

OECTA AGM 2006



Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy, speaking with Toronto Elementary Catholic Teacher delegates over lunch at our annual OECTA AGM luncheon. Mr. Kennedy was one of many speakers who addressed the over 600 OECTA delegates on education issues. *For more information and photos on the AGM, look to pages 10 through 13.*

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

The New Transfer and Placement Process, *Mario Bernardo*

Lenten Message, *Pope Benedict XVI*

What is a Professional Learning Community? *Richard Dufour*

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COVER

Cover photo by
Louisa DeCiantis

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WHAT'S INSIDE

- 3 President's Message**
Supporting UNITE HERE
John Pecsénye, President of TECT
- 4 Editorial**
Ending Mandatory Retirement
Louisa DeCiantis, Third Vice-President of TECT
- 5 Letter to the Editor**
A response to comments in our December issue
John Del Grande, TCDSB Trustee for Ward 7
- 5 ETFO Worklife Study by Matsui Research Inc.**
Average Hours Spent by Ontario Public Elementary Teachers on Teacher Related Work
Index compiled by Mario Bernardo
- 7 Enhancing Our Work Environment**
Good Boss Quiz – Effective Leadership & Don't be Taken Advantage of
Anthony Bellissimo, First Vice-President of TECT
- 8 Message from the Vatican**
Lenten Message, 29 September, 2005
His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI
- 10 Feature Article**
AGM 2006
Mario Bernardo, Second Vice-President of TECT
- 12 Pictorial**
Photographic Coverage of OECTA AGM 2006
Louisa DeCiantis, Third Vice-President of TECT
- 14 Article**
Teacher Leadership and Professional Communities
Rebecca Stelter, Teacher at St. John
- 15 Article**
What is a Professional Learning Community?
Richard Dufour
- 16 Your Collective Agreement**
The Transfer and Placement Process
Mario Bernardo, Second Vice-President of TECT
- 18 Your Collective Agreement**
Important Dates
Mario Bernardo, Second Vice-President of TECT
- 18 Internet Library**
Useful Websites for Teachers
Deborah Karam, Teacher at St. Kevin



SUPPORTING UNITE/HERE

Many families and individuals took a well-deserved holiday and escaped the winter blahs this past March Break. If you were one of the fortunate ones who traveled to a far off beach or found yourself enjoying the winter weather at a resort in Ontario many of you availed yourselves of a hotel stay.

Well appointed rooms with luxury bedding, over sized mattresses, thick duvets, mountains of pillows and thick fluffy towels are certainly well deserved treatments, but who prepared that room and what were the working conditions under which that individual worked?

During February's Council of Presidents meeting, the assembly passed a motion that supported the efforts of **UNITE HERE** in coming to successful contractual agreements with the three major hotel chains in the city of Toronto, the Hilton Hotel Corporation, Starwood Hotels and Resorts, and Marriott International.

UNITE HERE is a merger of two unions: **UNITE** (formerly the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees) and **HERE** (Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union). The two unions merged on July 8, 2004 forming **UNITE HERE**.

At its core, **UNITE HERE** values and works toward universal principals such as social justice, economic opportunity, civil rights and the organizing of unrepresented workers. The face of **UNITE** is an image of diversity. Members live in big cities and small towns with the largest

concentrations in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia and **UNITE** represents a rich diversity of cultures and work backgrounds. All share in a strong commitment to justice and democracy on the job. **UNITE HERE** workers are striving to secure and maintain a decent standard of living for its membership.

The members of the **UNITE HERE** include room attendants, cooks, waiters, bartenders, desk clerks, and many others in the hotel and service industry. They work in the largest of Toronto's hotels. Their membership is ethnically diverse, with high percentages of African-Canadians, and Latino and Asian immigrant workers.

These workers are the parents of many of the children that we have in our classrooms today. Many of these workers have more than one job and, as a consequence, are forced to be away from their children. Their working conditions have deteriorated over the previous years with the move to luxury bedrooms in the largest hotels in Toronto and throughout North America. Health and safety issues abound in this physical environment. The fact that many hotels have moved to the luxury bedrooms for guests has not minimized their workload. Hotel workers are still required to complete the same number of rooms in their workday even though the mattresses are larger, the comforters are heavier and the pillows are more numerous.

Their struggle is one that Catholic teachers have championed for many years; this struggle is about trans-

forming our society so that service workers can have a decent standard of living and a safe work environment. As in other North American cities, the majority of Toronto's housekeepers are immigrant women who must support their families on low wages and have little job security.

Heading into a year when 23 GTA hotels will negotiate new contracts with their 4,000 employees, it is imperative that we support these workers in their efforts to achieve fair and equitable collective agreements. Hotel workers should not have to work two jobs, sacrifice their health and have their children live in poverty. The creation of good jobs, promotional and training opportunities so that workers can live and retire with dignity and security should not be unattainable.

The hotel sector is prospering and it must not exploit the hardworking men and women. Raising the standard of living will benefit hotel workers and their communities and enable them to provide the first class services that make the tourism industry work in Toronto and in cities across North America.

John Pecszenye is President of the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers

You can read more about UNITE HERE by visiting their website at www.unitehere.com.



With second term now completed and spring in our midst, I encourage you to take some time for yourself and enjoy the warmer weather and longer days. Once again, I encourage members to contribute to Metro Voice through the submission of letters to the editor, articles, or other pieces of writing. The Communications Committee welcomes your input.

