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EDUCATION

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VOL. 33, ISSUE 2 OSSTF/FEÉSO SPRING 2007

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Passing the baton

Education Forum welcomes new editor

How time flies when you're having fun. It has been nearly nine years since I became editor of *Education Forum*, and in many ways it doesn't feel like a day. I also know, however, that it is time to move on and let someone else take this wonderful and unique magazine to new heights. Starting with the Fall 2007 issue, Wendy Anes Hirschegger will be the new editor.

Working on *Education Forum* has been a fun and rewarding experience. I have done many things since I started working at the provincial office of OSSTF/FEESO but few as gratifying. I don't know if it's the creativity that is involved in building something new every time we need to put out an issue or the opportunity to work with great people and writers, but the task never became tedious. In many ways, it never seemed like work at all.

During the past nine years, the magazine has undergone many changes. We discontinued the PD pullout, went from four to three issues a year, introduced a new department called Vox pop, added more French content and, perhaps most importantly, changed the editorial mix of the magazine. I am particularly proud that we were publishing articles on the environment before it was even on anyone's radar. We also took on educational, social, labour, human rights, international and professional issues with the same gusto. As a result, based on what members tell us, the magazine has never been so widely read and respected.

Throughout its history, *Education Forum* has won many awards for its design and graphics, its writing and its editorial mix. The magazine's success is largely due to the many people who contribute to it. A small but dedicated staff makes sure that the standards of quality for which it is known continually

improve. Marianne Clayton is much more than a managing editor. In many ways, she is the heart and soul of *Education Forum*. It is not only because of her devotion and hard work but also because of her sound judgment and deep knowledge of OSSTF/FEESO that she makes the magazine work. I learned early on that when Marianne asked, "Pierre, have you thought about...?" I should not think twice but simply heed her advice. Resistance was futile. Marianne, it has been a real pleasure working with you, but above all, learning from you.

During my tenure, many people have commented on how good and professional the magazine looks. I remember coming home and asking my wife, "Have you noticed that *Education Forum* looks a lot better than many professional magazines out there?" It's true. It does, and it's largely because of Jim Ireland of James Ireland Design Inc. and the talented staff of graphic artists who have worked under his leadership over the years. Pat Ireland tried to make sure that we always got our facts straight and there wasn't a misspelled word to be found. Just for good measure, Dawn Martin acted as our fresh pair of eyes. My relationship with Jim and Pat has evolved beyond a professional one, and we have become neighbours and friends. Thanks, Jim and Pat, for making us look so good.

Another key person in making the magazine work is Renate Brandon. Renate sells the ads that supplement the budget given to us by OSSTF/FEESO. At first blush, selling ads may seem like a fairly straightforward process, but not for a union magazine. The ads have to respect OSSTF/FEESO policy. Renate pulls it off with brio. So much so that for the past few years the magazine has con-

sistently come in under budget. Thanks, Renate. And our traffic co-ordinator, Janice Grant, does exactly that—she keeps the production moving. Whether it's keeping track of the mailing or the ads, Janice is a tremendous help. Thank you, Janice. Our translator, Diane Saint-Pierre, has helped us add French content. Her translation skills have been appreciated. Merci.

Last, I would be remiss if I didn't thank those who have been the fundamental reason for our success—the writers. While I will not try to name them all because I'm afraid I might accidentally forget one, I want them to know how special they have been. Some have written just one article, while others are regular contributors. In some cases they simply mail an article in to us, and in other cases it works the other way around and we ask them to write on a specific topic. Some are members who write in their spare time, and others are experts in their field who want to communicate more directly with education workers. Some have PhDs, and others are not yet out of high school. In all cases, however, I have been amazed by the quality of the writing. There are a lot of really smart and creative people/members out there. Thanks for your contributions, and don't stop sending us your articles.

