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Walking the walk

Collective action gets results

The first time I walked a strike line was in October 1997. It was a wet, cold day and by noon the slush on the sidewalk had penetrated my running shoes and I could no longer feel my toes. A quick trip to the local army surplus store yielded a dry pair of thick wool socks and the sturdiest, felt-lined rubber boots I had ever seen. They served me well for the next two weeks and I still use them when the snow drifts are high and I need to shovel the driveway.

Those two weeks proved to be a financial hardship for my young family. Although there was camaraderie on the line, tensions between colleagues were inevitable and the public's response to us was certainly mixed. While I can look back at that time with some fondness, I also remember how difficult it was.

When I first heard about the Commonwealth Plywood strike in Pembroke, I knew it was a story that had to be shared. My two weeks pale in comparison to the four years that those workers have endured, showing up every day for strike duty, despite the fact that their employer has all but forsaken them.

But walking the walk (both literally and figuratively) is what we do as unionized workers. While members of OSSTF/FEESO each individually express their care and concern for their students and the public education system, we also do so collectively. This is seen through our work, our policies and our actions.

Likewise, this issue's articles on gender-neutral washrooms in schools and on our involvement with WorldPride 2014 both demonstrate our members' commitment to LGBTQT issues. Also in this issue you will find a piece on the maternity-leave benefits that came out of the recent MOU and on the OMERS pension plan. Both are examples of the Federation's advocacy for the well-being of its members.

Furthering our commitment to students and their communities, we also thought you would enjoy the articles on resiliency in children and the Poverty Challenge project. Both give insights into the lives of our students and ourselves.

While not all of us face the daily challenge of getting up to walk a strike line, as education workers our commitment to public education requires us to walk the walk as well. ☺

Randy Banderob, Editor
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Passer de la parole à l'action

L'action collective donne des résultats

LA première fois que j'ai manifesté sur un piquet de grève, c'était en octobre 1997. Il pleuvait et il faisait froid; à midi, la gadoue sur le trottoir avait pénétré mes espadrilles et je ne sentais plus mes orteils. Une visite rapide à un magasin de surplus militaire m'a permis d'obtenir une paire de grosses chaussettes en laine sèches et des bottes de caoutchouc doublées de feutre les plus robustes que je n'avais jamais vues. Elles m'ont été bien utiles pendant les deux semaines suivantes et je les porte encore quand je dois débayer mon entrée.

Pour ma jeune famille, ces deux semaines se sont avérées difficiles sur le plan financier. Même si la camaraderie régnait, les tensions entre les collègues étaient inévitables et les réactions du public étaient certainement mitigées. Quand je me remémore cette période, je me rappelle aussi à quel point cela a été difficile.

Lorsque j'ai pour la première fois entendu parler de la grève chez Commonwealth Plywood de Pembroke, je devais partager cette histoire. Mes deux semaines ne pèsent pas lourd par rapport aux quatre années qu'ont endurées ces travailleurs, se présentant chaque jour pour les tâches liées à la grève, malgré le fait que leur employeur les avait presque abandonnés.

Mais en joignant la parole à l'action, c'est ce que nous faisons en tant que travailleurs syndiqués. Tandis que les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO expriment individuellement leur compassion et leurs préoccupations pour leurs élèves et le système d'éducation publique, nous en faisons de même collectivement. Cela se ressent dans notre travail, nos politiques et actions.

En outre, les articles de cette édition sur les toilettes universelles dans les écoles et sur notre participation à WorldPride 2014 manifestent tous deux l'engagement de nos membres sur les enjeux des LGBTQT. Dans ce numéro, vous trouverez un article sur les prestations de congé de maternité issues du récent protocole d'entente et sur le régime de retraite d'OMERS. Il s'agit de deux exemples des revendications de la Fédération pour le bien-être de ses membres.

Bien que nous ne sommes pas tous confrontés au défi quotidien de se lever et de joindre un piquet de grève, en tant que travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation, notre engagement à l'éducation publique exige que nous passions aussi de la parole à l'action. ☺

Randy Banderob, éditeur
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In the Winter 2014 issue of *Education Forum* you mentioned that two of the articles should be placed in certain areas of each school: the photocopier area and the staff room. I would like to suggest that the article "Stuck on the OT List" be placed in the school cafeteria of every faculty of education. It is a shame that these institutions are still accepting students, taking their money, when there is little hope of foreseeable future employment.

George Wright

Retired teacher, District 11, Thames Valley
Woodstock, ON

Being stuck on the OT roster is unpredictable, frustrating and lonely, as well as rewarding and challenging. I have empathy for Lindsay Chase and the cohorts of young teachers who graduate from colleges with little or no prospects of securing a contract. It's unconscionable that faculties of education graduate so many people with no job prospects. I'm guessing that many teacher candidates are unaware of the demand or existing surplus. School boards seem to take full advantage of this by keeping staff on ever-revolving series of LTO or OT placements that prevent them enjoying benefits that full-time teachers have.

David Sykes

District 30, PSAT

I just had to write when I saw the layout of Cyd Hosker's art in the Winter 2014 edition of the magazine! I loved the photographs—brought back some thoughts of the drive-in theatre and the sense of memory and loss that they convey. I am not an art critic, by any means, but I certainly love art in all of its forms and these photos are beautiful and compelling.

Thank you for revealing her talent to us!

Fran Koning

Geraldton Composite High School
District 6B, Superior North



A Canadian success story

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan

by Rod Albert

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) is recognized by many as the best pension plan in the world. From 2002 to 2012, OTPP had the highest investment return among 500 pension funds in the world. The June 2013 edition of *Forbes*, a magazine published by the investment industry, ranked OTPP as the best pension plan in the world. In 2012, OTPP was ranked by *Forbes* as the best pension plan in the world for the 10th year.

Well-regarded Canadian writer John Larkin commented that, "Writing in the September 2013 issue of *The Atlantic*, Larkin wrote: 'Ontario teachers have the world's best performing retirement fund.' He quotes *The Economist*: 'One of the world's top 40 pension funds is now Canadian, and all of them have increased according to the globalizing government pension funds' (OTPP) success."

With more than \$100 billion in assets, the OTTP is one of the largest pension funds in the world. It is a public pension plan, meaning that it is owned by the public and its assets are managed for the benefit of the public. The OTTP is a public pension plan, meaning that it is owned by the public and its assets are managed for the benefit of the public.

A note of gratitude to you and your contributors for *Education Forum*.

Although there exists a great geographic divide between our organizations, to say nothing of the size of our respective memberships, there is comfort in knowing our concerns for public education are so eloquently expressed across Canada and educators are united in our professional vision. Thank you for the terrific articles. I particularly enjoyed Suzette Clark's "21st-century schools = 21st-century learning" in *Forum's* 2014 Winter issue.

Planning, training and a focus on student achievement are a recipe for success. As Suzette says, "When teachers and educational workers working in modernized classrooms are provided with 21st-century resources and the training to use those resources, 21st-century learning will be guaranteed."

Thank you for allowing us to share this article with our members in the next edition of our *YTA Notes*.

Katherine Mackwood

President

Yukon Teachers' Association

Re: "A Canadian success story"

While Rod Albert is right to celebrate the financial success of the OTTP in his article (Winter 2014), he fails to mention that this

"success" comes at a price. With hundreds of millions of dollars invested in anti-union companies such as Walmart and Gildan Activewear, we are funding those who are out to destroy our labour movement and the human and environmental rights we say we stand for. Any advice from Mr. Albert about how to deal with this thorny contradiction would be much appreciated.

James Campbell

District 34, Independent
Educational Programs

Excellent article on the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan. You summarize the struggle very well and provide terrific insight on the history, past and present. Your presence on the board instills confidence in the membership, both active and retired (like me).

I recall those heady days when many of us were striving for change, culminating in the giant rally in Hamilton when Robert Nixon was the finance minister. You were a strong and active voice for improvement.

Thanks again for a wonderful writing effort. It should be required reading for every Plan member.

Tom Henderson

Past chair
OSSTF Superannuation Committee



One day longer

Standing up for workers' rights across the province



IF you have never been to the Ottawa Valley, I would encourage you to come and see one of the most beautiful parts of the country. I was born and raised in the Ottawa Valley and the lumber industry has always been a part of my family. My great-grandfather was killed in a lumber camp accident, my father worked in a paper mill for 37 years and I was fortunate to work as a summer student at that same mill for four summers. The mill that put food on my table when I was growing up and paid for my university education is now a memory. It has been torn down, taking close to 500 jobs with it.

The lumber industry, so long a major employer in the Valley, has suffered

many setbacks in the last 10 years, with multiple jobs lost or workers being asked to take a cut in pay. One example of the losses can be seen at the Commonwealth Plywood Factory in Pembroke. In 1951, J.D. Irving Ltd. established a veneer and plywood factory in a former World War II hangar that was dismantled and brought from the East Coast. In its heyday, over 500 workers were employed there. Over time, many of the workers were laid off, and the veneer operation was shut down in 2005, leaving only plywood manufacturing. In 1999, the operation was sold to Commonwealth Plywood Ltd., leaving a staff of approximately 50 unionized workers along with the machines that glued,

hot-pressed, cut and sanded plywood.

On Monday April 19, 2010 the Commonwealth Plywood employees, all members of the United Steelworkers (USW) 1–1000, voted to go on strike, after a year without a collective agreement and failed attempts at reaching a new agreement. When negotiations began, the company insisted the union agree to a number of concessions. In addition to a nine-year agreement term and a 30 per cent rollback in wages, the concessions included circumventing seniority, a reduction in the number of paid holidays and mandatory overtime, even limits on bathroom breaks! The union membership had been asked if it was willing to negotiate the concessions and the vote came back unanimously against. This April 19 marked the fourth year they have been walking the line in Pembroke, the longest strike in Canadian history.

I first met the men and women of USW 1–1000 three years ago on their picket line in front of the Commonwealth Plywood Factory in Pembroke. It was a very blustery November evening and I was there with members of other local unions to show our support and our solidarity. We walked with them and we talked with them and we gave them cheques. The strikers have been living on strike assistance pay of \$225 a week plus \$30 per dependant and donations are truly appreciated. There are currently 28 workers who show up for their five-hour picket duty, down from the original 40. Nine are over 65; most do not feel they can start a new career at this stage in their lives.

I remember being amazed at the length of time they had been on the line already, and that was years ago. My longest strike experience was the two-week political protest during the Harris years. I knew what stress over even two weeks feels like, and I could not imagine the stress over months, let alone years. Speaking at the rally, Michael McCarter, USW 1–1000 president,

remained defiant, saying the union membership, who endorsed the walkout 100 per cent, knew they were in for a long battle. "We will last one day longer..."

Last year was a difficult one for OSSTF/FEESO as it struggled with a government that stripped its collective agreements and even the right to bargain or strike. I will always be grateful to the men and women of USW 1-1000 as they brought their entire picket line to support our protest in front of our MPP's office. It was a bitterly cold evening, but they were there to support their brothers and sisters in their struggle with the provincial government.

I have been to many rallies with the Commonwealth Plywood workers but December 20, 2013 will always stand out in my mind, as I found myself once again carrying my District 28, Renfrew flag on the line. This was going to be their fourth Christmas on strike. I had brought coffee and muffins and some donations. It was cold and the snow was falling heavily. Our District had once again contributed to Operation Christmas Cheer and I, along with other representatives from

**"You don't know who
your boss is going
to be tomorrow,
but the union is going
to be there for you.
I believe I have
the right to make
a half-decent wage."**

local unions, was there to show support. I had the privilege to witness an incredible display of generosity when the Christmas food hampers, grocery gift cards, turkeys and hams arrived from Ottawa. The entire line refused to take the gifts and asked that they be delivered to their Service Employees International Union (SEIU) workers on strike at the Pembroke Red Cross. The Steelworkers then proceeded

to jump in their cars and head over to SEIU's picket line to support them. I will admit I had tears in my eyes that day.

I recently sat down to talk with Dave Weisenberg (Unit President) and Heather Mitton (Financial Secretary). Both of these leaders have worked at the factory for 33 years, yet both are the lowest on their seniority list. I asked them about that Operation Christmas Cheer day when they passed on their gifts. Dave felt it was an obvious choice. "They had nothing. Five weeks with nothing! Everybody agreed to it." Heather added, "What goes around, comes around."

I asked them about the highs and lows of the last four years. For Heather, the highlight for her is "how we have come together as a family." Like any family, these workers have tackled cancer, kidney problems, heart attacks and diabetic comas, but they have pulled together to get through. Dave recognized the support of the United Steel Workers and other unions that helped them: "It lifts your spirits when someone comes to walk with you." Their spirits need lifting from time to time as depression is an ongoing concern. Dave is vigilant, recognizing that it is depressing, "coming here every day and knowing there is nothing you can do about it."

When asked about words for other union members Dave had a lot to share. "You don't know who your boss is going to be tomorrow, but the union is going to be there for you. I believe I have the right to make a half-decent wage. If we caved in to the company, I might as well go to China and chain myself to a machine." Heather was more succinct. "Support your union. When it is gone, it is gone!"