Ending Mandatory Retirement

With new legislation: *The Ending Mandatory Retirement Statute Law Amendment Act* that will come into effect December 12, 2006 banning mandatory retirement, many of our members are wondering how this legislation will impact on their ability to continue teaching beyond the age of sixty-five.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is not planning on extending the mandatory age of retirement from sixty-five until it is legislated to do so. At this time the board is researching the impact of employing persons over the age of sixty-five. It is looking at how this will impact on benefits, accommodations, CPP, etc.

According to a Government of Ontario website, the status quo will remain with respect to disability plans, life insurance, and health benefit plans. The provision of benefits to workers 65 and older will continue to be at the employer's discretion. Employees 65 and older will continue to have access to programs such as *The Ontario Drug Plan*.

The Ontario Teachers Pension Plan has stated that it does not think mandatory retirement will drastically change teachers' retirement patterns. Teachers today, on average, retire at age 57 and most retire shortly after having attained their 85 factor. Fewer than two per cent begin collecting a pension at age 65.

As it stands now, Ontario is one of six provinces where mandatory retirement after age 65 is allowed, with some exceptions. In Alberta, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Quebec as well as the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon mandatory retirement at any age is viewed as discriminatory. In the United States mandatory retirement has been essentially eliminated.

The main reason for changing the law to ban mandatory retirement lies in the fact that forcing someone to retire at a particular age is discriminatory. There has been no evidence

presented that suggests that a person's ability to perform tasks diminishes at the age of 65.

According to C.T. Gillin, a professor in the Department of Sociology at Ryerson University and Thomas Klassen, an assistant professor in the Sociology Department at Trent University, mandatory retirement is a form of ageism. It

is a violation of human rights. If all baby boomers stop work at age 65, the retirement system will come under great stress. It's interesting to note that at present there are approximately four working Canadians for every retiree. By 2030 the ratio will be one to one with the age expectancy rising, those reaching age 65 will have, on average, another twenty years to live. With the ratio of retired Canadians versus working Canadians getting smaller, social programs and health care will be

strained. The argument that mandatory retirement will cause greater unemployment has been proven false in the United States where mandatory retirement laws have been rejected. For over two decades the United States has had lower unemployment rates than Canada.

Lenten Season

During this Lenten Season, as we prepare for the resurrection of Jesus, may our hearts be filled with the anticipation of the joyful event of Easter. May the peace and joy that comes with the light of Christ be with you and your family in this holy season.

Louisa DeCiantis is the Third Vice-President of TECT and Editor of Metro Voice.

For more information on mandatory retirement visit:

www.labour.gov.on.ca • www.sdc.gc.ca

www.oecta.on.ca • www.otpp.com

Teacher Retirement by the Numbers*

57 Average age at retirement

86 Average life expectancy at retirement

2,189 Number of pensioners in their 90s

58 Number of pensioners aged 100 or older

*Data from the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan website

WORKLOAD INDEX

Average Number of Hours per Week Spent by Ontario Public Elementary Teachers

25.6
Teaching classes

7.5
Preparing for classes

3.0
Working with students outside of class time

6.1
Marking

3.1
Supervising students including
extracurricular activities

2.4
Attending staff and team meetings

1.8
Contacting and dealing with parents

1.9
Pursuing professional development
opportunities

1.8
Preparing report Cards

0.4
Working on IEPs and ISAs

53.0
In total on teacher related work

The data above is based on an April 2005 study conducted by James Matsui Research Inc. entitled ETFO WORKLIFE STUDY: The Work Hours of Ontario Public Elementary Teachers and commissioned by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO). The study was based on telephone interviews with 3,145 ETFO members. The amount of time that teachers spend each term preparing report cards and the amount of time they spend annually working on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Intensive Support Amounts (ISAs) have been converted into hours per week.

According to Matsui, similar research projects conducted in other provincial jurisdictions have found comparable teacher workloads. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation found in 1994 and 1995 that their members worked, on average, 47 hours per week. The Nova Scotia Teachers' Union reported that their members spend 52.5 hours per week on teaching related activities, while Alberta teachers reported a range of 50.5 to 54.3 hours per week depending on whether report cards were being completed. The BCTF found that secondary English teachers were working more than 53 hours per week.

Letter to the Editor

In December's issue of the Metro Voice, John Pecsénye wrote a response to the Toronto Star article dated November 16, 2005 entitled: "Board mulls axing teacher-librarians".

Respectfully in rebuttal, if TECT fully researched and enquired to trustees directly instead of relying on third party sources that exploit headlines, they would understand that the board motion on November 3rd, 2005: "That staff be directed to come back with a report addressing the need to keep our libraries open full time using Library Technicians." was addressing the issue of staffing libraries in excess of hours they are currently operated and available to students. At no time did Trustees or I suggest that the Board should "axe" or systematically eliminate teacher librarians.

With regards to TECT's objections of my recorded comment to Toronto Star reporter Tess Kalinowski about not requiring teacher librarians in elementary schools -- was taken out of context. My comments were in response to not agreeing with the some trustees' stance of keeping all school libraries open full time. I supported finding creative, cost viable options of keeping high-school libraries open full time because of the flow of students and needs is somewhat unpredictable based on spares and class schedules. Hence my comment "In elementary schools, however, students don't have spares and tend to use the library when their class teacher is present".

I appreciate the unique roll of both teacher librarians and library technicians. I am a product of our TCDSB schools system, where I have witnessed first hand what is working, where we have opportunities to improve. Politics indeed, has no place in our classrooms.

John Del Grande is the TCDSB Trustee for Ward 7.

The response written by John Pecsénye, to which Trustee Del Grande refers in his letter to the editor above, can be read in its entirety by going to the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers' website at www.tect.org. Click on the Metro Voice link and then click on the December 2005 issue. Mr. Pecsénye's response can be found on page 8 of that issue.