As always, we have another really good issue of *Education Forum* for you. Please read Maude Barlow's article on water. Not to do so is at your own peril. Jon Cowans is back with a vengeance, and his opinions are sure to make a lot of people talk. Regan Mancini shares sad but at the same time hopeful stories of Canadian Indigenous women. I hope that you enjoy this, my last issue of *Education Forum*. I'm already looking forward to reading Wendy's inaugural Fall 2007 issue!





Place à la relève

Une nouvelle éditrice pour *Education Forum*

Comme le temps passe lorsque l'on s'amuse... Cela fait bientôt neuf ans que je suis rédacteur en chef d'Éducation Forum et je n'ai pas vu le temps passer. Néanmoins, je sais que le temps est venu de laisser à une autre personne le soin de propulser cette revue unique et remarquable vers de nouveaux sommets. À compter du numéro de l'automne 2007, Wendy Hirschegger sera la nouvelle rédactrice en chef.

Ce travail a été pour moi une expérience amusante et enrichissante. J'ai accompli bien des tâches depuis mes débuts au bureau provincial de l'OSSTF/FEÉSO, mais peu qui aient été aussi gratifiantes. Je ne sais si cela est dû à la créativité qu'implique l'élaboration d'un numéro entièrement nouveau à chaque fois ou l'occasion de travailler avec des gens et des auteurs intéressants, mais la tâche n'est jamais fastidieuse.

Depuis ces neuf dernières années, la revue a subi de nombreux changements. Nous avons abandonné l'encart sur le développement professionnel, sommes passés de quatre à trois numéros par année, avons lancé une nouvelle section appelée Vox pop, ajouté plus d'articles en français et surtout, changé le contenu de la revue. Je suis particulièrement fier d'avoir publié des articles sur l'environnement avant même que cette question préoccupe quiconque. Nous nous sommes également lancés avec le même élan dans les articles portant sur des questions d'éducation, sociétales, de travail, de droits de la personne, internationales et professionnelles. Ce faisant, de l'avis de nos membres, la revue n'a jamais été aussi lue et respectée.

Tout au long de son histoire, Éducation Forum a été maintes fois primée pour son format et son graphisme, ses articles et son contenu. Le succès de la revue est dû en grande partie aux nombreuses personnes qui y contribuent — des gens

dévoués s'assurent que les normes de qualité qui ont fait sa réputation s'améliorent constamment. Marianne Clayton est bien plus qu'une directrice-rédactrice en chef. Elle est le cœur et l'âme de la revue. Non seulement à cause de son dévouement et de son travail, mais également grâce à son jugement infaillible et à sa grande connaissance de l'OSSTF/FEÉSO, elle s'assure que la revue atteint sa cible. Je l'ai appris très tôt, lorsqu'elle a demandé « Pierre, avez-vous pensé à... ». Je ne devais pas trop y réfléchir mais seulement suivre ses conseils. La résistance était futile. Marianne, ce fut un véritable plaisir de travailler avec vous et surtout, d'apprendre de vous.

Pendant mon mandat, nombreux sont ceux qui ont loué l'aspect esthétique et professionnel de la revue. Je me rappelle être rentré chez moi et avoir demandé à mon épouse si elle avait remarqué qu'Éducation Forum avait bien meilleure allure que bien des revues professionnelles. C'est le cas. Nous le devons en grande partie à Jim Ireland et aux graphistes dévoués qui ont travaillé sous sa houlette au fil des ans. Pat Ireland s'est assurée quant à elle de la précision de nos renseignements et de l'orthographe correcte des mots. Par mesure de sécurité, Dawn Martin assurait une dernière relecture. Ma relation avec Jim et Pat a évolué — nous sommes devenus voisins et amis. Merci à vous deux d'avoir rendu notre revue si esthétique.

