 2009 report, Dr. Charles Pascal, who was appointed by MGuinly to study and report on how to best implement a full day of learning, Dr. Pascal recommended an extended day of learning for classes of 20 four-and five-year-olds, staffed by a full-time early childhood educator (ECE) and a half-time teacher.

The Association challenged Pascal's recommendation, insisting to the government that every classroom be led by a full-time certified teacher because research clearly shows that teacher qualifications have a critical influence on the achievement of students in full-day programs. OECTA's lobby was successful. The government acknowledged the skills and importance of having certified teachers at all times.

OECTA Leadership Training Program



With a vision of building strong teacher advocates and activists to enable OECTA to take action at all levels as a union of professionals, the Association launched its new Leadership Training Program in November 2009. The program's goal is to develop teacher leaders who have a broad-based sense of advocacy in the classroom, and who are equipped with specific knowledge and skills to provide service and leadership at all levels of the Association.

Led by OECTA's provincial office staff, the Level 1 workshops provide participants with foundational knowledge and skills in grievance arbitration, communication, professional relationships, the principles of teacher leadership, and the legislative framework for teacher collective bargaining. After completing eight modules of study, they received a Certificate of Foundational Training. Specialized certificate training began in 2010-2011. A new group of participants was accepted to begin leadership training in the fall of 2010, for completion of foundational training in 2011.

In-House Legal Counsel

In the fiscal year 2008-09, the Association spent over \$3 million on legal fees to counsel members. Adding hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Association's annual legal bill was the new 13 per cent harmonized sales tax (HST), which took effect July 1, 2010. After a review of the nature and pattern of OECTA's legal expenditures, it was determined an in-house counsel would benefit the Association, and the Provincial Executive approved the employment of an in-house legal counsel on a two-year trial basis.

Local Collective Bargaining Training

The four-year collective agreements signed in 2008 required the Association to engage local units and school boards in finalizing and monitoring contract details. The Association held annual collective bargaining regional workshops to support locals in implementing their agreements, and monitoring to prepare for 2011-12 collective bargaining.

2010 to 2011

Provincial Election Readiness Campaign

Speak for Children

The Association developed its political action campaign to elect an education-friendly government on October 6, 2011. The “Speak for Children” public relations campaign included a fact-based plan for a stronger Ontario, positioning OECTA’s key policy recommendations, social media (Twitter and Facebook), a YouTube video, a highly visible community billboard and media advertising campaign, and local unit-based MPP lobbying, with a call to action of members to speak for children and vote on election day. As anticipated, a minority Liberal government was elected.

Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program



OECTA held an ELKP Conference in May, “Everyone Learns the Kindergarten Program”, for teachers delivering the program in September 2010 to discuss workload, curriculum, classroom space, professional learning, and working in partnership with ECES. Following the conference, OECTA invited ELKP teachers to join a social media community network to continue the conversation by participating in discussion forums, sharing resources, and lending teacher-to-teacher support during the 2010-11 school year.

Information gathered from surveys allowed OECTA to provide useful and insightful feedback to the Ministry of Education on the continued development of the program.

Leadership Training Program

Reflecting OECTA’s commitment to training strong teacher activists, OECTA launched the program in 2010, starting with broad-based foundational training in areas of membership service. The program was expanded with the introduction of concurrent specialist training in four areas: collective bargaining, conflict management, grievance officer, and leadership skills & organizational development later in the year.

Through the LTP program, participants gain a broad sense of advocacy as well as specific knowledge and skills that will prepare them to provide service and leadership at the local and provincial level to ensure the next generation of OECTA leadership are prepared.

Your Right to a Safe Workplace

Bill 168, *An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act* with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace, came into effect June 2010. The law is an attempt to protect workers, including teachers, from acts of violence and or harassment in the workplace and will have far reaching effects in schools across the province.

It is the first such law enacted in Ontario and places many responsibilities on Boards of Education and their supervisory staff. Policies and procedures outlined in the Act were to be implemented by June 2010 and OECTA continues to examine these to ensure Boards are in compliance with the law.