If you are interested in commenting on any of the articles in the Metro Voice or on any current issue that you feel is of interest to our readers please forward your comments to Mario Bernardo by e-mail at mbernardo@tect.org



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ENHANCING OUR WORK ENVIRONMENT

Good Boss Quiz – Effective Leadership

Recently, the CBC programme, Venture, featured a segment on Bad Bosses and highlighted a Bad Boss Quiz. At TECT, we always try to stress the positive and therefore have modified the quiz. I invite you to complete “the Good” Boss Quiz. This is not a scientific survey by any means. It might, though, shed some light on the type of leadership being exhibited at your school, and, given the results, engender a discussion with a release officer.

1. My principal has never embarrassed me or made me feel uncomfortable in front of colleagues, students or parents. T F
2. My principal does not have a tough time making decisions. T F
3. My principal welcomes open communication about issues. T F
4. My principal does not blame others when things go wrong. T F
5. My principal is not argumentative. T F
6. My principal is supportive of me when dealing with parents and students. T F
7. My principal does not overburden me with work. T F
8. My principal is accessible, particularly at critical moments. T F
9. My principal works within a collegial model of decision-making. T F
10. My principal practises what she/he preaches. T F

If your responses are true to all ten statements, then congratulate your principal for being an exceptional leader. If not, then you might be working in an environment that is detrimental to your well being and your professional satisfaction. If this quiz engenders any comments or concerns, please contact TECT.

Don't be taken advantage of

TECT believes you are being taken advantage of if...

- 1) You do not claim for any lost planning and preparation time.
- 2) You are not receiving a 40-minute un-interrupted lunch every day.
- 3) You do not claim for lost heritage language time.
- 4) You attend staff meetings during your 40 minutes uninterrupted lunch, or at recess.
- 5) You pay to go to work, i.e., pay for attendance at a Day of Reflection.
- 6) You do not claim mileage if you have to return to work for interviews, a CSAC meeting, or have to drive off-site for professional development and so on. (N.B. TECT advises members not to drive students).
- 7) You are coerced into participating in extracurricular activities.
- 8) You attend a meeting with a parent / superordinate and any of the following occurs: i) not knowing who will be in attendance; ii) not having the reasons for the meeting in writing and iii) not having ample time to prepare for the meeting.
- 9) You agree with a principal who says, “Disciplining the students is your problem.”
- 10) You pay for basic supplies for your students.

I am certain that this list just touches the surface. TECT invites members to add to this list. Also, share with TECT, what we as an Association should be doing to enhance our members’ willingness to assert their rights. Let us all work together to stop “being taken advantage of.”

Anthony Bellissimo is the First Vice-President of the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers.



Pope Benedict XVI Lenten Message 2006

*“Jesus, at the sight of the crowds, was moved with pity”
(Mt 9:36)*

denounced “the lack of material necessities for those who are without the minimum essential for life, the moral deficiencies of those who are mutilated by selfishness” and “oppressive social structures, whether due to the abuses of ownership or to the abuses of power, to the exploitation of workers or to unjust transactions” (ibid., 21). As the antidote to such evil, Paul VI suggested not only “increased esteem for the dignity of others, the turning towards the spirit of poverty, cooperation for the common good, the will and desire for peace”, but also “the acknowledgement by man of supreme values, and of God, their source and their finality” (ibid.). In this vein, the Pope went on to propose that, finally and above all, there is “faith, a gift of God accepted by the good will of man, and unity in the charity of Christ” (ibid.). Thus, the “gaze” of Christ upon the crowd impels us to affirm the true content of this “complete humanism” that, according to Paul VI, consists in the “fully-rounded development of the whole man and of all men” (ibid., 42). For this reason, the primary contribution that the Church offers to the development of mankind and peoples does not consist merely in material means or technical solutions. Rather, it involves the proclamation of the truth of Christ, Who educates consciences and teaches the authentic dignity of the person and of work; it means the promotion of a culture that truly responds to all the questions of humanity.

In the face of the terrible challenge of poverty afflicting so much of the world’s population, indifference and self-centered isolation stand in stark contrast to the “gaze” of Christ. Fasting and almsgiving, which, together with prayer, the Church proposes in a special way during the Lenten Season, are suitable means for us to become conformed to this “gaze”. The examples of the saints and the long history of the Church’s missionary activity provide invaluable indications of the most effective ways to support development. Even in this era of global interdependence, it is clear that no economic, social, or political project can replace that gift of self to another through which charity is expressed. Those who act according to the logic of the Gospel live the faith as friendship with God Incarnate and, like Him, bear the burden of the material and spiritual needs of their neighbours. They see it as an inexhaustible mystery, worthy of infinite care and attention. They know that he who does not give God gives too little; as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta frequently observed, the worst poverty is not to know Christ. Therefore, we must help others to find God in the merciful face of Christ. Without this perspective, civilization lacks a solid foundation.

Thanks to men and women obedient to the Holy Spirit, many forms of charitable work intended to promote development have arisen in the Church: hospitals, universities, professional formation schools, and small businesses. Such initiatives demonstrate the genuine humanitarian concern of those moved by the Gospel message, far in advance of other forms of

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Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Lent is a privileged time of interior pilgrimage towards Him Who is the fount of mercy. It is a pilgrimage in which He Himself accompanies us through the desert of our poverty, sustaining us on our way towards the intense joy of Easter. Even in the “valley of darkness” of which the Psalmist speaks (Ps 23:4), while the tempter prompts us to despair or to place a vain hope in the work of our own hands, God is there to guard us and sustain us. Yes, even today the Lord hears the cry of the multitudes longing for joy, peace, and love. As in every age, they feel abandoned. Yet, even in the desolation of misery, loneliness, violence and hunger that indiscriminately afflict children, adults, and the elderly, God does not allow darkness to prevail. In fact, in the words of my beloved Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, there is a “divine limit imposed upon evil”, namely, mercy (Memory and Identity, pp. 19ff.). It is with these thoughts in mind that I have chosen as my theme for this Message the Gospel text: “Jesus, at the sight of the crowds, was moved with pity” (Mt 9:36).