Renate Brandon doit également être citée pour avoir contribué à la réussite de la revue. Renate s'occupe de la vente des annonces publicitaires qui complètent le budget accordé par l'OSSTF/FEÉSO. À première vue, la vente d'annonces peut sembler assez simple, mais ce n'est pas le cas pour une revue syndicale. Les annonces doivent respecter la politique de l'OSSTF/FEÉSO. Renate y est parvenue avec brio, tant et si bien que la revue n'a

jamais dépassé le budget alloué au cours de ces dernières années. Merci Renate! Janice Grant, quand à elle, s'assure que le tout roule comme sur des roulettes. Le courrier, les appels sont sous contrôle. Merci Janice. Et que dire de notre traductrice, Diane Saint-Pierre, qui nous aide à ajouter du contenu français. Ses habiletés de traduction sont fort appréciées.

Enfin, ce serait négligent de ma part de ne pas remercier ceux qui sont la raison fondamentale de notre succès : les auteurs. Si je ne veux pas les nommer de peur d'en oublier un, je tiens à ce qu'ils sachent combien ils comptent. Certains n'ont rédigé qu'un article alors que d'autres ont contribué régulièrement à la revue. Dans certains cas, ils nous ont simplement envoyé l'article et dans d'autres, nous leur avons demandé d'écrire sur un sujet donné. Certains sont des membres qui écrivent pendant leurs temps libres alors que d'autres sont des personnes connues qui veulent communiquer plus directement avec les travailleurs et travailleuses de l'éducation. Certains ont un doctorat alors que d'autres n'ont pas dépassé les études secondaires, mais quel que soit le cas, j'ai toujours été étonné de la qualité de leur style. Que de personnes intelligentes et créatives nous avons ! Merci et continuez à nous envoyer vos articles.

Comme toujours, nous vous présentons un numéro passionnant. Ne manquez pas de lire l'article de Maude Barlow sur l'eau. Ne pas le faire vous mettrait en péril. L'indomptable Jon Cowans nous revient et ses opinions feront jaser. Regan Mancini nous fait part d'histoires de femmes autochtones canadiennes à la fois tristes et porteuses d'espoir. J'espère que vous apprécierez mon dernier numéro d'Éducation Forum. Je ne sais pas si vous êtes comme moi, mais je suis déjà impatient de lire le premier numéro de Wendy à l'automne 2007. 🐦





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Course dingue

Can you lead students to Paris and make them use their French?



Students prove they were on the Champs-Élysées by asking a local to take their photo

Mais, bien sûr! For 2007 March Break, Meredith Clarke, Michael Michaelides and I led 28 Grade 10 and 11 students and three parents to Paris and Provence, and we all used our French. In our first international version of the Pauline Johnson CVS *Course Dingue (Amazing Race)*, six teams of students raced around Paris for a day, and Nice for a half-day, as part of our challenge to them to use the French they have learned.

On typical school trips, we herd the students around in one massive group, point at things, talk at the students and hope they'll say, "Ooh, aaah." Everything

is done and organized for them, from their rooms and their meals to their transportation and their tours. Their most frequent question is, "When do we get to shop?" Meredith and I really wanted the students to use their French and take some initiative on this trip. Their parents agreed when we described the concept of the race. Some students, needless to say, were skeptical but prepared to give it their best shot.

The race: Students were divided into teams—Grade 10, teams of four; Grade 11, teams of five (based more on friendships than on academics).

We produced a long list of things

"French" for them to look for and to photograph in particular neighbourhoods or sites: a man in a beret; a dog in a restaurant; men playing boules; someone eating a crêpe or French onion soup, etc. We brainstormed and came up with as many typical images as we could remember from our own visits. Students could take photos at any time; these would be checked off against the master list, and the teams would receive bonus points. Any time a student could convince a French person to join them in a picture, the points doubled.

The Paris leg of the race began early on our first full day. Each student wore a school lanyard with an ID tag—a small Canadian flag, a school crest and their photo on one side and "*Parlez-moi français, s.v.p.*" on both sides. Any time they approached someone, they had to show the ID tag. The French were more than co-operative, insisting the students use their French and even helping them with pronunciation and grammar.