I cannot help connecting the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Together Fairness Works campaign to our brothers and sisters of USW 1-1000. They embody what unions should be about: standing up against a belligerent employer because it is the right thing to do, supporting other unions by giving up their Operation Christmas Cheer and walking beside them on the line. We need to help raise their spirits by walking with them and supporting them so they can hold on for one day longer. ☺

Jeff Barber is the Occasional and Teacher Bargaining Unit President in District 28, Renfrew.



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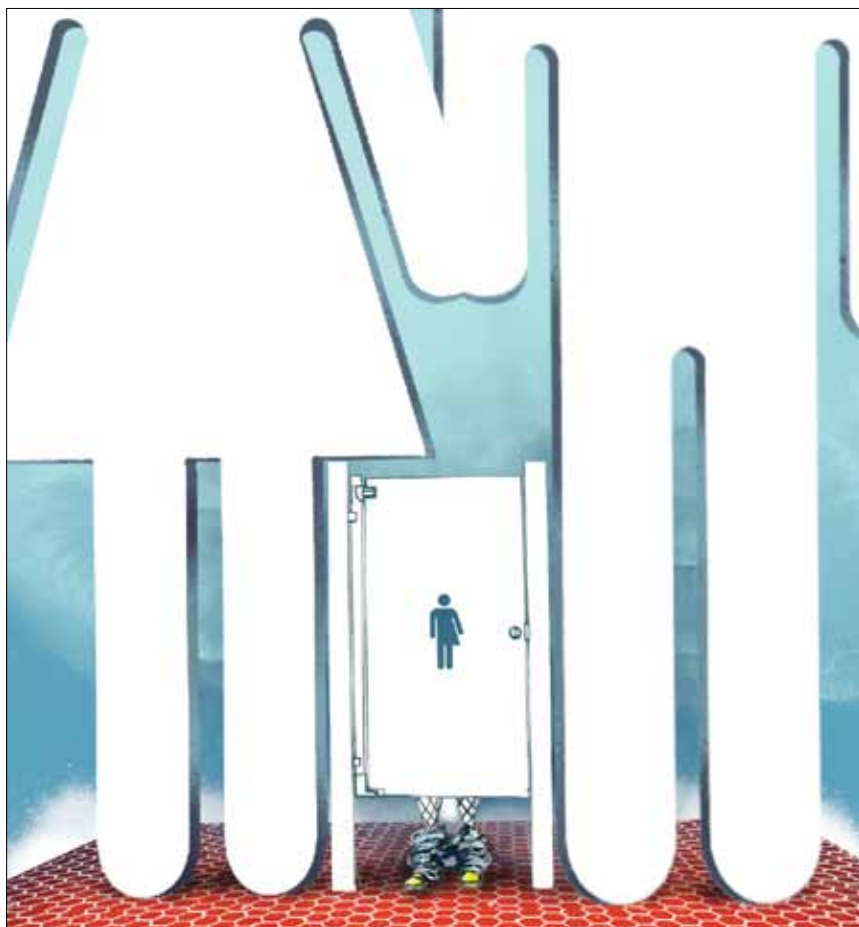
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Gender-neutral washrooms

A visible sign of society's increasing recognition of transgender students



In the spring of 2010 a student left me a letter in my staff mailbox. It read in part, “the point of this letter is to express my sincere gratitude for everything. Gender identity is an issue I’ve been struggling with since I was a child.... The confidence I’ve gained now wouldn’t have been achieved without knowing that you, an adult (not to mention a teacher), not only supported me but acknowledged me as a male.”

His story is not an isolated one. Many students have come through the schools across Ontario experiencing the same needs and the same loneliness. Thankfully, for more and more transgender or

genderqueer students, support is becoming the norm and activism abounds, including the creation of gender-neutral washrooms in schools. When I approached my principal in September this year about creating two washroom spaces for all students and staff to use, spaces that would be without gender definition, he was incredibly supportive. Within two weeks we had formalized two washrooms open to all staff and students. They have become part of our fabric.

It’s not just issues of washrooms that face our transgender students. Report-card pronouns, legal names on documents and attendance, and even rooming on overnight trips are all serious issues

facing students and staff who fall outside the gender norms of our society. What I’ve found to be universally true, however, is that folks who fall under the umbrella term of “trans” are often overjoyed to have someone support them through the institutional hurdles that come with any sort of gender transition. Perhaps the most visible sign of our progress as a society is the gender-neutral washroom, with the most common form being the single-seat washroom that is open to everyone. Gender-neutral washrooms allow people of all gender identities to safely and comfortably “use the loo” without fear of having to identify or be perceived as possibly not conforming to socialized gender norms that the binary system of male/female washrooms presents.

When we speak of gender identity as fluid, we are recognizing that how an individual chooses to self-identify is personal and based on the individual’s perception of self. It is not how others choose to perceive us but how we self-identify. Someone’s gender may or may not be congruent with their biological sex. That is to say, one may, for example, have male genitalia but identify as female, and may present in a way that traditional society would deem feminine. Or one may have female genitalia, identify as male and present in a variety of ways that are traditionally masculine, feminine and androgynous. According to MYGSA.ca, gender is a “social and cultural expression of sex; not biological sex. How you feel and experience your gender. It is not defined by your biological or anatomical sex, it can be fluid, i.e. masculine, feminine, androgynous, genderqueer.”

Even our language is changing, with more individuals choosing a variety of non-gendered pronouns including “zir” or “their” instead of the traditional male/female pronouns. MYGSA.ca defines

“Bathrooms are more dangerous when they are segregated. They actually become safer when they are unsegregated, including showers and bathrooms, with fewer incidences of sexual assault. It is a myth that we need to segregate by gender.”



gender neutral as “anything (such as clothing, styles, activities or spaces) that a society or culture considers appropriate for anyone, irrespective of gender; anything that carries with it no particular gender associations.” So a gender-neutral washroom is a washroom space that is open to any person, no matter how they define or present their gender.

At the OSSTF/FEESO Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) and Summer Leadership, the usual configuration of the gender-neutral washroom is a repurposing of the women’s washroom into a gender-neutral space to provide facilities with the heightened privacy of stalls over urinals. The response to the washrooms at AMPA 2014 was overwhelmingly positive. Member Lindsay Chase (District 22, Niagara OTBU) said, “I don’t know how many need it, but that is exactly why we need it. People shouldn’t have to identify.” Jeff Stickney (District 16, York Region TBU) responded to the question “Do you think it’s a good idea for us to have gender-neutral washrooms at OSSTF/

FEESO events?” by saying, “Sure, if it makes people more comfortable at schools, in buildings and at OSSTF/FEESO events. It’s easy when you can identify where you want to go.” This positivity speaks to the forward-thinking, equity-minded nature of our members and it is echoed in the fact that for OSSTF/FEESO, providing gender-neutral washroom access is now official policy.

Beyond our own union, the battle for transgender rights has taken the national stage. Bill C-279, The Gender Identity Bill, is in second reading. It proposes to amend the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to include gender identity as a prohibited ground of discrimination. This commitment to identifying and addressing the needs of trans folk in our country will be echoed at World Pride 2014, taking place in Toronto in July this year. It is not only the importance of providing safe and positive spaces for members that must be addressed in this discussion. It is also vital that we provide safe and accepting environments for our students. As we have just observed Sexual Harassment

Awareness week from June 1–7, it is now a great time to kick the discussion into high gear and maybe look at making changes in your own work site to ensure people aren’t limited by the way the system ignores gender diversity.

Shelia Cavanagh, Professor of Sociology at York University, notes, “It’s important for schools to work towards building gender-neutral washroom options for staff, faculty and students who are gender variant. Increasingly, these people are coming out as trans and not everyone identifies with the image of male and female on the doors. We would do well in education and society to accept and to respect gender variance.” And she reminds us that in Ontario, there is no law that regulates the gender of bathroom users; it is only custom, not legislation, that defines this practice. Importantly, Cavanagh says studies showing that gender-neutral washrooms are in fact dangerous are patently wrong. She points out that, in fact, “Bathrooms are more dangerous when they are segregated. They actually become safer when they are unsegregated, including showers and bathrooms, with fewer incidences of sexual assault. It is a myth that we need to segregate by gender. The more inclusive and more open to variety, the safer they tend to be and the less likely someone is to be entrapped or isolated.” This is powerful fodder to support us all in creating gender-neutral spaces for our students and colleagues.

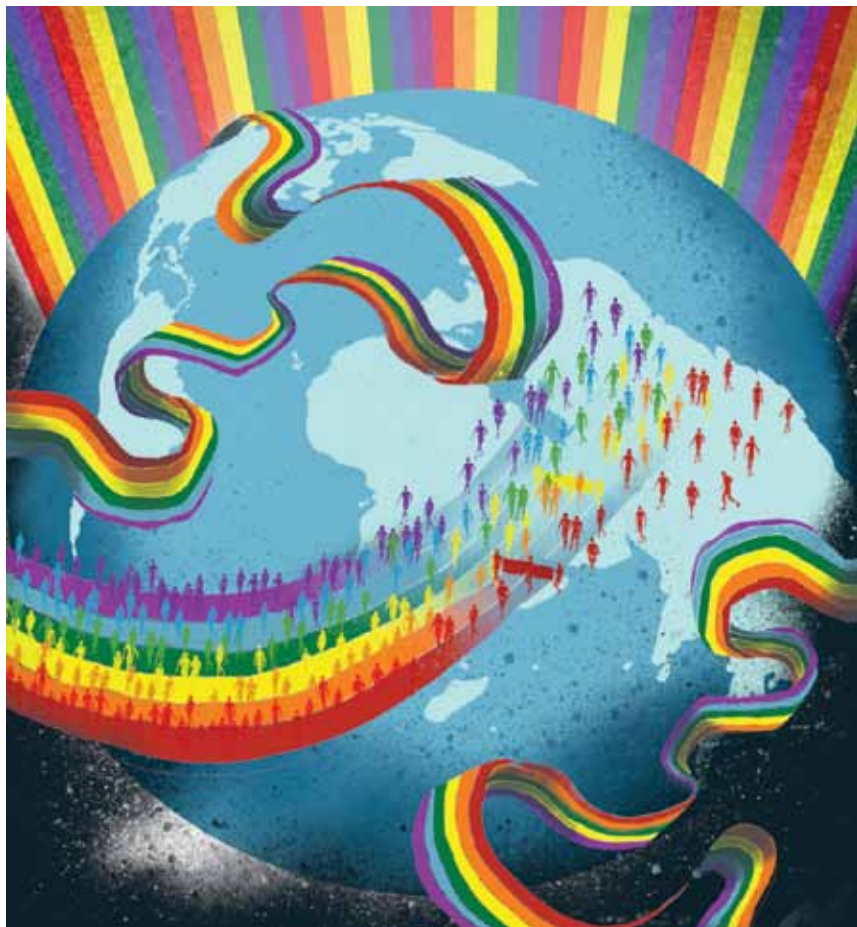
Now there are new graduates of my school who have come back and speak to our trans students to help them navigate the ups and downs of high school as gender-fluid individuals. For the returning graduates, the gender-neutral washrooms may have come too late, but for the current student body at my school, they work as a continued symbol of equity and inclusion. It’s an amazing thing to me to see the normalization that is happening in our school: that a washroom is just a washroom, not a symbol of difference or discrimination. ☺

Tracey Hughes is a teacher in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge, and chair of the Provincial Educational Services Committee.



WorldPride 2014 Toronto

OSSTF/FEESO will be there, along with thousands of other supporters



AT a time when countries around the world are challenging or removing the hard-fought rights of their LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two Spirit, Queer and/or Questioning) citizens, an event like WorldPride is more important than ever.

Since 2006 Russian regions have been enacting laws banning the promotion of LGBTQ relationships. Its 2013 federal law banning the distribution of so-called propaganda in support of non-traditional sexual relationships is a major development in the current anti-LGBTQ agenda. This legislation laid the groundwork for a sharp increase in anti-LGBTQ rhetoric,

violence and hate crimes, and many of the perpetrators are skirting prosecution using the new law as justification.

In Uganda the *Anti-Homosexuality Act* (previously called the “Kill the Gays Bill” because of its originally proposed death penalty) was signed into law in February. This bill broadens the criminalization of same-sex relationships inside and outside Uganda. Extreme penalties in the bill, including extradition, would enact punishment on non-government agencies, media organizations and companies as well as individuals who support LGBTQ rights or are proven to know gay people.

Throughout the world, 76 countries have anti-LGBTQ laws with punishments

ranging from fines to short and lifelong prison sentences, hard labour, forced psychiatric treatment, banishment, whippings and death by public stoning.

Is Canada immune to an erosion of LGBTQ rights? Anti-LGBTQ work in places like Uganda, Jamaica and Arizona is currently being supported in part by American and Canadian right-wing fundamentalist religious organizations and individuals. The lobbyists and the money are already here.