In this light, I would like to pause and reflect upon an issue much debated today: the question of development. Even now, the compassionate “gaze” of Christ continues to fall upon individuals and peoples. He watches them, knowing that the divine “plan” includes their call to salvation. Jesus knows the perils that put this plan at risk, and He is moved with pity for the crowds. He chooses to defend them from the wolves even at the cost of His own life. The gaze of Jesus embraces individuals and multitudes, and he brings them all before the Father, offering Himself as a sacrifice of expiation.

Enlightened by this Paschal truth, the Church knows that if we are to promote development in its fulness, our own “gaze” upon mankind has to be measured against that of Christ. In fact, it is quite impossible to separate the response to people’s material and social needs from the fulfilment of the profound desires of their hearts. This has to be emphasized all the more in today’s rapidly changing world, in which our responsibility towards the poor emerges with ever greater clarity and urgency. My venerable Predecessor, Pope Paul VI, accurately described the scandal of underdevelopment as an outrage against humanity. In this sense, in the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, he

...continued from previous page

social welfare. These charitable activities point out the way to achieve a globalization that is focused upon the true good of mankind and, hence, the path towards authentic peace. Moved like Jesus with compassion for the crowds, the Church today considers it her duty to ask political leaders and those with economic and financial power to promote development based on respect for the dignity of every man and woman. An important litmus test for the success of their efforts is religious liberty, understood not simply as the freedom to proclaim and celebrate Christ, but also the opportunity to contribute to the building of a world enlivened by charity. These efforts have to include a recognition of the central role of authentic religious values in responding to man's deepest concerns, and in supplying the ethical motivation for his personal and social responsibilities. These are the criteria by which Christians should assess the political programmes of their leaders.

We cannot ignore the fact that many mistakes have been made in the course of history by those who claimed to be disciples of Jesus. Very often, when having to address grave problems, they have thought that they should first improve this world and only afterwards turn their minds to the next. The temptation was to believe that, in the face of urgent needs, the first imperative was to change external structures. The consequence, for some, was that Christianity became a kind of moralism, 'believing' was replaced with 'doing'. Rightly, therefore, my Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, of blessed memory, observed: "The temptation today is to reduce Christianity to merely human wisdom, a pseudo-science of well-being. In our heavily secularized world, a 'gradual secularization of salvation' has taken place, so that people strive for the good of man, but man who is truncated...We know, however, that Jesus came to bring integral salvation" (Redemptoris Missio, 11).

It is this integral salvation that Lent puts before us, pointing towards the victory of Christ over every evil that oppresses us. In turning to the Divine Master, in being converted to Him, in experiencing His mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we will discover a "gaze" that searches us profoundly and gives new life to the crowds and to each one of us. It restores trust to those who do not succumb to scepticism, opening up before them the perspective of eternal beatitude. Throughout history, even when hate seems to prevail, the luminous testimony of His love is never lacking. To Mary, "the living fount of hope" (Dante Alighieri, Paradiso, XXXIII, 12), we entrust our Lenten journey, so that she may lead us to her Son. I commend to her in particular the multitudes who suffer poverty and cry out for help, support, and understanding. With these sentiments, I cordially impart to all of you a special Apostolic Blessing.

*BENEDICTUS PP. XVI
From the Vatican, 29 September, 2005.*



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AGM VOTES TO MAINTAIN OECTA FEES AT \$950.00

No Fee Increase for 2006-2007

On Saturday, March 11, 2006 the AGM delegates, after a relatively brief fee debate, defeated resolution #104. The resolution called for an increase in our annual OECTA fees from \$950.00 to \$980.00.

AGM delegates defeated the resolution even though the Council of Presidents had recommended that the AGM approve it. The \$30.00 increase proposed in the resolution would have represented an increase of just more than 3.1 %.

The Finance Committee, which submitted the resolution, indicated that the increase was designed to reflect the increased costs related to the current inflation rate and was needed just to maintain the status quo in terms of providing service to our members.

Oponents of the fee resolution pointed to several factors for voting down the proposed fee increase:

- An increase in membership resulted in greater than anticipated fee revenue last year
- Four year agreements have been signed across the province and hold out the prospect of limited demands on the reserve fund since contracts do not expire until August 2008
- With no new contracts to negotiate in August 2006 or August 2007 there should be lower than usual expenses incurred by the Collective Bargaining Department

As a demonstration of their commitment to reducing the financial demands on the Provincial Association, almost all resolutions with financial implications were either withdrawn or defeated by the AGM delegates.

As teachers face higher than expected gasoline prices and increases in other every day living expenses, and as the prospect of possible pension contribution increases become more real, delegates believed that the membership would welcome a reprieve from an OECTA fee increase. That was the prevailing view at AGM 2006 and the view of 50 of TECT's 55 voting delegates.