Under Bill 168, teaching staff has the right to know when they might come into contact with those who have a record of violent behaviour. Bill 168 states that employers and supervisors must provide at-risk specific information including the personal data of anyone, including students, with a history of violent behaviour. School boards are required to produce policies and procedures with regard to the dissemination of such information.

OECTA followed up with regional workshops focusing on workplace violence policy and procedures, and new responsibilities for Joint Health and Safety Committee members.

Spirit Horse Northern Ontario Tour

OECTA and ETFO collaborated to offer an enriching Arts experience to teachers and schools in the northern reach of the province. The Spirit Horse play by Roseneath Theatre is used as a catalyst for professional development in dance, drama, music and visual arts. The joint northern Arts Native Studies project provides elementary school audiences with an opportunity to “reflect upon, respond to, and analyze” the theatre experience while supporting classroom teachers with the revised Ontario Arts Curriculum.

Spirit Horse tours 33 communities across northern Ontario from October to December 2010. The tour officially launched in Marathon.



2011 to 2012

Re-branding



July 1, 2011 marked the official launch of OECTA's new wordmark, official colours, and document standards, including fonts. These were first introduced at AGM 2011, in the presentation to unit presidents of new flags bearing the wordmark and

colours, as well as distribution of Report to Members 2011, which illustrated various aspects of the new visual brand.

2011 Provincial Election

During the summer of 2011, leading up to the fall provincial election, OECTA re-launched its Speak for Children campaign. The non-partisan, issues-based campaign celebrated Ontario's education system as being among the best in the world, promoted positive education policies and encouraged voters to become informed about the issues and vote for pro-education candidates.

OECTA's Key Campaign Messages:

- Invest in people to prepare for a new economy
- Maintain investments in publicly funded education
- Ensure our schools are safe and inclusive
- Strengthen the social safety net, which will strengthen the economy



Throughout September Speak for Children ads ran in local community newspapers, on local radio stations, on billboards, public transit and in shopping malls and hockey arenas across Ontario. Even Toronto's Union Station was dominated by Speak for Children messaging for several weeks.

Many OECTA members volunteered to help elect education-friendly candidates in their communities. Thanks in large part to the efforts of teachers, 63 of 88 locally endorsed candidates were elected and the Liberals were returned to Queen's Park to lead a minority government.

OECTA's Educational Aid reaches Out to the World

OECTA's Educational Aid Committee is responsible for allocating the Educational Aid Fund, which receives two per cent of the Association's net revenue each year.



This year, the committee disbursed more than \$214,000 to a variety of projects, including grants to a nursery/primary school in Ghana, to Bartica Secondary School in Guyana, to People's School of Nepal, to KAIROS, a Canadian social justice organization, and to a project in Malawi run by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

Closer to home, OECTA has renewed its four-year commitment to support the Aboriginal Literacy Summer Camp that it has funded since 2008 in Onigaming, a First Nation community north of Thunder Bay. The Educational Aid Fund provides partial funding for the camp, which runs annually during July and August.

Teachers Teaching Teachers



Project Overseas is a joint endeavour of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and its member organizations. Teams of teachers, including OECTA are selected each year to provide professional assistance to teachers in countries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East. OECTA members volunteer their time and talents to assist in raising the academic and professional qualifications of teachers, peer to peer. This year, six OECTA members volunteered in Mongolia, Grenada, Saint Vincent, and Sierra Leone.

Education International



OECTA's President, General Secretary, Past President and first Vice-President attended Education International's 6th World Congress held in Cape Town, South Africa in July 2011. They were part of the Canadian Teachers' Federation delegation to the congress. Resolutions addressed a wide range of topics, including copyright and education, sustained funding for education in the economic crisis, teacher migration and

mobility, and child labour. OECTA fought to have the congress consider its motion calling for support for the rights of constitutionally protected minorities (including religious groups) to publicly funded school systems. In the end, the Association's recommendation became part of a compilation motion that included the key element — the recognition of the existing rights to education of minorities such as religious, linguistic and ethnic groups. This motion did not hit the floor at the congress, however, it was adopted by EI's Executive Board in November 2011.