Each team was accompanied by an adult who, although an experienced traveller, was not necessarily strong in the French language (our three parents bought into this wholeheartedly). For each clue the students received, their accompanying adult had all the expectations, destinations and explanations in English on hand.

At 8 a.m. the students received their first clue and some euros. They had to find their way, on foot, to a local outdoor market (even the smallest French markets thrilled the students) to purchase various picnic items, photograph food items and get their pictures taken with vendors. They learned very quickly that the French will not acknowledge you if you don't begin with "*Bonjour*" before you say anything else. My group of Grade 11s had a riot getting their picture taken with a merchant who invited them right into his booth so they could pose behind his gorgeous display of French, Greek and Spanish olives. One group, who could not find an *épi* (a French loaf of bread shaped like a wheat sheaf), had

their picture taken with a baker holding a poster picturing wheat fields. These students were determined to follow every clue, and this was a very creative solution.

Next was their first Métro experience. The Paris Métro is one of the best in the world—once you figure out how it works. It took a bit of prompting, and every student had to buy his or her own unlimited day pass *en français*. (The cashiers were infinitely patient.) Everyone arrived in fine form at the Louvre, where their assignment was to seek out a set list of famous works of art in a set amount of time.

From there, depending on their list of clues, they took the Métro to the Arc de Triomphe and strolled down the Champs-Élysées taking pictures of significant addresses—“Oh my God, there’s Chanel. Quick, take a picture”—or to the Galeries-Lafayette, where they had to ask for help to try on clothes; trying to explain Canadian sizes to a French sales clerk proved quite a challenge. (I was able to get six tickets for the Friday fashion show

there, so one lucky group of girls got to attend a *véritable défilé de mode* in Paris.)

The teams switched places, and it was back onto the Métro to complete the next set of clues. They found their way to Notre Dame and then walked to the neighbourhood of St-Germain-des-Prés to find various landmarks. One group had *chocolat chaud*, served in silver, on the *terrasse* at the famous Café de Flore. When in Paris...

“The Amazing Race was a great experience and a really good way to see Paris.... I really enjoyed figuring out the clues and found I could speak way more French than I originally thought.”

By the time the students got back to the hotel, between 5 and 6 p.m., they were exhausted, but bubbling over with the tales of their adventures in Paris.

The adults were grinning from ear to ear, just as exhausted as the students, and they, too, were bubbling over with tales. After lights out, the adults established the team standings.

Our second race day was the last morning of the trip, in Nice. This differed in that the students had to follow clues on their own, without an adult. This was a timed event, leading them to the famed Hotel Negresco and back to the old town with its animated flower market and labyrinthine streets. The students bought flowers for all the chambermaids at the hotel, tried *socca* (a chickpea pancake special to Nice), took time out for gelato, and climbed to the top of the city, all at high speed! After two hours, the third-place team had gained ground.

The adults tallied the points from the Paris leg and the Nice leg, then added in all the bonus photo points. We awarded prizes (picture frames and perfumes) at our final-night fashion show (featuring clothing the students had purchased), which we held in the hotel dining room.

The strength of this project was that we saw that even the shyest of students got caught up in the fun. If they were too nervous to ask a stranger a question in French, they could still help by translating the clues, reading maps and brochures and counting out euros. I have never enjoyed myself more on a trip, and somehow, in spite of the dozens of hours that went in to preparing this *Course Dingue*, I have never come home less stressed.

The comments of Grade 10 student Eslin make it all worthwhile:

“The Amazing Race was a great experience and a really good way to see Paris. We were on our own, and it felt as if we were part of the city, not just tourists. I really enjoyed figuring out the clues and found I could speak way more French than I originally thought. Everyone was really nice when we asked for directions, even though our French must have seemed a little bizarre!”