Five Year History Of Association Fees

Year	Fee	Increase	%
2006-2007	\$950	\$00	0.00
2005-2006	\$950	\$60	6.74
2004-2005	\$890	\$00	0.00
2003-2004	\$890	\$50	5.62
2002-2003	\$840	\$50	6.33



AGM

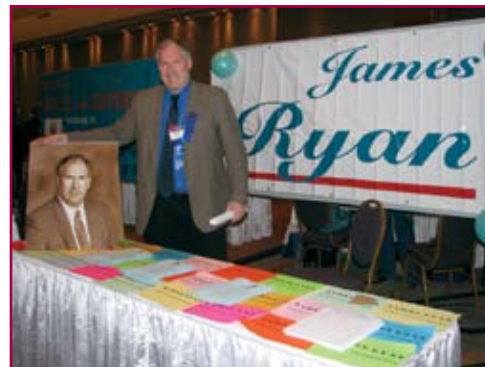
On Friday, March 10, 2006 over 600 Catholic teacher delegates from all over the province began arriving at the Westin Harbour Castle Hotel in Toronto for the beginning of OECTA's 63rd Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The highlight of the Friday kickoff was the annual AGM Social Night. Open to all of our members, it is a fun filled evening of casino-style gaming followed by a silent auction and raffles. Sponsored by TECT, and the other GTA units, the event raises thousands of dollars every year for children's charities. This year, the proceeds from the Friday night festivities will go to the Ontario chapter of the Starlight Children's Foundation.

The formal business of the AGM began on Saturday morning with the Chair's call to order at 8:30 a.m. and ended by about 3:30 p.m. on the Monday of March Break.

When in session, the delegates assembled at AGM represent the supreme law making body of the Association.

Each OECTA unit from across the province is entitled to representation at the AGM based on the size of its membership. According to our Provincial Association By-Laws, each unit is allowed to send its President, and one delegate for every 75 of its members. Under this formula TECT, as the largest unit within OECTA, was entitled to 55 voting delegates.



This represented more than 9% of the total voting delegates at AGM 2006.

At the AGM, delegates are empowered to elect the Provincial Executive to serve for the coming year as well as other OECTA officials who represent our interests as OTF Governors.

Aside from its authority to elect OECTA officials, the AGM is constituted annually to add, delete and amend, where it is deemed necessary, the Constitution, By-Laws, Policies and Procedures of the Association. This year over 100 resolutions were submitted for consideration by the AGM. The lively, and sometimes intense, debate that arises from these proposed changes are a proud testimony to the dynamic and democratic nature of our AGMs. The outcome of these debates, in the form of adopted resolutions, create the fundamental structures and form the guiding principles that govern the functioning of our Association.

While all the resolutions and debates at AGM play an important role in defining who we are as an Association, the most intense debate is usually reserved for resolutions governing fees. Few topics are as sensitive as the debate around whether fees

2006

should rise, fall or remain the same for the coming year. Arising out of the debate this year, I know there will be many of our members who will be very happy to know that there will be no increase in our OECTA fees this coming year.

Interspersed between these debates on resolutions, Saturday, Sunday and Monday AGM sessions are typically filled with informative speeches and presentations from educational dignitaries and representatives from the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), The Ontario Teachers Federation (OTF), The Canadian Teachers Federation (CTF) and the current Minister of Education. The speeches provide the Association leadership with opportunities to become better informed of the key developments that are taking place not only in the Ministry but in all of the institutions in education that impact on the lives of our members. More than just becoming informed, these avenues also provide opportunities to hold our affiliate representatives as well as the Ministry of Education accountable for the decisions they make effecting education in Ontario.



As a release officer, and as a ten-year delegate representing TECT at our Provincial AGM, I have come to have an even deeper appreciation for the invaluable service that our members make in offering their time and their talents to serve our Association as AGM delegates.

Every year, hundreds of our colleagues from across the province take time out of their lives, and their precious March Break, often away from their families, to serve in the governing of our Association. They do so, often with little praise and little reward other than the knowledge that they are making a contribution to the greater good of our profession and our Association.



To all who served as delegates, to all who served as alternates, to all who put their name forward to help in the service of our Association, I thank you for your kind contribution and your selfless dedication.

Mario Bernardo is the Second Vice-President of the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers

AGM Elects 2006-2007 Provincial Executive

All three of TECT's endorsed candidates were re-elected to their positions for 2005-2006. James Ryan, a long time member of Toronto Elementary, was re-elected Second Vice-President of OECTA. Sonia Di Petta, Past President of the Toronto Occasional Teachers Local, was re-elected Councillor and Terri Taggart, who is currently teaching at Holy Name as a TECT member, was elected OTF Governor. Here then, is the 2006-2007 Provincial OECTA Executive:

President

Donna Marie Kennedy

Past President

Kathy McVean

First Vice-President

Elaine Mac Neil

Second Vice-President

James Ryan

Third Vice-President

Kevin O'Dwyer

Treasurer

Chris Karuhanga

Councillor

Sonia Di Petta

Councillor

Jim Zettel

OTF Table Officer

Marilies Rettig

OTF Governors

Bill Doyle

Reno Melatti

Marilies Rettig

George Saranchuk

Terri Taggart

Toronto Elementary delegates to AGM 2006 enjoyed a special luncheon with the Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy. As Education Minister, Mr. Kennedy addresses the OECTA AGM delegates on Ministry policies and priorities and other education issues.



James Ryan speaks to a resolution brought forward by the Human Rights Committee. James, a member of the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers, was re-elected Second Vice-President of OECTA at AGM 2006.