The labour movement has been championing equity and inclusion for generations. In 1920, OSSTF/FEESO was one of the first to demand equal pay for women. Labour and its allies have been active in the fight that led to the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969 and the battle during the 1980s and 1990s to prohibit discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. It was not until 1996 that the Canadian government finally passed Bill C-33, which added sexual orientation to the Canadian Human Rights Code. Subsequently, in 1999, a Supreme Court decision forced then Ontario Attorney General Jim Flaherty to introduce Bill 5, making the rights and responsibilities of same-sex couples mirror those of common-law couples. In 2007, NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo, with the support of labour, introduced *Toby's Act*, which amends the Ontario Human Rights Code to include gender identity and gender expression. As well, *Toby's Act* would make Ontario the first major jurisdiction in North America to provide human-rights protection for transgendered people. It took four more attempts until, in June 2012, *Toby's Act* finally became law. Despite these victories, in 2014 transgendered people still do not have these protections under the Canadian Human Rights Code. Equity rights in Canada need to be celebrated but there



WorldPride is a celebration that has never been held in North America. Toronto WorldPride 2014 is only the fourth such festival in the world.



is also a lot of work involved in moving forward, along with vigilance to protect against erosion.

WorldPride is a celebration that has never been held in North America. Toronto WorldPride 2014 is only the fourth such festival in the world. The festival was started by InterPride, an international organization committed to education, networking and mentoring. It currently has over 160 member Pride organizations in 35 countries. The first WorldPride took place in Rome in 2000, followed by Jerusalem in 2006 and London in 2012; Madrid will host it in 2017.

Toronto has planned a huge 10-day festival, with hundreds of official, affiliated and labour-sponsored events running from June 20–29. The Opening Ceremonies will be at 7:30 p.m. at Nathan Phillips Square and will feature world-class entertainers and a fireworks display. The WorldPride Gala and Awards will be held on June 25, when leaders in the global LGBTQ movement will be honoured with WorldPride Awards.

A feature event is the WorldPride Human Rights Conference at the University of Toronto from June 25–27. Activists, artists, educators, journalists,

policy-makers, students and others engaged in LGBTQ human rights from around the world will gather to have a global dialogue on a full range of LGBTQ issues. OSSTF/FEESO will have members at this conference.

WorldPride also features an arts and culture aspect. Art galleries, museums, film festivals, photography exhibitions, visual and ceramic arts exhibits are happening all over the city. In the heart of the Church-Wellesley Village, drag artists, burlesque and dance will be featured at the Village Stage. Fruit Loopz and Black Queer Youth will run youth programs during the festival as well as the family-friendly zone at the Church Street Public School at Church and Alexander streets. In Paul Kane Parkette you will find singer-songwriters, spoken word, youth showcases, traditional, folk, dance and plenty of other activities. For more specific detail to go to worldpridetoronto.com/festival/events-calendar#1.

Labour is also planning a number of events for workers to enhance your time at the festival. A committee of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council has been meeting for months to co-ordinate labour participation throughout

the festival. Events include a morning breakfast caucus during the WorldPride Human Rights Conference at the United Steelworkers Hall and a reception after the parade on Sunday. All events are listed on a website the committee has established called labourpride.com.

It would not be a pride festival without a rally and WorldPride 2014 has three. On Friday, June 27 at 7:00 p.m. members of the trans community and their supporters will celebrate with the Trans Pride Rally and March, beginning with the rally at the North Stage at Church and Isabella streets. Saturday brings the Dyke March Rally at Allan Gardens, starting at 1:00 p.m. The WorldPride Parade, the culminating event of the festival, will be on Sunday, June 29 starting at 1:00 p.m. The parade starts at Church and Bloor and ends at Dundas Square, and OSSTF/FEESO will be marching in the parade. OSSTF/FEESO has booked a spot, designed and co-ordinated a float with a sound system for the celebratory music that is synonymous with pride and has ordered T-shirts for marchers and swag to hand out to people along the parade route.

What we don't have yet is *you*.

We need members from across the province to attend this important festival and march with us in the parade. Educational workers are always very well received by the crowd. We encourage you to march with OSSTF/FEESO in the WorldPride Parade on June 29, starting at 1:00 p.m. For more information about the OSSTF/FEESO participation in the WorldPride Parade, please contact Wayne Milliner, our Equity Officer, at the provincial office: wayne.milliner@osstf.ca.

The parade schedule will be released in the middle of June. As soon as the information is available we will post it on social media and our website. Of course you can always find us by walking down Rosedale Valley Road, where the parade is staged.

See you at WorldPride 2014! ☺

Wayne Milliner is an Executive Assistant at the Provincial Office in the Communications/Political Action Department. He is the staff liaison for the Human Rights Committee and the Equity Work Group.



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Unique governance for a unique pension plan

The *OMERS Act* in 2006 set the stage
La *Loi de 2006 sur OMERS* donne le ton
By/par Jack Jones

It took a long time to get there, but after more than a decade of lobbying and political action, a new governance model for the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) plans was established. The *OMERS Act, 2006* (also referred to as Bill 206) reflected the goal of stakeholders to control their own pension plan.

At the time, OMERS identified six key principles to guide the future governance structure. Bill 206 reinforced these principles.

1. Alignment of ownership and control;
2. Clear separation of sponsor and fiduciary function;
3. Balance between employer and employee interests;
4. Accountability to members and employers;
5. Exclusivity; and
6. Best governance practice.

Il a fallu beaucoup de temps pour y arriver, mais après plus d'une décennie de lobbying et d'action politique, le nouveau modèle de gouvernance pour le Régime de retraite des employés municipaux de l'Ontario (OMERS) a été créé. La *Loi de 2006 sur OMERS* (appelée aussi Projet de loi 206) correspondait à l'objectif des partenaires de contrôler eux-mêmes leur régime de retraite.

À cette période, OMERS avait cerné six principes clés pour orienter la future structure de gouvernance. La Loi 206 a renforcé ces principes :

1. Alignement de l'appartenance et du contrôle
2. Nette séparation des fonctions de promotion et fiduciaires
3. Équilibre entre les intérêts de l'employeur et de l'employé
4. Responsabilisation face aux cotisants et aux employeurs
5. Exclusivité
6. Meilleure pratique de gouvernance

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Gouvernance unique pour un régime de retraite unique

An illustration of a person with dark hair, wearing a light-colored t-shirt and dark pants, kneeling and working on a large, yellow, globe-like object. The person is focused on their task, with their hands resting on the surface. To the left of the person, there are several large, stylized yellow leaves or petals. The background is white.

On that first day,
the SC started from
scratch to build a
new governance
structure for OMERS.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15/

On June 30, 2006, OMERS became an independent Joint Sponsored Pension Plan (JSPP). Representatives, who are appointed by plan member unions and employers, replaced the provincial government as the plan sponsor. The new Sponsors Corporation (SC) would be responsible for setting contribution rates and benefit levels. The existing OMERS Board would continue as the new Administration Corporation (AC). This Board would administer the plans, pay pensions and invest the funds. The SC would have authority under the Act to determine the makeup and appointment process for the AC Board.

The first meeting of the OMERS SC was held at the OMERS head office at One University in Toronto shortly after Bill 206 passed. The meeting was attended by the 14 new SC directors. The joint sponsorship model set out in the legislation dictated that seven directors for the new Board would be appointed by employer groups and seven directors would be appointed by employee unions and associations. As an interim measure, the appointing bodies were all identified in Bill 206.

On that first day, the SC started from scratch to build a new governance structure for OMERS. The legislation laid out in broad strokes the responsibilities of each Board, but left all of the implementation and detailed interpretation of the Act to the new SC Board. At this point, the SC existed only on paper. The first meeting began without any corporate structure in the form of bylaws or processes. There was also no staff or office and no external advisors. In fact, everything was so new at that point that there was almost no coffee for the meeting because it was not clear how to pay for it!

Building a new governance structure

In the beginning of building the new governance structure at OMERS, the work focused on getting the SC operating and building a policy framework for the interaction of the two Boards. The SC retained expert advisors and legal counsel to assist with developing the ongoing governance structure. In the first 18 months after the Bill passed, the SC put in place many of the key components required to establish the new structure. Corporate bylaws were adopted to set out meeting protocols, dispute resolution, voting procedures and banking authority. In order to establish a permanent funding structure, the SC and the OMERS Administration Corporation (OAC) commenced a court application for direction and approval of a joint protocol for the reimbursement of SC costs from the pension fund. An important milestone for the SC was the passing of the composition bylaw for the Board that replaced the interim makeup as specified in the Act.

Under the new model, the two largest groups, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), have representation that reflects the number of plan members they represent or employ. Member retirees are allocated one seat and the remaining groups are ranked based on the number of plan members they represent or employ, with the top ranked obtaining the Board seats. Consideration can also be given to sector distribution and representation if the Board deems it necessary.

/CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



Le 30 juin 2006, OMERS est devenu un régime de retraite conjoint indépendant. Les représentants, qui sont nommés par les syndicats et les employeurs des cotisants au régime, remplacent le gouvernement provincial en tant que promoteur du régime. La nouvelle Société de promotion (SP) serait chargée de fixer les taux de cotisation et les niveaux de prestation. Le conseil d'administration d'OMERS existant continuerait à titre de nouvelle Société d'administration (SA). Ce conseil administrerait les régimes, verserait les rentes et investirait les fonds. En vertu de la loi, la SP serait habilitée à déterminer la composition et le processus de nomination au conseil d'administration de la SA.

La première réunion de la SP d'OMERS a eu lieu au siège social d'OMERS, au One University, à Toronto, peu après l'adoption de la Loi 206. Les 14 nouveaux administrateurs de la SP étaient présents. Le modèle de parrainage conjoint, prévu en vertu de la loi, stipule que sept administrateurs du nouveau conseil d'administration seraient nommés par les groupes d'employeurs et les sept autres par les syndicats d'employés et les associations. À titre provisoire, les groupes chargés des nominations étaient tous identifiés dans le Projet de loi 206.

Dès le début, la SP a commencé à zéro à établir une nouvelle structure de gouvernance pour OMERS. La Loi a établi les grandes lignes des responsabilités de chaque conseil d'administration, mais a laissé toute la mise en œuvre et l'interprétation détaillée de la loi au nouveau conseil d'administration de la SP. À ce stade, la SP n'existait que sur papier. La première réunion a eu lieu sans structure de société, ni règlements ou processus. De plus, il n'y avait pas de personnel ou de bureau et aucun conseiller externe. En fait, tout était alors tellement nouveau que nous sommes même venus prêts de ne pas avoir de café pour la réunion parce qu'il n'était pas clair comment on allait le payer!

Créer une nouvelle structure de gouvernance

Aux débuts de la création de la nouvelle structure de gouvernance d'OMERS, le travail était axé sur le fonctionnement de la SP, la mise en place d'une structure et la création d'un cadre politique pour l'interaction des deux conseils d'administration. La SP a retenu les services d'experts-conseils et d'avocats pour l'aider dans le développement de la structure de gouvernance permanente. Au cours des 18 premiers mois après la promulgation du projet de loi, de juin 2006 à la fin de 2007, la SP a mis en place un bon nombre des éléments clés requis pour établir la nouvelle structure. Des règlements corporatifs ont été adoptés dans le but de créer des protocoles pour les réunions, la résolution de différends, la procédure pour le vote et l'autorité bancaire. Dans le but d'établir un cadre de financement permanent, la SP et la Société d'administration d'OMERS (SAO) ont déposé une demande à la Cour afin d'obtenir des orientations et l'approbation d'un protocole conjoint pour le remboursement des coûts de la SP à même le régime de retraite. Un important jalon pour la SP a été la mise en place du règlement de composition du conseil, qui a remplacé la composition intérimaire précisée dans la Loi.

Sous le nouveau modèle, les deux groupes les plus importants, le Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique (SCFP) et

l'Association des municipalités de l'Ontario (AMO), jouissent d'une représentation qui reflète le nombre de cotisants du régime qu'ils représentent ou emploient. Les retraités membres ont droit à un siège et les autres groupes sont classés selon le nombre de cotisants du régime qu'ils représentent ou emploient, les groupes représentant le plus de membres obtenant des sièges au conseil d'administration. Une considération peut également être accordée à la distribution et à la représentation par secteur, à la discrétion du conseil d'administration.

OMERS consiste en environ 1 000 organismes d'employeurs et compte au total 440 000 membres actifs et retraités qui sont représentés par 45 syndicats et associations. OMERS comprend également de nombreux membres gestionnaires et non syndiqués.

OSSTF/FEESO est très choyé d'avoir une représentation aux conseils d'administration de la SP et de la SA d'OMERS. Cependant, il est très important que les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO comprennent que les membres du conseil d'administration ont le devoir de représenter les intérêts de *tous* les membres du régime et non seulement l'organisme qui les ont nommés.

Processus de modifications spécifiques du régime

Dès le début, la SP a reconnu le besoin de mettre en place un mécanisme afin de livrer les composantes clés du conseil d'administration. La SP détient l'exclusivité sur le concept des régimes de retraite d'OMERS. Les membres du conseil d'administration ont convenu que le processus pour la prise en considération de modifications aux régimes doit passer par un niveau élevé de transparence et d'accessibilité.