For a journal of this trip, go to our blog: pjcv.blogspot.com.

Lori Chisholm is a French teacher at Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School in Brantford, Ontario.

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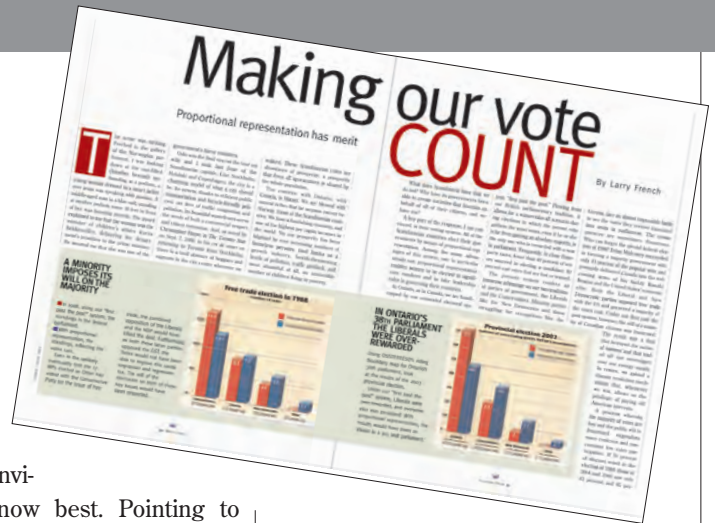
Although OSSTF/FEESO is claiming that the organization is not in favour of any particular format for a changed electoral system in Ontario, a lot of space in this magazine (*Education Forum*, Winter 2007) and in *Update* (Jan. 17, 2007) has been allowed for proponents of some type of proportional representation system.

It seems to me that our primary purpose as a professional organization is to advocate for our profession. Accordingly, space in our publications should be so used. Unless someone can provide bona fide proof that some form of new electoral system will provide us with the necessary policy changes and competency

in governance that we seek, then we should stick to what we are good at: advocating for our own, in the environments we know best. Pointing to other countries (as was done by author Larry French) with other political and social histories and other electoral systems is no formula for a panacea for the Ontario political environment. If individual voters in Ontario are interested in acquiring extra political advantage for their favourite parties, then they should participate in the political process to

help bring this to fruition, but without the assistance of the communication organs of a professional organization whose total membership may or may not agree with the personal political agenda of Mr. French.

Dennis Donohue
Marathon, Ont.



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What If? you missed out on **What If?**

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Magazine Fund for this project

Janie was raised on a reserve, where her family spoke of their experiences—of having been punished for speaking their own language and forbidden from wearing their own clothes, playing their own games or practising their own ceremonies. They told of sexualized torture, spiritual and psychological deprivation at the hands of state and religious agents, and the undermining of their identities. The violence inflicted on them morphed into violence they inflicted upon themselves, facilitated by the weapon of alcohol, which they used to dull the pain.

Sara's mother, on the other hand, refused to talk about her residential school experiences. She wouldn't speak or teach Sara her Indigenous language. She was haunted by the punishments she'd received from the Catholic nuns when she tried to speak it at school. Despite her inability to prevent the abuse, she felt a sense of shame for what had been done to her. She was determined to protect her children from

the violence she'd endured.

Kerrie and her three siblings were taken from their family when Kerrie was five and they became wards of the state. Her parents were deemed by the government to be unfit to provide for and protect them. Kerrie lived with five different foster families, all of them non-Indigenous. In some homes she was treated well, while in others she experienced violence. One foster father sexually abused her. The brother of another raped her. And in all places, she knew she was different, by the colour of her skin and by the way people treated her—the lone "Indian" in the family. None of her foster homes could protect her from that.

Education: Whose?