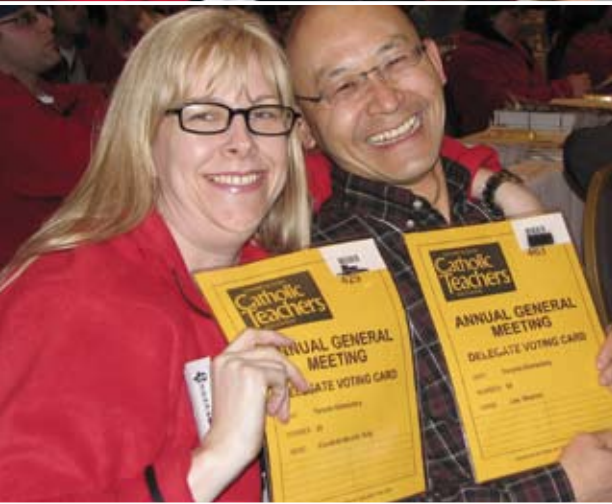
Recently retired but still politically active, former TECT Chief-Negotiator, Brian MacDonald, poses for a photo with TECT President, John Pecsénye and First Vice-President Anthony Bellissimo at the AGM 2006 Awards Dinner. Brian works closely with NDP Education Critic, Rosario Marchese on education issues. Mr. Marchese was also in attendance at the Gala evening.



TECT President, John Pecsénye, presents Brenda Carrigan with flowers in appreciation for her dedicated service to OECTA and TECT. Brenda, a former TECT member and a former TECT Vice-President, is retiring after over 16 years of service at Provincial OECTA. Before retiring, Brenda served as Head of Contract Services.

AGM 2006

The photos below represent only a small portion of the delegation that represented TECT at AGM 2006. On behalf of the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers, the TECT Executive thanks the entire TECT delegation for taking time from their March Break to serve and represent our members.



TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES

As each year brings new students into our lives, we as teachers are constantly adapting to the challenges of a changing society. Generally, parents, students, and we ourselves are busier with each passing year. There are so many activities going on in our elementary schools, and yet we as teachers need to draw a line somewhere in the sand behind which we can proudly stand and say, Here I am, doing my part, helping all who I can, but without depriving myself of satisfying my own needs.

A THOUGHT OR TWO

Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.

Charles Reade

I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.

Edward Everett Hale

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

Maya Angelou

It is an inevitable aspect of a teacher's experience that one is asked to participate in different school activities. This can sometimes take the form of being asked to fill a role as a coach, leader, or representative. Teachers are also asked to promote the latest in paradigms regarding educational leadership and philosophy. Sometimes, the pressure of balancing leadership roles and fulfilling our many other classroom obligations produces an environment of tension or stress. Nobody likes Mondays and everybody is working for the weekend.

Richard DuFour expresses his observation of professional learning communities as schools in which:

Educators embrace the notion that the fundamental purpose of school is learning, not teaching - an enormous distinction. They examine the practices and procedures in their school to ensure alignment with this fundamental purpose, and they maintain an unrelenting focus on student learning. They develop a shared sense of the school they hope to become to better fulfill the purpose of learning for all. They articulate the collective commitments they are prepared to make to move the school toward their shared vision. They establish specific, measurable goals to serve as targets and timelines in their journey.¹

Many schools have taken such practices to heart and have found success. I believe that truly professional communities are those environments where teachers are not only open to communication, but are also actively suggesting ways in which they can help each other. Teachers could work together in the selection of resources to be purchased, or suggest common themes enabling teachers to work together to create student projects that are products of collaboration. Teachers can share teams, extracurricular activities, or representative roles (i.e. teacher members at CSAC or Health Action Teams). When we share our loads with each other, we increase our accountability to our students, our productivity in all aspects of teaching, and most importantly, our personal job satisfaction.

Ideally, we would all work in schools where, when we have questions, we know who to ask; when we need support, we know who will have a great suggestion; when we feel overloaded, we know who will help carry us through; and when we see our colleagues overloaded, we offer to take up the slack. Professional learning communities provide many opportunities for teachers to be leaders, but teacher leaders are not just leaders to the students. Teacher leaders are leaders to each other. Ideally, in a school where all teachers are both teachers and leaders, no teacher will fall behind and no teacher will take on more than they can handle, because the task of supporting student activities will be shared equally among all. When we help each other, we allow for the greatest aspect of school life to evolve; the continued love of learning, not only for students but for teachers, too.

Rebecca Stelter is a member of the Communication committee and teaches at St. John School

¹ DuFour, Rick. Professional Learning Community. The Leadership Academy Developer. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Winter 2000-2001. <http://info.csd.org/staffdev/rpdc/darticle.html>

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY?

On Wednesday, February 8, 2006 TECT members were invited to an open forum to discuss and share ideas with the TECT Executive regarding the Board's Professional Learning Community (PLC) initiatives. Arising from that meeting it became abundantly clear that many of the members who attended were unclear as to what constitutes a PLC. The following article by Richard Dufour is presented in an attempt to bring greater clarity to the widely used, but much misunderstood, term. The Metro Voice Editorial Board plans to continue this education process by addressing Professional Learning Communities in future issues.

The term “professional learning community” is used to describe every imaginable combination of individuals with an interest in education. In fact, the term has been used so universally that it is in danger of losing all meaning. Initial enthusiasm can give way to confusion, followed by implementation problems, abandonment, and the search for a new initiative. Educators can avoid this cycle only if they understand the “Big Ideas” that represent core PLC principles and how they can sustain the PLC model until it becomes the school’s culture.

BIG IDEA #1 ENSURING THAT STUDENTS LEARN

The PLC model assumes that the core mission of formal education is to ensure that students learn. When schools take the mission statement “learning for all” as a pledge to ensure the success of each student, profound changes occur. The school establishes a solid foundation of shared knowledge and a common ground that will allow them to move the improvement initiative forward. As the school progresses, every professional in the building must engage in the ongoing exploration of

three crucial questions that will drive the work of the PLC:

- What do we want each student to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

When a school functions as a PLC, teachers become aware of the incongruity between their commitment to ensure learning for all and their lack of coordinated strategy to respond when some students do not learn. The staff addresses this discrepancy by designing timely, intervention-based strategies to ensure that struggling students receive the time and support they need to succeed.