Le processus qui en a découlé, connu sous l'appellation de Processus de modifications spécifiques du régime, donne aux membres un accès direct au régime pour examiner des changements aux prestations ou aux taux de cotisation. Les membres peuvent accéder au site Web de la SP afin d'obtenir des renseignements détaillés sur les modifications au régime qui sont étudiées par le conseil d'administration de la SP. Le Processus de modifications spécifiques du régime est clairement décrit sur le site Web, y compris l'échéancier des décisions clés à prendre. Les membres ont également accès à un dossier complet de plus de 50 propositions du Processus de modifications spécifiques du régime examinées par le conseil d'administration depuis 2006.

Le site Web offre également des renseignements sur la façon dont les intervenants ou même les membres individuels peuvent présenter des propositions de modifications du régime pour considération par le conseil d'administration.

Ce niveau élevé de transparence et d'accessibilité est rare dans l'industrie des régimes de retraite et permet à OMERS de se distinguer des autres régimes.

Effondrement des cours de 2008

Lorsque le ralentissement économique mondial est survenu en 2008, la SP avait un cadre de gouvernance solide, ainsi que l'infrastructure nécessaire, permettant au Conseil d'administration d'exécuter son mandat. Ce mandat est décrit dans l'Énoncé des meilleurs intérêts adopté par la SP en novembre 2009 :

OMERS is made up of approximately 1,000 employer organizations and has a total of 440,000 active and retired members who are represented by 45 unions and associations. OMERS also includes many management and non-union members.

OSSTF/FEESO is very fortunate to have appointees on both the OMERS SC and AC Boards. But it is important for OSSTF/FEESO members to understand that Board members have a duty to represent the best interests of *all* plan members and not just the appointing body.

The Specified Plan Change Process

Early on, the SC recognized a need to put in place the mechanism to deliver on the key job components of the Board. The SC has exclusive authority over the design of the OMERS pension plans. The Board members agreed that a high level of transparency and accessibility must be built into the process for considering plan changes.

The process that resulted, known as the Specified Plan Change Process (SPC), gives members direct access to the system for considering changes to benefits or contribution rates. Members can access the SC website to view detailed information on the plan changes under consideration by the SC Board. The SPC is clearly described on the website, with the timing of key decision points identified. Members also have access to a full record of the 50-plus SPC proposals considered by the Board since 2006.

The website also has information on how stakeholders or even individual members can submit plan change proposals for consideration by the Board.

This high level of transparency and accessibility is rare in the pension industry and is something that helps to set OMERS apart from other plans.

2008 market crash

By the time the global economic downturn occurred in 2008, the SC had a solid governance framework in place, along with the supporting infrastructure to allow the Board to fulfill its mandate. That mandate is summed up in the Best Interest Statement adopted by the SC in November of 2009.

“The best interests of the OMERS Sponsors Corporation (SC) include governance and decision-making practices, which support the health and long-term viability of the jointly sponsored OMERS pension plans, and give due consideration to the interests of its stakeholders and other relevant circumstances.”

With the Best Interest Statement in place and projections that showed a growing funding deficit as the investment losses from 2008 were smoothed into the plan valuation, a total of 10 proposals were tabled for consideration in the 2010 SPC cycle. After a detailed review of the funded status of the plan, which included scenario testing and projections based on different market conditions, the SC decided to act sooner rather than later. In June 2010, the SC approved the Multi-dimensional Approach to Funding Deficit. This plan included both temporary contribution-rate increases and temporary benefit changes. The changes were phased in over a three-year period, beginning in 2011, and brought the

total combined overall contribution rate for the OMERS pension plan to 21.6 per cent of total payroll by 2013.

A key feature of the agreement is that it protected and continued to guarantee full inflation protection for OMERS retirees.

2012 review

The *OMERS Act, 2006* included a provision for a mandatory review of the new governance model, to start no later than the end of 2012. It turned out that the timing of the review could not have been better. The bi-commercial governance structure was well established and the economic events of 2008 had tested OMERS (and all pension plans), helping to identify any areas that may need to be addressed within the governance system.

The government appointed Tony Dean to conduct the review and his report was released early in 2013. Much of the Dean Report focused on recommendations for changes to the makeup of the AC Board. The report considered the increasingly complex investment landscape. OMERS is a \$65-billion plan and investments vary widely from stocks and bonds to shopping malls, bridges and pipelines.

Ultimately, the SC Board supported two recommendations from the Dean Report intended to increase the function and capacity of the OMERS AC. The first one was the addition of an independent Board Chair as a 15th member of the AC Board. George Cooke was appointed as the first independent Board Chair on October 1, 2013. The other change was to amend the bylaw that sets out the composition of the AC as well as the nomination and appointment process. The new procedure included a mandatory interview with the SC Governance Committee for each OMERS AC candidate and a gap analysis provided by the AC to help identify the skill sets that would round out the overall Board resumé.

A total of seven Board member appointments were in place for January 1, 2014, using the new process, and resulted in five new Board members and two reappointments.

The benefits of joint sponsorship

The joint sponsorship model works! We can see the proof in real time. Only a few years after the worst financial crisis in a generation, large public-sector Joint Sponsored Pension Plans are thriving. Many are in a surplus position with more projecting a return to surplus in the coming years.

Bill 206 gave the members (employees and employers) of OMERS the full responsibility to manage their pension plans and this includes ownership of the all risks and rewards that come along with it.

It's interesting to imagine where OMERS would be today without Bill 206. It is safe to say that the fully guaranteed inflation protection and the unprecedented level of access and transparency that OMERS plan members currently enjoy would have been a whole lot less likely under a government-controlled governance structure. ☺

Jack Jones is an Executive Assistant in the Negotiations and Contract Maintenance Department at Provincial Office and was OSSTF/FEESO's appointee to the OMERS SC Board from June 2006 to June 2014.



« Le meilleur intérêt de la Société de promotion (SP) d'OMERS comprend des pratiques de gouvernance et de prise de décision qui privilégient la santé et la viabilité à long terme des régimes de retraite à promoteurs conjoints d'OMERS en tenant compte des intérêts des intervenants et des circonstances. »

Grâce à la mise en place de l'Énoncé des meilleurs intérêts et les prévisions démontrant un déficit croissant de la capitalisation, alors que les pertes en placement de 2008 ont été nivelées dans l'évaluation du régime, dix propositions ont été présentées pour examen dans le cycle des modifications spécifiques du régime en 2010. À la suite d'un examen détaillé de la capitalisation du régime, y compris une vérification par scénario et des prévisions fondées sur différentes conditions de marché, la SP a décidé d'agir plus tôt que tard. En juin 2010, la SP a approuvé la démarche multidimensionnelle pour résoudre le déficit de capitalisation. Ce régime a inclus une augmentation provisoire des taux de cotisation ainsi que des modifications provisoires des prestations. Les modifications ont été instaurées progressivement sur une période triennale, à compter de 2011 et ont permis de rehausser le taux de cotisation global combiné pour le régime de retraite d'OMERS à 21,6 pour cent de la paie totale dès 2013.

Une caractéristique clé de l'entente est qu'elle protégeait et continuait de garantir aux retraités d'OMERS une protection complète contre l'inflation.

Examen 2012

La *Loi de 2006 sur OMERS* comprenait une disposition pour un examen obligatoire du nouveau modèle de gouvernance, qui devait débiter à la fin de 2012, au plus tard. Il s'est avéré que le temps déterminé pour l'examen ne pouvait pas mieux tomber. La structure de gouvernance bi-commerciale était bien établie et les événements économiques de 2008 avaient éprouvé OMERS (et tous les régimes de retraite), aidant à cerner les domaines pouvant faire l'objet d'un examen au sein du système de gouvernance.

Le gouvernement a nommé Tony Dean pour mener un examen et son rapport a été publié au début de 2013. Une grande partie du rapport de M. Dean était axée sur des recommandations pour changer la composition du conseil d'administration de la SA. Ce rapport prend en considération le contexte d'investissement de plus en plus complexe. OMERS est un régime évalué à 65 milliards de dollars et les investissements varient largement à partir d'actions et d'obligations, jusqu'à des centres commerciaux, des ponts et des pipelines.

Ultimement, le conseil d'administration de la SP a appuyé deux recommandations du rapport Dean, ayant comme but de rehausser la fonction et la capacité de la SA d'OMERS. La première était l'ajout d'un président indépendant du conseil comme 15^e membre du conseil d'administration de la SA. George Cooke a été nommé au titre de premier président indépendant du conseil, le 1^{er} octobre 2013. L'autre changement était de modifier le règlement qui établit la composition de la SA ainsi que le processus de nomination. La nouvelle procédure comprenait une entrevue obligatoire en compagnie du Comité de gouvernance de la SA pour chaque candidat de la SA d'OMERS et une analyse des

Le modèle de
financement conjoint
porte ses fruits!
Nous en avons
la preuve en
temps réel.



lacunes fournies par la SA pour aider à cerner l'ensemble des aptitudes qui complèteraient le curriculum vitae global du conseil d'administration.

Au total, sept nominations au conseil d'administration étaient en place le 1^{er} janvier 2014 au moyen du nouveau processus et ont donné lieu à cinq nouveaux membres du conseil d'administration et deux reconductions.

Les avantages du parrainage conjoint

Le modèle de financement conjoint porte ses fruits! Nous en avons la preuve en temps réel. Quelques années à peine après la pire crise financière d'une génération, les importants régimes de retraite financés conjointement dans le secteur public se portent bien. Bon nombre se trouvent dans une situation de surplus et un plus grand nombre prévoit un surplus dans les années à venir.

Le Projet de loi 206 a donné aux membres (employés et employeurs) d'OMERS la pleine responsabilité de gérer leurs régimes de retraite et cela comprend la responsabilité pour tous les risques et avantages qui l'accompagnent.

Il est intéressant d'imaginer où en serait OMERS aujourd'hui sans le Projet de loi 206. On peut aisément affirmer que la protection pleinement garantie contre l'inflation et le niveau inédit d'accès et de transparence dont les membres du régime d'OMERS jouissent à l'heure actuelle auraient été beaucoup plus invraisemblables sous une structure de gouvernance contrôlée par le gouvernement. ☺

Jack Jones est adjoint exécutif au Secteur des négociations et de la gestion des conventions collectives au Bureau provincial et a été nommé par OSSTF/FEESO au conseil d'administration de la SA, de juin 2006 à juin 2014.





IN SEARCH OF RESILIENCE

During her travels, **Robyne Hanley** discovers that fostering a resilient spirit is central to young people's lives

The whistle blows with 30 seconds left in the game. My son and his team are one point down in the bronze medal game of the Ontario Basketball Cup. My son's ball is still in flight as the referee moves onto the key. The shot is good! The gymnasium explodes into screams, cheers and celebration. While my son and his teammates are celebrating, the referee calls the basket off. No points are awarded. The whistle was calling my son for travelling before he took the shot. It is now the other teams turn to scream, cheer and celebrate. We lose, 30–29. As a parent I wanted to stop time for my son. The look on his face gave me no doubt as to the internal battle that had been unleashed in him.

PHOTO: JEFF DAROE



There are many factors that contribute to the success of students and that cannot always be easily identified. For example, as a university instructor, there are academic prerequisites to take my second- and third-year university courses. Having taught psychology for nearly a decade, those prerequisites have not changed much but there are definitely a new set of requisite skills I wish I could make mandatory. In my ideal classroom my students would come loaded with five skill sets: courtesy, responsibility, trustworthiness, curiosity and, most importantly, resilience. In my time teaching I cannot recall watching a student develop resilience over a 12-week course but I have seen the consequences of not already having that skill erode academic dreams and professional pursuits.

If university students need resilience skills before they come to university, I wanted to explore what the key pillars are for resilience and how we can teach them to our students.

The empirical literature repositories are filled with studies and articles directing us in so many conflicting directions. Too soft, too hard, too careful, too rigid, too flexible, too much of pretty much anything has been correlated with resilience. Although research has its role in this discussion, I wanted to quiet the debate in my own mind, take an awareness pause and ask what do I truly know about the subject. In my pursuit of this research—traveling from Canada to Honduras, followed by Israel—I was instilled with a sense of confidence that our children can learn to be resilient and, better yet, we can help teach them.

Honduras

Four central themes permeated my travels: belonging, perspective, acceptance and hope. In the remote landscape of Honduras, hours north of the capital Tegucigalpa, there is a small community called Nuevo Paraiso or New Paradise. Over four decades ago a nun named Sister Maria Rosa Leggol developed a community model to support the single mothers and orphans of Honduras. Mothers would raise their own child or children with children who were orphaned. The mothers would be given a home, food and a modest salary. Today, there are 14 homes in New Paradise, 120 children, a school, medical clinic, small

markets and, of course, a soccer pitch. In the second-poorest country in the Western hemisphere, a simple yet sustainable community is raising healthy, well-adjusted and resilient children. The children know a sense of belonging and have a bond with one other. It is evident to all who see this community that being here has saved their lives. We need to belong.

My colleagues and I use New Paradise as our base camp. We set off to bring supplies to a rural school buried deep in the Honduras jungle. The school is an open-air, clay-over-concrete-cinder-blocks building no bigger than three metres by three metres. The floors are dirt and the minimal classroom supplies are sun-bleached and damaged by water. The 35 children and their teacher have not seen anyone at their school in two years and they have had no paper, books or pencils since last year.