Kerrie and Sara were educated in systems where not one of their teachers looked like them or taught in a manner that was culturally like their own. In class they were often asked to provide the "Indian" opinion, as if they could speak

for all Indigenous peoples. They struggled with the racially driven bullying and beatings they received from their classmates. With little incentive to stay at school, they began to search for alternatives. They quit school, Kerrie took to the streets, and Sara worked as a waitress.

Like Kerrie and Sara, Janie struggled within the mainstream education system. She didn't see how the knowledge she gained there related to her daily life. Her classes were not taught in her native tongue, and the traditional ways of her people were "add-ons" to course curriculum.

Janie wondered where this education would lead her, even if she did pursue it. The military had set up a base outside her reserve and flew planes overhead all day, which not only scared away wildlife but polluted the air and waterways, making it difficult for her people to hunt and trap. Robbed of a livelihood, many of the local women turned to prostitution, "servicing" the military.

Services: What services?

Sara sought help after she was raped by her cousin. While she could see that the non-Indigenous service providers had the best of intentions, she felt alienated through the process. Too often she felt that her body and mind were being separated from her spirit through the healing tactics that were used. She knew that her perpetrator was also a victim. He'd been brutalized through the residential school system, and he needed healing as well. She longed for her people, for someone to reach out to her in a way that addressed her whole person and the health of her community.

As in many remote communities, support services didn't exist on Janie's reserve. As a result, she kept details of the abuse she experienced at the hands of her husband largely to herself. Her community was small and she feared what would happen should she reveal her husband's violence. Like so many women who are habitually abused, Janie believed that she somehow deserved or was responsible for the violence and that it was a normal part of being a woman.

Like Janie, Kerrie didn't seek out sup-



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port services. She knew there was rarely, if ever, justice for Indigenous women in Canada. She knew about John Crawford, who had murdered four Indigenous women and how his treatment at the hands of mainstream media outlets differed starkly from that accorded Paul Bernardo, a killer of white women. Instead of asking for help, Kerrie made the decision herself to get off the streets, to begin her healing process and to assist in the healing of her community through the use of traditional practices. The positive results of her work encouraged her to continue down this path.

The complexity of the violence

Although each of these stories is a compilation of experiences, they are real nonetheless. They attest to the harsh reality facing countless Indigenous women in Canada today.

Throughout history, and even now, Indigenous women have been highly regarded in their societies—as healers, mothers and elders—yet years of subjugation increasingly erode this status. Mainstream media portrayals of Indigenous women as easy sexual targets, prostitutes and drug users, who have no value as human beings or a right to love and to life, contributes to this erosion.

The violence these women experience is a result of Canadian policies such as the Indian Act and Bill C31, which discriminate against Indigenous women. The act doesn't go far enough to re-establish the status of the next generation of women and leads to their dispossession and poverty. The residential school and foster care systems have torn families and communities apart, and the abuse experienced there has led to the future generations of violence. Lack of culturally relevant education compounds the situation further. Without culturally sensitive social services and legal recourse, Indigenous women will not report violence. And by not reporting this violence, the scale and understanding of the contributing factors that help create it cannot be adequately understood. Even if it is understood, without political will and the desire of Canadians to address the violence, the situation will not change.


Where do we go from here?

The abuse and degradation of Indigenous women is everyone's concern. Many non-Indigenous organizations are working in solidarity with Indigenous peoples to create change. Indigenous groups across the country such as the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Ontario Native Women's Association and the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres are mobilizing and pressuring the government to address their concerns. And they have been successful. The Canadian government is slowly providing support.

OSSTF/FEESO is also paying attention. The Federation has invested in the creation of a list of resources that teachers, educational workers and students can use to educate themselves about the violence Indigenous women experience. These resources can be used to foster debate on Indigenous issues, to decrease the pervasive and systemic racism against them and to demonstrate

that this violence is not due to personal weaknesses—it is a result of the marginalization Indigenous women and their communities have experienced for centuries and continue to experience daily in Canada.

While we cannot overlook the essential role of Indigenous control over Indigenous education and their communities in overcoming this violence, as educators you can use these stories to change the situation Indigenous women and their communities face.