BIG IDEA #2 A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

Educators building a PLC recognize that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all. Therefore, they create structures to promote the powerful, collaborative culture that characterizes a PLC: a systematic process in which teachers work together in teams to analyse and improve their classroom practise, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning.

Their collaborative conversations require team members to make goals, strategies, materials, questions, concerns, and results public. These discussions are explicitly structured to improve a classroom practise of teachers—individually and collectively

BIG IDEA #3 A FOCUS ON RESULTS

PLCs judge their effectiveness on the basis of results. Every teacher

participates in an ongoing process of identifying the current level of student achievement, establishing a goal to improve the current level, working together to achieve that goal, and providing periodic evidence of progress. The results-oriented PLC then turns this data into useful and relevant information for staff.

Educators who focus on results must also shift their attention to goals that focus on student learning. They must stop assessing their own effectiveness based on how busy they are and instead ask, “Have we made progress on the goals that are most important to us?”

HARD WORK AND COMMITMENT

Initiating and sustaining the PLC model concept requires hard work. A school staff must focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and hold its members accountable for the kind of results that fuel continual improvement. When educators work hard to implement these principles, their collective ability to help all students learn will improve. The success of the PLC concept depends not on the merits of the concept itself, but on the most important element in the improvement of any school—the commitment and persistence of the educators within it.

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Changes to the Surplus/ Return from Leave Placement Process

The Association is very proud of the changes to the Surplus/Return from Leave Placement provisions that were negotiated in the last round of collective bargaining. The Association believes that the new changes address many of the historical shortcomings and weaknesses that existed in the placement process.

Strengthening the right of teachers to declare themselves surplus

Both the Association and the Board recognized that being declared surplus can be a very stressful situation for teachers. In order to reduce the number of situations where surplus needed to be imposed, changes were made to article 9.01 (c)(i) to strengthen the claim of a teacher volunteering to be surplus.

Incentives to volunteer to be surplus

In order to encourage members to volunteer to be surplus it was necessary to build in incentives. By making a voluntary declaration of surplus more attractive both the Board and the Association were able to create an environment where there would be less of a need to impose surplus decisions. Under the new placement process, teachers can now unilaterally select their placement to available open positions as long as they are qualified for that position. By allowing teachers to select their placement on the basis of seniority, the Board and the Association have eliminated the tedious interview process that used to be part of the placement process. It has also given teachers greater control over where they will be placed. It is hoped that these incentives will result in more teachers volunteering to be declared surplus in schools where a surplus exists.

Improved Transparency

Under the new surplus placement process all open positions must be declared and must be posted on the intranet before they can be filled by surplus teachers or teachers returning from leave. The Board has also offered to provide a detailed list of surplus teachers, and teachers returning from leave, in order of their seniority prior to the placement meetings to insure that teachers are properly ordered when the selection process begins.

More timely and efficient placement

Unlike the past, the new provisions of our collective agreement will allow for a finite three week period during which all surplus teachers, teachers returning from leave and supernumerary teachers must be placed.

Timelines for the and Trans

First Three Weeks of March Each school principal should have consulted with the Local School Staffing Advisory Committee (LSSAC) to discuss the tentative staffing model for the 2006-2007 school year. **Article 9.01 (a)**

March 31st Each school principal should have submitted the tentative staffing model to the appropriate superintendent of education.

A list of all the open positions at any given school is also to be forwarded immediately to the appropriate superintendent of education. **Article 7.10 (a)**

Between March 31st and April 15th After the tentative staffing model has been approved, the principal must determine the specific classroom/teaching assignment of each teacher in consultation with the teacher. When doing this, the principal must consider the preferences, abilities, qualifications and experience of each teacher. **Article 9.01 (h) (i)**

By April 15th The tentative staffing model with specific classroom / teaching assignments must be presented to the entire staff. **Article 9.01 (b)**

Also, teachers must be informed of their teaching assignments for the 2006-2007 school year by this date. **Article 9.01 (h) (ii)**

By April 22nd The list of open positions will be posted electronically on the Board's intranet site, and a copy will be distributed as appropriate to superintendents of education, principals, OECTA school representatives, and the TECT President or designate. **Article 7.10 (b)**

During the 4th Week in April (This Year - April 24, 2006)*** Each field superintendent will hold a meeting of all surplus teachers in the superintendency, with the TECT/OECTA president or designate present, in an observer status. This process will involve offering of open positions to the surplus teachers qualified for them in order of seniority. Immediately following this, the same process will be followed with teachers returning from leave. **Article 7.10 (c)**

Staffing, Placement Transfer Process

The Following Week (This Year - May 2, 2006)*** Any surplus teachers, or teachers returning from leave, that did not choose a placement in the previous week will be given the opportunity to choose a placement in a region-wide placement meeting with the appropriate Superintendents and the TECT/OECTA President or designate present in an observer status. The same process will be followed as in the first meeting.

The Following Week (This Year - May 8, 2006)*** Any surplus teachers, or teachers returning from leave, who did not choose a placement in the first round of placement meetings (Superintendency placement meetings) or the second round of meetings (regional placement meetings) will be given the opportunity to choose a placement in a board-wide placement meeting with the appropriate superintendents and the TECT/OECTA president or designate present in an observer status. The same process will be followed as in the first two meetings.