Our team brings in four hockey bags full of supplies and as we unpack, the children and teacher sit patiently. The children are so patient and reserved. Part of me wishes they would jump out of their respective lines and let loose, but they are completely respectful and obedient to their teacher. With piles of new, bright and shiny things all around them, they sing their seven-verse national anthem for us. Their faces light up, hands over hearts while singing away.

The last item I pull from my backpack is a brand-new soccer ball. The white of this ball is nearly blinding against the dull

tan and beige colour of everything in Honduras. The children scream and whistle. They feverishly start making teams and run to the rocky field outside their classroom. One little boy, no more than four years old, stays behind, next to me. When I ask him if he is coming to play, in a quiet voice he tells me he will play and I can be on his team. Then he asks me if I he could do one thing. Could he touch the ball? I smile at my new friend and ask him if he would like to carry the ball out to his friends. Never before have I witnessed that level of joy on a human face. As we walk onto the makeshift pitch, I notice this little boy is not wearing shoes and, looking at the terrain of the field, I am concerned he will get hurt. I lean down to my little friend and said to him, “I don’t know if it is safe for you to play without shoes.” He looks at me with a huge smile

“I wanted to explore what the key pillars are for resilience and how we can teach them to our students.”





Honduras, New Paradise

on his face and says, “I don’t have shoes but I have a ball.” It is all about perspective.

Israel

A month later I am sitting beside a parked car in the Golan Heights, between Israel and Syria. My driver, who was a child during the Six Day War, flips through his iPhone and shows me pictures of his children. The pictures are really no different than pictures I have on my iPhone of my own children, except when I look more closely, a sign in one of the pictures reads “Warning: Mine Fields.” I ask him abruptly, “How do you do it? How do you raise children here?” I immediately regret my questions. I am a guest here and feel as though my questions are out of line. My driver looks at me encouragingly and asks me, “How do you raise children in Canada?” Smiling, he answers the question: “One day at a time.” We both laugh for probably different reasons. He goes on to say that children need to know how to take care of themselves. He explains how his children at school can get to bomb shelters within 20 seconds of hearing the sirens and recounts that he himself slept in a bomb shelter for the first six years of his life. Parents love and worry about their children all over the world, he tells me. We do the best we can with what is within our control. Children need to know that hard times happen, that change happens, and it is through these experiences that character is built. We must accept what is within our control and what is not.

Back in Canada

Athletes have unique emotional experiences with their sports, as do the parents. I was hurting for my son on that huge basketball court, watching the other team be awarded the bronze medal. He held his head up high and smiled weakly at his teammates. After the ceremony ended, I saw him collect his bags and change shoes rather slowly. He was working it all out in his mind. I wanted to come over and say something to make it OK for him or at least carry the disappointment, but I did not. This was his disappointment, this was his time to find a way to move forward and frame the experience. He finally was ready to leave the gym and he walked over. He smiled at me and looked almost happy. In a lively voice my son said, “Mom, I really hope to have a chance next year to score the game-winning basket.”

Belonging, perspective, acceptance and hope: this is what I saw in my travels and what I believe contributes to a resilient spirit. As educators, let us set these as our teaching and learning objectives. Let us set these as our goals for our students. In our classrooms let us foster belonging, help shape and frame perspective, build the skills of acceptance and, above all, have hope for the future. ☺

Robyne Hanley is a mother of three school-aged children and an instructor in the Department of Psychology at Trent University, Peterborough.



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MATERNITY & PARENTAL LEAVE

Brought to you by unions

By Alison Wallace

The role of unions in improving the lives of working women has long been recognized. Unionized women receive higher salaries, suffer fewer human-rights violations, less workplace harassment and experience a better standard of living than non-unionized women. Maternity/parental leave is a benefit that resulted directly from collective bargaining.

/CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

Grâce aux syndicats

par Alison Wallace

Le rôle des syndicats dans l'amélioration de la vie professionnelle des femmes est reconnu depuis longtemps. Les syndiquées sont mieux rémunérées, sont victimes de moins de violations des droits de la personne, de moins de harcèlement au travail et ont un niveau de vie meilleur que les femmes non syndiquées. Le congé de maternité/parental est un avantage qui découle directement de la négociation collective.

ILLUSTRATION: SANDRA DIONISI

/SUITE À LA PAGE 27

MATERNITÉ & PARENTAL CONGÉ DE

It was 1955 before the federal government abandoned its policy of firing women employees when they married. It wasn't until 1980 that the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, 43 per cent of which were women members, won 17 weeks of paid maternity leave after a six-week strike. This

SEB plan were limited to six weeks at 100 per cent salary, deemed to the presumptive period of recovery from childbirth in case law. Any collective agreement that had a SEB plan longer than eight weeks may be blended with these new entitlements. Perhaps even more significantly, this benefit is now portable over periods

(EI) payments after serving a two-week unpaid waiting period.

The basic rate for EI is calculated as 55 per cent of average insurable weekly earnings, up to a maximum amount. As of January 1, 2014, the maximum yearly insurable earnings amount is \$48,600. This means you can receive a maximum amount of \$514 per week before taxes.

Since SEB is portable and no longer limited to a childbirth recovery period that occurs on school days, the employer will pay Sutheethra for the difference between the EI payments and her weekly salary for the eight weeks starting on the first day of school in September.

Some of the maternity leave and SEB provisions of a current collective agreement impact the implementation of the MOU provisions. Check with your bargaining unit to determine the practice of your employer. A plan may blend current provisions with the MOU and will have local nuances due to past practice.

Jaliyha is a full-time secretary for an elementary school. Her collective agreement provided for 12 weeks of SEB at 90 per cent salary. She is due on April 14. What is her entitlement?

Jaliyha is eligible for EI payments, six weeks of SEB top-up payments to 100 per cent salary and six weeks topped up to 90 per cent salary. The MOU allows for blending of superior entitlements to ensure women are not disadvantaged by the new provisions.

Anna is an educational assistant who has just returned from a parental leave on April 14, 2014, following the birth of her first child. She is pregnant with her second child and her due date is September 3, 2014. What is her entitlement?

Anna will only be eligible for EI if she is able to work 600 qualifying hours. Her employer uses a 7.5-hour work day for the purpose of calculating EI eligibility. Anna will not qualify for EI as she did not work enough insurable hours with all employers. Anna is still entitled to eight weeks at 100 per cent salary as a payment from the employer. It will not be considered a top-up of EI payments, but employees not eligible for SEB are still entitled to eight weeks of salary at 100 per cent.

/CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

It was 1955 before the federal government abandoned its policy of firing women employees when they married.

strike, along with a similar strike by federal government translators in the same year, put maternity leave on the public agenda. Since that time, unions have continued to negotiate improvements to maternity leave, parental leave and family-care leave. Most recently, OSSTF/FEESO bargained improvements to maternity benefits in 2013 through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ontario government.

The MOU ensures that OSSTF/FEESO members, working for a publicly funded school board and hired into a term position or long-term assignment, are entitled to maternity benefits limited by the term of the assignment. For many occasional employees this represents the first time they can access maternity benefits. In addition, a Supplemental Employment Benefit (SEB) plan was negotiated that provides for up to eight weeks at 100 per cent salary following the birth of a child. Until this round of bargaining, many OSSTF/FEESO employees with a

of time that are normally unpaid, such as summer and March break. In the past, for many women, a child born in July or August meant no access to supplemental employment benefits.

The Maternity Benefits in the MOU apply only to pregnancy. Members who are pregnant should contact their local union office to determine the specific entitlements and processes applicable to their employment.

The following examples demonstrate how these new provisions work in practice.

Sutheethra is a teacher in her fourth year with the school board. She teaches full time and her due date is July 15, 2014. What is her entitlement?

Since Sutheethra worked 600 qualifying hours in the 12 months prior to giving birth she is entitled to 17 weeks of maternity benefits and 34 weeks of parental benefits through Employment Insurance. During the 12-month leave, she will receive 50 Employment Insurance



C'est en 1955 que le gouvernement fédéral a abandonné sa politique de congédier les femmes après leur mariage. Ce n'est qu'en 1980 que le Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes, dont 43 pour cent étaient des femmes a obtenu un congé de maternité rémunéré de 17 semaines après une grève de six semaines. Cette grève, en plus d'une autre semblable des traducteurs du gouvernement fédéral la même année, a porté le congé de maternité sur la scène publique. Depuis cette période, les syndicats ont continué à négocier des améliorations aux congés de maternité, parentaux et familiaux pour raison médicale. Tout récemment, soit en 2013, OSSTF/FEESO a négocié des améliorations aux prestations de maternité par le biais d'un Protocole d'entente (PE) avec le gouvernement de l'Ontario.

Le PE garantit que les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO, travaillant pour un conseil scolaire financé à même les deniers publics et embauchées dans un poste à terme ou à affectation à long terme, sont admissibles à des prestations de maternité limitées par la durée de l'affectation. Pour plusieurs employées occasionnelles, c'est la première fois qu'elles peuvent accéder à des prestations de maternité. De plus, un régime de prestations supplémentaires de chômage (PSC/SEB) a été négocié leur offrant un maximum de huit semaines à 100 pour cent du salaire après la naissance de l'enfant. Jusqu'à cette ronde de négociation, plusieurs employées d'OSSTF/FEESO ayant un PSC étaient limitées à six semaines à 100 pour cent du salaire, considérées en matière de jurisprudence comme étant la période de rétablissement après un accouchement. Toute convention collective contenant un régime de PSC au-delà de huit semaines peut le fusionner à ces nouvelles admissibilités. Mais, plus important encore, ces prestations sont désormais transférables d'une période qui est habituellement non rémunérée, comme l'été et la pause de mars. Dans le passé, pour plusieurs femmes dont l'enfant venait au monde en juillet ou en août, cela se traduisait par l'impossibilité d'obtenir des

prestations supplémentaires de chômage.

Les exemples suivants démontrent comment fonctionnent ces nouvelles dispositions en pratique.

Les prestations de maternité du PE s'appliquent seulement pour les grossesses. Les membres qui sont enceintes devraient communiquer avec leur bureau local du

Cela signifie que vous pouvez recevoir un montant maximum de 514 \$ par semaine, avant les impôts.

Puisque le PSC est transférable et qu'il n'est plus restreint à la période de rétablissement après l'accouchement qui se produit pendant les journées scolaires, l'employeur versera à Sadia la différence

C'est en 1955 que le gouvernement fédéral a abandonné sa politique de congédier les femmes après leur mariage.

syndicat afin de déterminer l'admissibilité et les processus précis qui s'appliquent à leur poste.

Sadia est enseignante depuis quatre ans au sein du conseil scolaire. Elle enseigne à temps plein et elle doit accoucher le 15 juillet 2014. À quoi a-t-elle droit?

Étant donné que Sadia a travaillé pendant 600 heures assurables au cours des 12 mois qui ont précédé la naissance, elle est admissible à des prestations de maternité de 17 semaines et 34 semaines de prestations parentales par l'entremise de l'assurance-emploi. Durant le congé de 12 mois, elle recevra 50 paiements d'assurance-emploi (a.-e.) après deux semaines non rémunérées de la période d'attente.

Le taux de base pour les prestations d'a.-e. correspond à 55 pour cent de la rémunération hebdomadaire moyenne assurable, jusqu'à concurrence d'un montant maximum. À compter du 1^{er} janvier 2014, le maximum annuel de la rémunération assurable est de 48 600 \$.

entre les paiements de l'a.-e. et son salaire hebdomadaire pendant huit semaines à partir de la première journée scolaire de septembre.

Certaines dispositions de congés de maternité et de PSC des conventions collectives en vigueur ont des répercussions sur la mise en œuvre du PE. Consultez votre unité de négociation afin de déterminer la pratique de votre employeur. Un régime peut fusionner les dispositions actuelles avec celles du PE et elles seront adaptées à l'échelon local en fonction de la pratique établie.

Janine est secrétaire à temps plein dans une école élémentaire. Sa convention collective prévoit 12 semaines de PSC à 90 pour cent du salaire. Elle doit accoucher le 14 avril. À quoi est-elle admissible?

Janine est admissible aux paiements d'a.-e., à six semaines de PSC comblées à 100 pour cent du salaire et à six semaines supplémentaires à 90 pour cent. Le PE

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Maria is a long-term occasional teacher on a contract that runs from September to April 15, 2014. Her second child is due on March 3, 2014. What is her entitlement?

Maria is eligible for EI payments and will also be eligible for six weeks of SEB at 100 per cent salary ending April 15, 2014. She will not receive the full entitlement of eight weeks SEB because of the end date of her contract.

Pregnancy and childbirth are significant life events and members should contact their local federation office to review processes and forms that may be required to receive these negotiated benefits. Your union will also have information about purchasing pension contributions, entitlement to health, dental and LTD benefits, staffing provisions upon return from maternity/parental leave and extended parental leave. ☺

Alison Wallace is an Executive Assistant working in the Provincial Office Negotiations and Contract Maintenance Department.

permet de « fusionner » les droits supérieurs afin de garantir que les femmes ne soient pas lésées par les nouvelles dispositions.

Le 14 avril 2014, Anna, éducatrice, revient tout juste d'un congé parental après la naissance de son premier enfant. Elle en attend un deuxième et elle doit accoucher le 3 septembre 2014. À quoi a-t-elle droit?