OECTA Sends Largest Delegation to OFL

In November, OECTA sent its largest delegation to date (90 members) to the biennial Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) convention. The convention was an opportunity to build solidarity among conference delegates as teachers, plumbers, autoworkers and government employees affirmed the importance of the union movement and the need to work together to bring about change for Ontarians.



Three of the four motions the Association took to the convention were adopted. Two of these, which addressed the Day of Pink and Anti-Bullying, and Anti-Homophobia Education, were combined into a new motion that received overwhelming support. The motion requires that the OFL support and promote Ontario wide action on the Day of Pink, April 13; that the federation promote training and promotional materials that oppose homophobic and transphobic bullying in all workplaces; and that it support the expansion of anti-homophobia education programs in schools.

OECTA also works with the OFL outside the convention, for example, by participating in the January 21, 2012 demonstration in London to support the workers at Electro-Motive Canada, who had been laid off on January 1 after being offered a new contract that reduced salaries and benefits by 50 per cent. Caterpillar announced the plant's permanent closure and transfer of jobs south to Indiana, an anti-union state, barely a month later, on February 3.

Reach Every Student – Equity and Inclusivity in Ontario Schools



supports any variety of measures, including students clubs (regardless

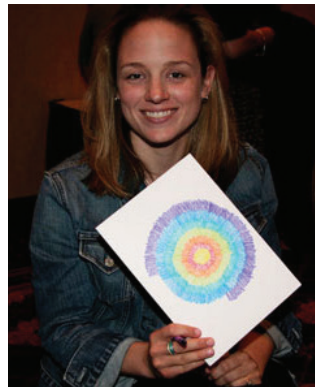
The Catholic education system gained media attention this year when, under the direction of the Archdiocese, school boards refused to allow students to form Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs to help combat homophobia and build acceptance in their schools. The issue culminated in November with the government's introduction of Bill 13, the *Accepting Schools Act*, 2011. OECTA

of name), that have the intended goal of building respect and understanding and making our schools safer for everyone. OECTA supported the implementation of Bill 13, and then President O'Dwyer spoke in favour of the Bill to the Legislative Committee.

At its 2012 Annual General Meeting in March, OECTA delegates reaffirmed their support for inclusive and respectful schools by passing two resolutions dealing with GSAs and inclusive learning and working environments for LGBTQ individuals.

In May, OECTA, in cooperation with the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO), hosted a conference for classroom teachers and administrators on supporting marginalized and LGBTQ students in Ontario's Catholic schools. Titled Reach Every Student, Know Their Story, the conference was a first of its kind for Ontario's Catholic educators. Participants heard from keynote speakers and attended workshops that provided valuable insight on how to use our shared Catholic values to build welcoming, inclusive environments in which all individuals, including those who are LGBTQ, are safe and respected.

Professional Development



Each year OECTA members enhance their professional status through the professional development activities offered by the Association, many of them designed by teachers for teachers.

OECTA's Educating for the Common for the Common Good curriculum conference was held in Teaching: Changing the Human Condition. Three keynote speakers delivered challenging messages. Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish wrote "I Shall Not Hate"

after three of his daughters were killed in their Gaza home by a shell launched by the Israel Defense Forces. Michel Chikwanine was forced by rebel forces to become a child soldier in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and now works as a motivational speaker for the Me to We organization in Toronto. Ilana Landsberg-Lewis, executive director of the Stephen Lewis Foundation, is a life-long campaigner for women's rights, equity, social justice, and racial inclusiveness. The conference also offered members a choice of 25 workshops with titles such as That's So Gay – Beyond Homophobia: Building Inclusive Communities Within Catholic Schools; Teaching Genocide in the Canadian Classroom; Social Justice Documentaries: Engaging Students in Multimedia Awareness of Social Issues; and Progressive Discipline: What's New in Safe Schools?