Supernumerary teachers will be given an opportunity to select from any of the remaining open positions once surplus teachers and teachers returning from leave have selected their placements.

All surplus teachers, teachers returning from leave and all supernumerary teachers must choose a placement for which they are qualified by the end of this final round of placements.

It is important to note, that surplus teachers, teachers returning from leave, and supernumerary teachers who have been placed in these three rounds of placement meetings have the right to take part in the transfer process. [Article 7.10 \(e\)](#)

By the End of the Third Week in May All remaining open positions will be posted electronically and any teacher with the necessary qualifications will have the opportunity to apply. [Article 7.10 \(f\)](#)

***Please note that in the interest of ensuring the placement of our members TECT has agreed to the above mentioned meetings on a without prejudice basis. TECT has reservations concerning the time, the location and the configuration of these meetings.

Changes to the Regular Transfer Process

Under the new collective agreement, the Open Transfer, Exchange Transfer, Transfer to Part-time Teaching, and Job Sharing procedures remain largely untouched and operate very much as they did in the past. What has changed is the manner in which regular transfers take place.

Teachers don't have to be on the transfer list to transfer

Unlike the past where teachers had to declare that they were interested in a possible transfer, the new process is open to all members.

No more blue pages for regular transfers

Unlike the past where lists of all teachers interested in a transfer were circulated, the new process will provide more current, more accurate and more relevant information via the Board intranet. Once the transfer process begins, open positions will be posted on the Board intranet. If a desirable position becomes available at a desirable school any teacher can contact the principal for consideration.

Electronic forms

To ensure uniformity, the Board has undertaken to create an e-form to be filled out by teachers contacting principals for consideration for open positions. The e-form will be the accepted means by which teachers apply for open positions when they want to transfer.

Principal's discretion

Unlike the surplus / return from leave placement process which is seniority driven, the transfer process, as in the past, allows for principal's discretion. Once an e-form has been sent to the principal, teachers are encouraged to make arrangements to meet to discuss placement opportunities with the relevant principal.

Fixed date for the transfer process to begin

Under the new collective agreement, the transfer process can no longer be delayed due to problems related to surplus/return from leave placement. According to the new collective agreement, open positions to be filled through the regular transfer process must be posted no later than the end of the third week of May.

Open positions and new hires

As of June 7th any available open positions can be filled by new hires.

Mario Bernardo is the Second Vice-President of the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers

IMPORTANT DATES

APRIL

By April 15th Teachers must be informed of their teaching assignments for the 2006-2007 school year. See [Article 9.01\(h\) \(ii\)](#)

Tentative staffing model with specific classroom / teaching assignment must be presented to the entire staff. See [Article 9.01 \(b\)](#)

By April 22nd List of all open positions must be posted on the Board's intranet. See [Article 7.10 \(b\)](#)

April 24th Each field superintendent is to hold a placement meeting where surplus teachers and teachers returning from leave are able to choose, based on seniority and qualifications, from open positions available in their respective superintendencies. See [Article 7.10 \(c\)](#)

MAY

By May 1st Deadline date to submit proof of qualifications to receive Category upgrading retroactive to January 1st. See [Article 3.09](#)

May 2nd Regional meetings to be held to place surplus teachers and teachers returning from leave who did not select a placement at the superintendency placement meetings the week before. See [Article 7.10 \(d\)](#)

May 8th Board-wide meetings to be held to place surplus teachers and teachers returning from leave who did not select a placement in the previous two placement meetings. Supernumerary teachers also to be placed at this meeting. See [Article 7.10 \(e\)](#)

May 15th Date by which notice should be given to the Board by teachers electing to resign on June 30th. (Such notice may be waived by mutual consent). See [Article 8.08](#)

By the end of the Third Week of May All remaining positions will be posted electronically and any teacher with the necessary qualifications will have the opportunity to apply. See [Article 7.10 \(f\)](#)

JUNE

By June 1st Human Resources must receive proof of qualifications by this date to qualify for retroactive pay to September 1st. See [Article 3](#)

By June 1st Deadline date for Transfer Request Forms to be submitted to Human Resources for teachers interested in exchange transfers. See [Article 7.04 \(a\)](#)

By June 1st Deadline date for Transfer Request Forms to be submitted to Human Resources for teachers interested in job sharing transfers. See [Article 7.07 \(a\)](#)

June 7 As of this date, open positions may be filled by external applicants provided all teachers who have been declared surplus, and those returning from leave, have been placed. See [Article 7.02 \(a\)](#)

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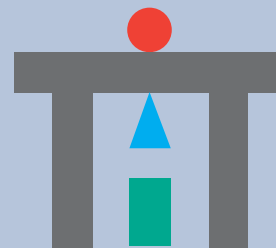
www.curriculum.org

Tap into this site and you will end up at Curriculum Services Canada (CSC). Once you get into the site look under "Quick Links" and click on "Free Resources". Teacher developed resources are organized on a handy grid that lets you know the grade appropriateness of the listed resource before you do any more surfing. Intermediate teachers will find more of a selection than primary or junior teachers.

www.teachervision.com

A comprehensive website specifically designed with teachers in mind. The site has an extensive lesson planning center and many interesting and useful lessons, worksheets and resources organized by subject. Also of interest, are articles and relevant resources under such headings as "The Art of Teaching", "Classroom Organization" and "Teacher-Parent Collaboration". This is an American site, and full access comes at a cost, however, there are enough freebies and items of interest here to warrant a peak.

If you have a favourite teacher friendly website that you think other members would find useful or interesting pass it along so that we can share it through the Metro Voice. Send your suggestions via e-mail to mbernardo@tect.org



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