Anna aura droit à l'a.-e. seulement si elle peut accumuler 600 heures assurables. Son employeur utilise une journée de travail de 7,5 heures aux fins de calcul de l'admissibilité à l'a.-e. Anna ne sera pas admissible à l'a.-e., car elle n'a pas travaillé un nombre suffisamment d'heures auprès de tous les employeurs. Anna a toujours droit à huit semaines à 100 pour cent du salaire payées par l'employeur. Il ne s'agit pas de paiements d'a.-e. complémentaires, mais les employées non admissibles au PSC ont quand même droit à huit semaines à 100 pour cent du salaire.

Maria est enseignante suppléante à long terme avec un contrat s'échelonnant de septembre au 15 avril 2014. Son deuxième

enfant doit naître le 3 mars 2014. À quoi a-t-elle droit?

Maria est admissible aux paiements d'a.-e. et aura aussi droit à six semaines de PSC à 100 pour cent du salaire se terminant le 15 avril 2014. Elle ne recevra pas l'intégralité des huit semaines de PSC en raison de la date de la fin de son contrat.

La grossesse et l'accouchement sont des événements importants dans la vie et les membres devraient communiquer avec leur bureau local de la Fédération afin de passer en revue les processus et les formulaires qui peuvent être requis dans le but d'obtenir ces prestations négociées. Votre syndicat aura également les renseignements liés au rachat des cotisations de retraite, à l'admissibilité aux prestations de santé, dentaire et d'ILD, aux dispositions quant à la dotation au retour du congé de maternité/parental et au congé parental prolongé. ☺

Alison Wallace est adjointe exécutive au Secteur des négociations et de la gestion des conventions collectives, au Bureau provincial.

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The **POVERTY** *Challenge*

Helping students see the reality of poverty in their community

By Bill Hodgins

ILLUSTRATION: JILLIAN DITNER

In some ways, The Poverty Challenge is akin to a game of Clue. Participants are assigned a character, they face hurdles and often accusations as they strive to navigate to a better, more advantageous place. And in the end, many fail in their bid to “win.”

But it’s not fun and games for those taking part. Judi Wyatt, a retired teacher from Kingston who helped develop The Poverty Challenge program, says students who participate often find there are few winners at the end of the day. “It can be a very emotional experience,” she says. “A powerful experience. It’s not unusual to see tears.”



The Poverty Challenge is an intensive, one-day summit on poverty designed for high school students. As described by its organizers, “As one of over 100 participants, you’ll be given a challenge that you’ll try to meet by seeking help from local agencies during a simulation involving over 100 volunteers and real procedures and documents from community and government organizations. You’ll have to do your best to succeed by providing the necessary answers, information and documentation. If you are not successful, you’ll have to find another way for you and your family to survive.” After the simulation, participants have an opportunity to talk to other students involved and then come up with a plan to solve problems they’ve encountered.

Seventeen-year-old “Molly” is one of the characters assigned to participating students. Molly is a Grade 11 student with no work history and a baby at home. She’s no longer with her family, has no support from the baby’s father and must live on \$1,075 a month in benefits from Ontario Works. She has no assets, but she has been taken in by a friend.

During the first round of the “game,” the baby is seized by the Children’s Aid Society until Molly can find a secure place to live. But that leads to a benefit reduction of almost \$500 a month. To add to the problems, Molly applied for a birth certificate for the child but it never arrived. And she wants to finish high school. Her challenge is to obtain a new birth certificate, find suitable and hopefully subsidized accommodation and work with legal aid to arrange to have the baby returned.

Fast forward to Round 2 and Molly has her baby back home and she is trying to include the child’s father in her life by having him stay with them a few days a week. But it leads to a fraud charge from Ontario Works. At the same time, she applies to college but it can’t happen without a student loan. It’s a scenario that can be pretty overwhelming to students who live north of the poverty line, Wyatt says. It involves extreme conditions that few could hardly imagine.

But “Molly” is real.

She is 26-year-old Reanna King. Her daughter is now 10. She is on the board of directors for the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Kingston and is actively involved in the city’s Community Plan for Poverty Reduction. And she’s very grateful to those behind The Poverty Challenge. They’ve kept her involved since its inception in 2009.



They would
need to verify
the stories,
and then form
an event where
the students
could play the
roles of the
impoverished.



“I first became involved with The Poverty Challenge through my teacher at an adult learning centre while trying to get my high school diploma,” she says. “My teacher was Craig Stevens and he was very socially active in the community. He inspired us to have a voice and fight back. He connected me with Judi Wyatt and I was her first interview.”

King has since attended every single conference put on by The Poverty Challenge, often as a guest speaker. “When I started this journey with The Poverty Challenge, I only understood and cared about my own struggles. I felt weak and unable to change my life. Through this, I have gone to college, gained confidence and, most valuable to me, I have met people who inspire and believe in me. Before this experience I believed I was destined to live in poverty forever. But I know I have the skills and support to change my life. Now I just need an opportunity.”

Wyatt says there was plenty of support for The Poverty Challenge proposal from the outset, but it still took considerable effort to get it off the ground. “I have a friend involved with the Kingston round table on poverty reduction. He told me they wanted to raise awareness of poverty in high school students and asked about an essay contest.”

Wyatt admits it sounded like a bad idea. Something more experiential was required. The round table had hosted a simulation experience on a much smaller level for city council members in Kingston, but it had been based on fictional characters in real-life situations. They decided to create an experience that would be more authentic. “We needed to find people living in Kingston who would tell us their story.” They would need to verify the stories, and then form an event where the students could play the roles of the impoverished.

The idea had great appeal, she says, but they knew it would be difficult. Aside from finding people willing to share their experiences in the public eye, they would need to rely on volunteers to help co-ordinate the event and some funding would be required. By 2009, a year after the idea was initially proposed, the volunteers were in place, they had character sketches in hand, and the United Way and two local schools had come through to cover expenses. It has since become an annual event.

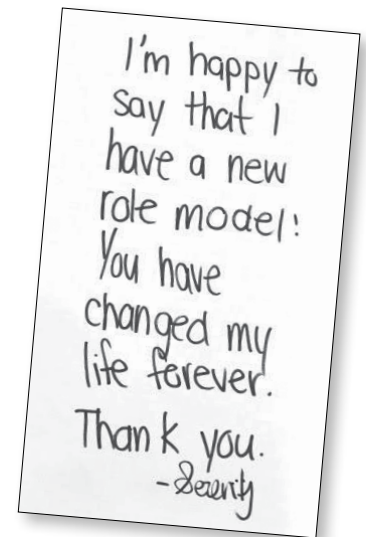
It’s also moved beyond the boundaries of Kingston. Organizers took it to students at Brock University and it has been offered at the high school level in Belleville.

This past November, program organizers were asked by the Dean of Queen’s



The POVERTY Challenge Online

The Poverty Challenge has its own Facebook page where students and teachers are free to share their experiences with the program. As well, www.thepovertychallenge.org tells visitors more about the program, the people behind it and how it has grown over the past five years. There are photos, videos and testimonials from past workshops. You can also download a Poverty Challenge Toolkit, at no cost, to allow you to plan your own events. Judi Wyatt, who helped develop The Poverty Challenge program, says they have had interest in the program from as far away as California. To take part in next year's event, contact Wyatt at wyatt.judi@gmail.com.



Faculty of Education to run the event for all 650 BEd candidates. "Our committee chose to focus on compassion and we had a second guest speaker, a woman living with less who had children in our school system," Wyatt says. "She spoke of the challenges of coming up with money for pizza day, book orders or field trips. She gave examples of teachers' acts of compassion and of incidents demonstrating lack of compassion. At the end of the day, the BEd candidates worked on the creation of a Charter of Compassion for Educators."

Wyatt hopes eventually to see the program in place throughout the province. On May 29, The Poverty Challenge marked its fifth annual event at McArthur Hall at Queen's University. Along with the high school students who took part, teachers from across Ontario were

invited to participate.

Nicole Kasserra, an educator in the Social Science Department at Kingston's Frontenac Secondary School, has participated in four previous Poverty Challenges. "Each time I am impressed with the level of organization for this event and the volunteers who make it happen," she says. "I am always deeply moved by the bravery of the speakers who share their life stories and who have become inspirations for the roles that students and teachers play throughout the day."

Kasserra says the first time she went, she wandered around as students took on their roles and tried to complete the tasks assigned to them. "I was able to offer advice and a reassuring presence as the tasks became more challenging, especially under the time limits provided. I found it

really interesting to observe the students cope and saw that for them, that day, this was very real. It was their life."

The second year she attended, teachers were also given roles to play. "Wow! New challenges were added to the various profiles and I also felt anxious as I dealt with long waits in 'welfare' lines, slum landlords and unrealistic deadlines. Accessing assistance was a full-time job and I was as frustrated as my students. I felt I had a good understanding going into the process, but it was furthered by the experience. I really walked a mile in their shoes."

She says the surprise unveil for students at the end of the event—meeting the people on whom the profiles are based—is the highlight of the day. "Students are stunned to learn that someone actually lived this life and they could meet that



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person. One year, as we waited in the classroom for a debriefing, I knew, but the students didn't, that they were about to meet the real 'Mike.' I was stunned to see the father of one of the boys on my son's hockey team. He looked at me, I at him, we nodded a greeting and then he launched into his story. I wiped away tears. He really put himself out there, knowing he wasn't as anonymous as he might like to be. We never talked about it afterwards, nor did I share it with anyone else. True courage."

In an ideal world, there wouldn't be a need for The Poverty Challenge, she says. "Since poverty is an issue, I wish all my students could take this challenge because every year they tell me how it changed their perspective. They no longer view 'poor people' as a nameless, faceless group but as individuals very much like themselves who deserved to be viewed with respect and given our support."

Wyatt says that response is not unusual. At the beginning of the day, students are asked to offer a few words describing people in poverty. "It's usually pretty unflattering. You hear 'lazy,' 'takers,' 'bums,' 'dirty.' It's really appalling what they will say. At the end of the day, we revisit that and ask them to come up with new words. Resilient. Brave. Strong. Flexible."

After they have had a chance to hear from the real people profiled, participants have a greater understanding, she says. They see how luck can play a part. What you are born into can make a difference. Health can make a difference. Whether a marriage stays together can make a difference.

"It's remarkable," Wyatt says, "how close many of us are to poverty." That message hits home for students but it also hits home for the volunteers who help with the events. "A lot of them are middle-class people who I know in the community, or those who others know. We didn't think we would be educating them."

It's definitely a worthwhile experience, says Wyatt, and she strongly encourages other schools and boards to introduce it into their classrooms.

Bill Hodgins is a Peterborough-based communications specialist, a former journalist and a father of three.





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Visions of Mexico

Combining art and travel

Sanja Srdanov's love of travel began with her first trip to Europe at age two to visit her grandparents in Serbia. For the past 12 years she has combined her love of art, culture and travel into a career as a visual arts teacher with the Greater Essex County District School Board, as well as teaching internationally. She lived and taught in South Korea, Mexico and Italy and

was influenced by each experience, returning and combining the photos, the memories and cultural experiences into her own mixed-media paintings as well as her classroom environment. In 2013, she was selected to create an *ofrenda* installation celebrating Mexico's Day of the Dead at the Detroit Institute of Arts where she displayed her students' Mexican-inspired art works. While

teaching in Mexico City she was captured by the art, colours and scenery, not to mention the tastes and scents of the land. Her own work has been described as "an imagined memory...ethereal and oneiric. The oneiric quality of the work comes through in the juxtaposition and arrangements of memories on the picture plane." (Sarah Beveridge, owner, SB Contemporary Art, Windsor.)



Left page: *Ofrenda* altar installation celebrating the tradition of the Mexican Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), the Detroit Institute of Arts, 2013. The altar showcases non-traditional self-portrait sugar skulls created by Sandwich Secondary School students from LaSalle, ON., for a senior project. Designed by Sanja Srdanov and artist Renee Nantais.

Right page: Clockwise from top left; all oil on stonehenge paper: *The Wings are Wide*, *Wild Card Inside*, *Loved Him Like a Winter Bird*, *Put Your Weight Against the Door*, *Stranded in a Fog of Words*.



A day with the lepidopterans

Niagara Parks Butterfly Conservatory

Lepidoptera, a term derived from the Ancient Greek words “scale” and “wing,” is the scientific name for a group of insects more commonly known as butterflies and moths. A visit to the Butterfly Conservatory is an eye-opening experience for students of all ages and provides another good reason for a ride to the Niagara Parks. The Niagara Parks Butterfly Conservatory is North America’s largest glass-enclosed butterfly exhibit. Visitors can not only observe but also interact with the freely flying butterflies, who often land on people’s heads and bodies, offering an up close and personal encounter with these delicate and beautiful insects.

The conservatory, which is open year round, is home to approximately 2,000 tropical butterflies. Before entering the 1,000-square-metre, rain-forest-like setting, you can watch a short orientation video. Once inside, visitors can see features such as a six-metre waterfall and pond, extraordinary plants and beautiful flowers, as well as (if you’re lucky) butterflies making their way out of their chrysalids. They also get to witness groups of butterflies feeding on fruits. Some of the butterflies have such remarkable markings that when they are in a group, it’s initially hard to grasp what exactly you are observing but then it becomes intriguingly clear.