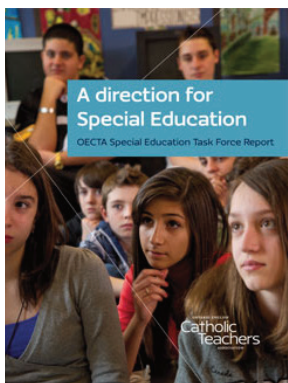
With funding in part from the Ministry of Education, OECTA has developed Professional Learning Communities of self-selected members who have explored various areas of practice. The American Educational Research Association (AERA) has accepted the Association's proposal for a symposium presenting the results of this research on Professional Learning Communities at the 2012 AERA annual meeting in Vancouver.

Beginning Teachers Conference



Supporting beginning teachers in their professional as well as their union lives remains an important focus for OECTA, as was reflected in this year's conference. More than 300 OECTA members attended the two-day conference in February for teachers in the first five years of their teaching career. They participated in workshops, hands-on curriculum practice, as well as information sessions about collective bargaining and the importance of the pension, especially to young teachers. Humour mixed with practical advice was delivered by author and classroom teacher Jane Bluestein in her talk about managing student behaviour. Joanne Cave, founder of Ophelia's Voice, shared her inspiring life story of involvement in social justice and civic leadership since she was 12 years old, and encouraged teachers to continue to be mentors for girls who want to find their voice and be civically engaged.

OECTA's Special Education Task Force



The task force, which included input from PD staff, undertook an in-depth look at this increasingly important issue and produced *A Direction for Special Education*, a far-reaching report that makes 37 recommendations pertaining to students with special needs, a model of delivery, revisions to assessment, identification and Independent Education Plans, professional development, class sizes and more. The task force was comprised of both classroom and special education teachers, reflecting a wide range of

experience in special education, classroom and resource roles. The report was distributed to every school.

College of Teachers

In response to recommendations made by Justice LeSage in his review of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), in January 2012, the OCT posted details of disciplinary decisions on their website

<http://www.oct.ca> making hundreds of decisions from 1998 onward accessible online. Previously, information about disciplinary decisions was stored in the College's library, and only available upon request. The College says its intention is to provide the public with greater transparency and accountability. OECTA believes there is work to be done to enhance fairness in posting disciplinary decisions online.

Public sector reform expected to curb province's \$16 billion deficit. In an effort to address serious fiscal problems, the Ontario government appointed former TD Bank chief economist Don Drummond to spearhead the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services. OECTA submitted briefs to the government and the Drummond Commission encouraging them to look at the increasing expenditures in school board administration lines, the size of government bureaucracy at the Ministry of Education (such as the Student Achievement Division) and the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) as areas where efficiencies could be realized, without impacting classroom learning. Read OECTA's brief to the Minister of Finance.

When the spring 2012 budget was released, opportunities for savings were not mentioned. Instead, the government took a very 'unbalanced' approach to the budget – ignoring valid opportunities for savings while implementing measures that disproportionately impact teachers.

Collective Bargaining Begins

In February 2012, OECTA entered into the bargaining process intent on negotiating the parameters of an agreement with the government.

The previous two rounds of bargaining with the provincial government resulted in two consecutive four-year agreements (2004-08 and 2009-12), and brought improvements to working conditions, compensation and an increase in specialized teachers. The Liberals created the "provincial dialogue table" (PDT) to discuss province-wide issues and establish consistent compensation and benefit standards across the province. However, some school boards resisted by delaying entitlements established at the PDT. For example, professional development funds allocated to local units, and some benefit enhancements, were maliciously delayed.

In the 2012 round, the government directed OECTA to meet with the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) to come up with an agreement acceptable to both parties. OECTA President Kevin O'Dwyer opposed the idea.

"The trustees have no authority in this matter," added O'Dwyer. "The bottom line is that it is the government that created the proposal, controls the funding, and are the owners of this PDT process, therefore, they are the party with whom we need to be engaged in a discussion."

By the end of the school year, discussions with the government on the parameters they proposed had produced some positive signs, but there remained many issues to be resolved before any agreement could be reached.

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