The Butterfly Conservatory is owned and operated by the Niagara Parks Commission, an agency of the Ontario government. It’s located on the grounds of the world-renowned Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens & School of Horticulture, north of Niagara Falls.

The Niagara Parks Commission is dedicated to providing educational programming opportunities through the conservatory and also through nature and heritage programs that can be tailored to all grade levels, from elementary to post-secondary archeology students.



PHOTOS: RONDA ALLAN





In conjunction with the Monarch Teacher Network of Canada, the Commission also offers a two-day workshop that gives educators the knowledge and skills to teach multi-disciplinary lessons that will help provide excitement and wonder when teaching their students about the monarch butterfly.

Educators learn about the monarch's life cycle, migration and habitat requirements by participating in experiential activities, including indoor simulations, outdoor games and a variety of visual and performing arts. There is also a focus on ethical and political considerations related to species conservation and social-justice issues in Mexico.

Through the proven teachers-teaching-teachers method, participants build confidence and competence working with monarchs, including appropriate handling techniques, care and feeding throughout all life stages, and tagging and tracking of migrating monarchs.

Participants will leave the workshop with the knowledge, skills and tools to bring the magical story of this

emblematic creature to life.

Another one-day workshop, Creating Monarch-Friendly Habitat, teaches you how to nurture butterfly populations by growing your own easy-to-maintain butterfly garden.

The variety of education opportunities throughout the Parks is abundant. The nature programs include guided hikes and a tree-planting program. The hikes are customized for each grade level as students travel the Niagara Glen nature reserve, a biologically diverse ecosystem containing over 400 species of plants, including 75 that are rare in Ontario and Canada. The Glen provides an opportunity to see many of the geological processes that have occurred from 300 million years ago to 8,000 years ago, when the Niagara River continued to carve its way up towards its present location, creating many unique geological features. Students are led on a one-hour hike descending over 60 metres from the top of the gorge, through forests of ancient trees and remnants of Carolinian forests down to the viewpoints of

the Niagara River at one of its narrowest and most treacherous points: Devil's Hole Rapids.

Tours can focus on a variety of topics such as geology, natural history, species at risk, native plant and tree identification, invasive species, birding or sustainable outdoor recreation.

The tree-planting program shows students how to select appropriate tree species, plant and maintain trees, along with the benefits of tree planting to local wildlife.

The Heritage programs include exploring the Laura Secord Homestead, occupied by the Secord family from 1803 to 1835; the Mackenzie Printery, where students will find working heritage presses and typesetting facilities, allowing them a hands-on experience in the restored home of William Lyon Mackenzie; and Old Fort Erie, the first British fort built in what is now Ontario.

For more information on the Nature, Butterfly Conservatory and Heritage programs, please call 1-877-NIA-PARK or 905 371-0254 ext. 2. Or get visitor information at www.niagaraparks.com. 🦋

Keeping you in the loop

Reviews, conferences, PD opportunities and other items of interest

BOOK REVIEW

Overcoming Textbook Fatigue: 21st-century Tools to Revitalize Teaching and Learning

By ReLeah Cossett Lent

ASCD, 2012

202 pages, US\$26.95

Reviewed by Eleanor MacNiven Hoecht

Historically, a lot of classroom teaching comes from textbooks. These texts can be a wealth of knowledge and help define the structure of a course. However, they can also limit the content and learning that happens in a classroom. The first chapter in *Overcoming Textbook Fatigue* is titled “Learning: It’s All About Engagement.” That is the key idea in this book.

Texts can become outdated, and the content can be what the publishers think students need to learn, not what the teacher determines students need to learn, based on what he or she sees every day. For this reason the author tells teachers to make texts engaging and relevant, with students synthesizing and analyzing information, and actively involve students instead of requiring them to passively listen or memorize. Innovative strategies and easy to read charts lay out how to use the countless suggestions provided.

Each chapter explains the importance of the topic (background knowledge, vocabulary, reading, writing, assessing), how texts deal with the topic, then explores strategies to enhance the text and make it more engaging for students. Tips are provided for helping students “read to learn” (81), and the author notes that every teacher is a teacher of reading, no matter the discipline,

since reading skills are required to access concepts. Cossett Lent reminds us that “covering the text is not the goal, learning is the goal” (146).

Overcoming Textbook Fatigue is easy to read and not at all dry. It holds your interest and has many new ideas, as well as new ways to use common strategies. There are sample questions and charts for easy reference and to ensure easy implementation. The author seems to have read and studied many texts in a variety of disciplines and grades in order to appeal to as many classroom teachers as possible.

Eleanor MacNiven Hoecht is a Curriculum Coordinator in District 29, Hastings Prince Edward, and a member of the Provincial Educational Services Committee.

Overcoming Textbook Fatigue: 21st Century Tools to Revitalize Teaching and Learning

Par ReLeah Cossett Lent

ASCD, 2012

202 pages, 26,95 \$US

Critique de Eleanor MacNiven Hoecht

Historiquement, une grande partie de l’enseignement en salle de classe provient des manuels de classe. Ces manuels peuvent constituer une richesse de connaissances et aider à définir la structure d’un cours. Toutefois, ils peuvent également limiter le contenu et l’apprentissage en salle de classe. Le premier chapitre dans *Overcoming Textbook Fatigue* est intitulé; *Learning: It’s All About Engagement* (Apprendre : cela se résume à l’engagement). Voilà l’idée clé de ce livre.

Les manuels peuvent devenir désuets et le contenu se limite à ce que les maisons d’édition jugent comme étant ce dont les élèves ont besoin, et non pas ce que le personnel enseignant détermine comme étant nécessaire, en se fondant sur ce qu’il observe tous les jours. Pour cette raison, l’auteur suggère au personnel enseignant de rendre les manuels engageants et pertinents, en faisant participer les élèves à la synthèse et à l’analyse des renseignements, plutôt que

d’écouter ou de mémoriser passivement. Des stratégies innovatrices et des tableaux faciles à lire expliquent comment utiliser les innombrables suggestions fournies.

Chaque chapitre explique l’importance du sujet (enseignements généraux, vocabulaire, lecture, rédaction, évaluation), et comment les manuels de classe traitent de ces sujets. Ensuite, il explore des stratégies qui visent à améliorer le manuel et le rendre davantage engageant pour les élèves. On y offre des conseils pour aider les élèves à « lire pour apprendre » (81) et l’auteur indique que tout enseignant est un enseignant de lecture, quel que soit la matière enseignée puisque les aptitudes à la lecture sont requises afin de pouvoir accéder à des concepts. ReLeah Lent nous rappelle que « le but n’est pas de couvrir le texte, mais bien d’apprendre » (146).

Overcoming Textbook Fatigue est facile à lire et pas du tout monotone. Il maintient votre intérêt et offre de nombreuses nouvelles idées, ainsi que de nouvelles façons d’utiliser des stratégies communes. On y trouve des questions et des tableaux types faciles à consulter et favorisant une mise à exécution facile. L’auteur semble avoir lu et étudié de nombreux textes sur divers sujets et niveaux scolaires, dans le but de répondre aux besoins d’un plus grand nombre possible d’enseignants.

Eleanor MacNiven Hoecht est coordonnatrice du programme d’études au District 29, Hastings Prince Edward, et membre du Comité provincial des services éducatifs.

The End of War

by Bill Freeman

308 pages, \$21.47

Reviewed by Jeff Barber

Author Bill Freeman’s book begins by exploring how the empires of the past have used war and the threat of war as a tool to rule and exploit others. According to the author, after World War II, the United States became an empire and it has used war in the same manner as empires of the past. The second part of the book examines the

decline of the American empire and its position as the dominant player in global politics. Ultimately, in the third part of *The End of War* the author explores the possibility of a new world order based on multilateral responsibilities in the absence of empires that, hopefully, will lead to lasting peace.

In addition to readers with an interest in geo-politics, this book would be of value to teachers of senior history and geography courses at the secondary level. Students in those courses would benefit from the overview of war at the beginning of this book, which reads like the script to a video series on the history of wars. I can certainly see Freeman's thesis being used to initiate debate in World Issues or an American or World History class. The author's thesis is currently being put to the test, as Russia seems intent on playing the role of empire in the ongoing tensions in the Ukraine.

Jeff Barber is the Occasional and Teacher Bar gaining Unit President in District 28, Renfrew.

Paikin and the Premiers: Personal Reflections on a Half Century of Ontario Leaders

By Steve Paikin

Dundurn

408 pages, \$26.99

Reviewed by Dave Warda

Steve Paikin is to Ontario politics what Ron McLean is to Canadian hockey broadcasting. His passion has been evident throughout his lengthy tenure as an enthusiastic ringside television journalist for every provincial election since David Peterson. Over the years, Paikin has had unprecedented access to every influential politician to set foot in our legislature. Those who want to be premier and those who have been victorious have all been interviewed by Steve Paikin.

Paikin and the Premiers: Personal Reflections on a Half Century of Ontario Leaders was published by Dundurn last autumn. It is a robust book that contains transcripts and insightful commentary from extensive interviews Paikin has had with the likes of David Peterson, Bob Rae, Mike Harris,

Ernie Eves, Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne. For anyone in Ontario who seeks to understand the changes in our political landscape over the past 30 years, this is an excellent resource.

The chronicle of the interviews follows each premier from before they were elected until their departure from politics. There is an obvious arc in the types of things they say before, during and after office, but we do get a good look at them. What is impossible to miss is that, like them or hate them, they are people of deep conviction and demonstrate an authenticity that has somehow captured the electorate. Whether it was our favourite bully, Mike Harris, so often vilified by the public sector, or awkward "Premier Dad" Dalton McGuinty, the public chose leaders who were themselves and did not try to be otherwise. The people of Ontario are wary of pretence. In an era where someone like Rob Ford can rely on a "nation" of supporters, the question of authenticity is critical.

Who, then, in our current context is the political leader with the authenticity to take up the mantle of change into the next phase of government in Ontario? We can be sure that from the writ drop to the close of the polls, Steve Paikin will keep us entertained and informed.

Dave Warda is First Vice-President of District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge.

Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding

by Jay McTighe & Grant Wiggins

ASCD, 2013

110 pages, US\$26.95

Reviewed by Shaundell Parris

Learning goals, big ideas and success criteria are all new, yet old, concepts being tossed around in the world of education. Here's a new term/concept for you: essential questions. Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins have written a new book titled *Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding* to "aid teachers in improving the quality of inquiry and intellectual engagement in the classroom." The book (better

viewed as a guide) is geared to administrators and teachers of all grade levels. It is written in a simple yet rhetorical manner that is structured in an orderly manner to answer the what, why and how of the world of essential questions (EQs), including designing, implementing and creating a classroom culture of inquiry.

Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding provides many opportunities for readers to ponder their current ways of formulating and posing questions in the classroom. It also provides multiple aids, charts, examples and practical exercises throughout the entire book to assist in a shift in thinking. The authors elaborate on the seven characteristics of EQs and discuss the reasons for using these questions in the classroom. The EQs may be both overarching and subject specific. McTighe and Wiggins impart in detail their four- and eight-phased process with subject-specific examples for the implementation of EQs in the classroom. The remaining chapters discuss how to create a culture of inquiry within the classroom as well as one that extends beyond the classroom.

Teachers and educators who are interested in taking their classrooms to another level would benefit from this book and, in particular, anyone who already uses the framework of *Understanding by Design* (1998), as the authors make constant reference to their earlier book in this new one.

Shaundell Parris is a teacher in District 13, Durham and is on the provincial Educational Services Committee.

Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding

Par Jay McTighe et Grant Wiggins

ASCD, 2013

110 pages, 26,95 US\$

Critique de Shaundell Parris

Les buts d'apprentissage, les grandes idées et les critères de réussite sont tous des concepts nouveaux, bien qu'anciens, que l'on voit flotter un peu partout dans le monde de l'éducation. Voici un nouveau

terme/concept pour vous : les questions essentielles. Jay McThighe et Grant Wiggins sont les auteurs d'un nouveau livre intitulé *Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding* qui vise à « aider le personnel enseignant à améliorer la qualité du questionnement et de l'engagement intellectuel en salle de classe ». Ce livre (qui se veut plutôt un guide) cible les gestionnaires et le personnel enseignant de tous les niveaux scolaires. Il est rédigé d'une façon simple, bien que rhétorique, et structuré d'une manière ordonnée dans le but de répondre au quoi, pourquoi et comment dans le monde des questions essentielles, y compris la conception, la mise en œuvre et la création d'une culture de questionnement en salle de classe.

Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding offre de nombreuses occasions aux lecteurs de réfléchir sur leurs façons actuelles de formuler et de poser des questions en salle de classe. Il fournit également de multiples aides, tableaux, exemples et exercices pratiques afin d'aider à transformer la façon de penser. Les auteurs élaborent sur les sept caractéristiques des questions essentielles et discutent des raisons pour lesquelles il faut les utiliser en salle de classe. Les questions essentielles sont parfois globales, parfois propres à une matière particulière. Jay et Grant transmettent dans le détail leur processus en quatre et huit étapes, au moyen d'exemples propres à une matière pour la mise en place des questions essentielles en salle de classe. Les autres chapitres traitent de la manière de créer une culture de questionnement en salle de classe ainsi qu'une culture qui va au-delà de la salle de classe.

Le personnel enseignant intéressé à relever leur salle de classe à un niveau supérieur aurait grand intérêt à lire ce livre, et en particulier toute personne qui se sert déjà de la structure *Understanding by Design* (1998), puisque les auteurs se reportent souvent à leur livre précédent dans celui-ci.

Shaundell Parris est enseignante au District 13, Durham, et siège au Comité des services éducatifs.

CONFERENCES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

July 14–18, 2014

All Things Marine—a cross-curricular
maritime institute
Huntsman Marine Science Centre
Saint Andrews, NB

There is no better outdoor marine classroom than Canada's own Bay of Fundy. Twice a day the tide at the mouth of the Bay rises and falls eight metres, stirring up nutrients that have drifted to the ocean floor. Join us as we explore this unique and diverse environment. What we catch and collect is what we will study! Time is also set aside to share ideas on how to adapt our marine examples to your own classroom. For more information visit www.huntsmanmarine.ca/subcontents/id/17/sid/48.

September 18–20, 2014

19th Annual Values and Leadership

Conference

Deerhurst Resort, Huntsville, ON

The 19th Annual Values and Leadership Conference of the International Consortium for the Study of Leadership and Ethics in Education (CSLEE) is hosted this year by Nipissing University. The theme for the 2014 conference is Towards Transformational Leadership: Values and Ethics for Educational Advancement and Sustainability. Unique to this conference is a focus on the power of emerging media and technology and ethical decision-making in early childhood, elementary, secondary and post-secondary settings. For more information visit cslee19.nipissingu.ca.

October 24, 2014

Shaw Festival's Fall Teachers' Day
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON

Dressing the Part is a workshop that approaches storytelling and character through costume design and creation, with William



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Forum picks

Schmuck, Shaw Director of Design, and Tanya Apostolidis, Shaw Head of Wardrobe. For more information visit www.shawfest.com/education/just-for-teachers/teachers-days.

November 6-8, 2014

[Soundscapes 2014](#)

[London Convention Centre, London ON](#)

The Ontario Music Educators' Association (OMEA) and the Canadian Music Industry Education Committee (CMIEC) are co-hosting the Soundscapes 2014 conference on Music and Music Education in Ontario. Soundscapes 2014 will offer music educators from across Ontario the opportunity to participate in focused workshops and discussions on their craft, investigate the latest music-industry innovations and technologies, and gather with colleagues to discuss and refine the education of Ontario's students towards success in life. For more information visit: www.omea.on.ca.

November 5-7, 2014

[Educational Computing Organization of Ontario](#)


[Bring IT Together 2 Conference](#)
[Scotiabank Convention Centre,](#)
[Niagara Falls, ON](#)

Plans are underway for this annual conference for educators interested in the integration of new computing technology into the educational curriculum. For more information visit ecoo.org/conference2013.

November 9-10, 2014

[OSCA Gold: Creating Pathways to Success \(K to 12\)](#)

[International Plaza Hotel, Toronto, ON](#)

The Ontario School Counsellors' Association presents a conference focusing on six themes: career and labour market trends, mental health issues, counselling techniques, career development, at-risk students and shared best practices. For more information visit www.oscaconference.ca/#. deadline is March 14, 2014. Educator grants are also available. For more information visit www.torontoalpha.org. 





Last word

by Paul Elliott, President

Mot de la fin

par Paul Elliott, président

Protecting public education from profiteers

Standing up across North America

A few weeks ago, on May 9 to 11, over 160 delegates from Canada, the United States and Mexico, including a small contingent from OSSTF/FEESO, participated in the Trinational Conference in Defense of Public Education, held in Chicago. Every two years for the past 20 years a coalition of teacher union activists, higher education faculty, students and parents who value public education have gathered to share their own experiences and struggles in each of the three NAFTA countries, as well as the impact of globalization on public education.

Over the three days of the conference, delegates shared stories of the growing attacks on public education. From Puerto Rico to Oaxaca, Mexico, from Vancouver to San Francisco, delegates outlined how neo-liberal governments were continually finding ways to undermine and underfund public education. From Puerto Rico we heard of how the government unilaterally ended teachers' pension plans, from Vancouver we heard of the 10-year struggle to maintain collective bargaining rights and from Chicago we heard of the most egregious attack on schools, parents and students themselves through school closures.

Chicago Teachers' Union President Karen Lewis spoke at the opening panel for the conference, along with President Jim Iker of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, Juan Melchor of Mexico's National Co-ordinating Committee of Education Workers, Maria Elena Fontanez, President of the Puerto Rican Teachers' Federation, and myself. All the speakers remarked on the ways in which standardized testing, attacks on pensions and lack of investment in our schools are profoundly harming children, teachers and their communities.

Karen Lewis opened the plenary session and spoke to the ongoing struggles within the city of Chicago. Using the legacy of former President George W. Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act*, the mayor of the city has used standardized test

Protéger l'éducation publique des profiteurs

Revendiquer partout en Amérique du Nord

Il y a quelques semaines, du 9 au 11 mai, plus de 160 délégués en provenance du Canada, des États-Unis et du Mexique, y compris une petite délégation d'OSSTF/FEESO, ont participé à la Conférence trinationale sur la défense de l'éducation publique, tenue à Chicago.

Au cours des trois jours de la conférence, les délégués ont partagé des témoignages d'attaques de plus en plus fréquentes contre l'éducation publique. De Porto Rico à Oaxaca, au Mexique, de Vancouver à San Francisco, les délégués ont souligné comment les gouvernements néo-libéraux trouvaient sans cesse des moyens d'affaiblir et de sous-financer l'éducation publique. De Porto Rico, nous avons entendu comment le gouvernement a unilatéralement mis fin aux régimes de pension des enseignants, de Vancouver, nous avons entendu un témoignage de leur lutte depuis dix ans pour conserver leurs droits de négociation collective, et de Chicago, nous avons entendu des témoignages au sujet d'attaques les plus graves contre les écoles, les parents et les élèves par le biais de fermetures d'écoles.

Tous les conférenciers ont fait des remarques sur les façons dont les tests normalisés, les attaques contre les pensions et le sous-financement dans nos écoles nuisent profondément aux enfants, aux enseignants et à leur communauté.

Karen Lewis a ouvert la séance plénière et a discuté des luttes incessantes dans la ville de Chicago. En se servant de l'héritage de la loi *No Child Left Behind Act* de l'ancien président George W. Bush, le maire de la ville s'est servi des résultats aux tests normalisés pour fermer des écoles de quartier et forcer les élèves à fréquenter des écoles à charte (privées) de Chicago. Les études successives démontrent l'incapacité des écoles à charte de fournir une éducation de qualité, la mauvaise gestion chronique du financement public et l'incapacité des écoles à charte de reconnaître les élèves ayant des besoins particuliers et d'offrir des programmes adéquats. Néanmoins, l'utilisation des écoles à charte continue de croître et la ville de Chicago continue de fermer des



scores to close neighbourhood schools and force students into the charter (private) schools of Chicago. Study after study has outlined the failure of charter schools to provide quality education, the prolific abuse of public funding and the inability of charter schools to recognize students with special needs and provide adequate programs. Nevertheless the use of charter schools continues to grow and the City of Chicago continues to close schools and bus students out of their neighbourhood schools.

But neighbourhood community groups are fighting back. One of the most compelling workshops I attended focused on building links between educational workers, parents and diverse communities. We heard from Jitu Brown, Chair of the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization and Journey for Justice Alliance. He spoke of how in mid-south Chicago, 20 of 22 local schools had been shuttered and students moved to much larger charter schools. He spoke of an unfair lottery system to determine which charter school a child was to attend. And he spoke of their latest struggle to save the neighbourhood high school. Despite the fact that the Chicago school system has been almost dismantled through privatization, he spoke with hope and conviction—conviction from someone who cares deeply for his community and children and is convinced neighbourhood schools are worth saving and should be saved. And he spoke of hope that, through the alliances of the teachers' union and other community groups, they would be able to save the high school. His closing comments focused on his own experience, and he stated, "I can't look at my grandchild, a third-grader, and support a policy that will doom that child."

In many ways we have been fortunate in Ontario. We have yet to see a government that has embraced the neo-liberal education as we have seen in Mexico and the United States. In the 1990s, the Progressive Conservative government of the day attempted to bring charter schools to Ontario, but parent groups and education unions managed to hold the Harris agenda at bay. But the neo-liberal agenda is always only one election away. By the time this goes to print, another Ontario election will have occurred and we may very well be defending one of the best education systems in the world.

Our education system here was founded upon the words of Egerton Ryerson: education "is as necessary as the light—it should be as common as water and as free as air." These are principles worth defending. It's unfortunate that companies such as Pearson International view public education as an untapped source of revenue. Through the growing focus on standardized testing and assessment, more and more governments are allowing business to gain more and more access to education funding as an avenue to increase profit.

NAFTA introduced the privatization of public education under the guise of globalization. Since its inception, the Trilateral Conference in Defense of Public Education has been a platform for the protection of something that is "as necessary as the light," for without public education we all fail. ☹

écoles et de déplacer les élèves en autobus vers d'autres écoles à l'extérieur de leur quartier.

Cependant, il y a des groupes communautaires qui commencent à se défendre. Un des ateliers les plus convaincants auxquels j'ai participé était axé sur la création de liens entre les travailleurs de l'éducation, les parents et les communautés diverses. Nous avons écouté Jitu Brown, président du *Kenwood Oakland Community Organization and Journey for Justice Alliance*. Il a parlé des 20 écoles sur 22 dans le mi-sud de Chicago qui ont été fermées et dont les élèves ont dû être envoyés dans des écoles à charte beaucoup plus grandes. Il a fait allusion à un système de loterie injuste pour déterminer quelle école à charte un enfant devrait fréquenter. Et il a parlé de leur plus récente lutte qui consistait à sauver l'école secondaire du quartier. Malgré le fait que le système scolaire de Chicago a été presque démantelé par la privatisation, il s'exprimait avec espoir et conviction, conviction d'une personne qui aime profondément sa communauté et les enfants et qui est convaincu que les écoles de quartier méritent d'être sauvées et qu'il faut les préserver. Il a parlé également de son espoir que, par le biais des alliances entre les syndicats des enseignants et d'autres groupes communautaires, ils pourraient ensemble être en mesure de sauver l'école secondaire. Ses remarques de fin d'allocation se concentraient sur sa propre expérience et il a affirmé : « Je ne peux pas regarder mon petit-fils, qui est en 3^e année, et appuyer une politique qui signifierait une catastrophe pour lui. »

De nombreuses façons, nous avons été choyés en Ontario. Nous n'avons toujours pas vu un gouvernement qui a adopté l'éducation néo-libérale comme nous avons été témoins au Mexique et aux États-Unis. Dans les années 1990, le gouvernement Progressiste Conservateur de l'époque a tenté d'introduire le concept des écoles à charte en Ontario, mais les groupes de parents et les syndicats dans le domaine de l'éducation ont réussi à mettre un frein aux objectifs de Mike Harris. Cependant, les objectifs néo-libéraux ne sont toujours qu'à une élection près. Au moment d'imprimer ce magazine, une autre élection aura eu lieu en Ontario et il se peut que l'on doive défendre l'un des meilleurs systèmes d'éducation au monde.

Notre système d'éducation a été fondé sur les mots de Egerton Ryerson, que l'éducation « est aussi nécessaire que la lumière – elle devrait être aussi commune que l'eau et gratuite comme l'air. » Ce sont des principes qui valent la peine d'être défendus. Il est regrettable que des entreprises comme Pearson International perçoivent l'éducation publique comme étant une source de revenus inexploitées. Au moyen de la concentration continue sur les tests normalisés et les évaluations, de plus en plus de gouvernements permettent aux entreprises de gagner de plus en plus accès au financement de l'éducation comme moyen d'augmenter leur chiffre d'affaires.

L'ALENA a mis de l'avant la privatisation de l'éducation publique, sous le couvert de la mondialisation. Depuis ses débuts, la conférence trinationale sur la défense de l'éducation publique est une tribune pour la protection d'un concept qui est « aussi nécessaire que la lumière, » car sans l'éducation publique, nous sommes tous perdants. ☹



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Our Members can be proud that we assist the less fortunate by funding local and international children's learning programs, and contributing to foreign aid initiatives.

To find out how Teachers Life member benefits support the education community and how we connect with communities around the world, please visit our website.

Scholarships • Bursaries • Healthy Living Rebate
FeelingBetterNow® • CAREpath® • Posaction Plus®



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**OSSTF members get up to
50% off home insurance**

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otip.com/osstf to complete a quote**

This is a one-time discount (of up to 50%) and is only applicable to new multi-line home and auto policies underwritten by Traders General Insurance Company, part of the Aviva Insurance Company of Canada. OTIP and Aviva have the right to withdraw this offer at any time. Must reside in Ontario to be eligible for this discount.