You've heard these stories. They're yours. 

Regan Mancini is a Toronto-based activist working on human rights violations of various groups around the world. She is a graduate of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. The OSSTF/FEESO resource list is available on its website at www.osstf.on.ca.

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child should die before he or she has a chance to live a full life.... We never have a child to waste."

Clinton said that thousands of non governmental organizations (NGOs) have sprung up around the world in recent years in response to citizen demand—400,000 in the Soviet Union; 250,000 registered in China—with another 500,000 not yet registered; and more than a million in India. "All of these NGOs are trying to bring equality in education and health care." Clinton is clearly astounded at the response of ordinary people in attempting to combat the world's greatest problems, such as HIV/AIDS.

At the Clinton Foundation, an organization he promotes to strengthen the capacity of people to work together for the common good of all, nearly 100 of the 500 workers are volunteers. "These people work for room and board, and are truly amazing individuals," Clinton stated. "They don't have any money, but they give what they can—their talents and their time." Clinton said our hope in solving our social problems lies not with individual governments or politicians, but with individual citizens.

Clinton also cited the wonderful example of donors such as Warren Buffet and Bill Gates, who are giving billions of dollars to worthy causes—Buffet has pledged to donate 98 percent of his total assets.

"I don't agree with my country's economic policies," the former president admitted. Clinton would like to see the

BOB RAE SAYS...

At the launch of his campaign for the leadership of the federal Liberal party on April 24, 2006 at Ryerson University, Bob Rae said that he wants to create a Canada where "all people feel comfortable and respected"—based "on respect, purpose and commitment."

"The most important spending we can make is on education," Rae stated in his talk *Post Secondary Education's Role in Improving Canada's Competitiveness in a Global Economy*, in February, 2007 at the Toronto Board of Trade. He said that he would like to see the Ontario government "put as much time and attention into education as it does into health care."

American government put up its \$30-billion share of the \$120 billion that is required for the world to meet the United Nations' Millennium Development goals—which include making sure every child gets a primary school education, clean water and enough to eat.

The former president expressed disgust that his country pours \$2 billion a week into military spending on the war in Iraq, yet fails to take care of the world's needy at home and abroad.

Former Ontario premier Bob Rae echoed Clinton's concern about the developed world's need to help those in developing countries. He reminded the

audience of the immense gap between rich and poor and of the need, for those who can, to share their resources.

Although Rae's political stripes may have changed, clearly his ideology has not. It is evident that he is still a strong believer in equality of opportunity—both economic and educational.

Obviously, education is a hot issue for Rae. He spent several years reflecting on, studying and publicizing the state of postsecondary education in Ontario. And he has argued long and hard for the right of all our province's citizens to have access to educational programs regardless of their economic or social status.

Clinton discussed how citizens can step into the gap not filled by governments to do good work; Rae spoke to the crowd about the personal, inner gap between thought and action within each person. Canadians would like to think that they're kind and caring individuals. But do most Canadians really do everything they can to help those in need? Rae believes that education can play a key role in developing inclusive ways of looking at others. And that an educational system that fosters kindness, insight and imagination may awaken the students' consciences and challenge them to perform good works, rooted in justice.

Rae challenged his listeners to "mind the gap" in their own lives, and to avoid sliding into a passive state of inaction. "Nothing happens without engagement and without commitment," he said.

Both of these great men stressed the ability ordinary citizens have to take charge and to do something positive, not only for at-risk youth in the Halton Region, but for those in need all over the world. Every day is an opportunity, according to both Clinton and Rae, to choose to do good and to have an inspiring influence on those around us.

"As private citizens, we have more power to do public good than at any time in human history," Clinton proclaimed.

For more information about the Transition For Youth Foundation, visit www.tfyhalton.ca.

Judith Robinson is an occasional teacher from OSSTF District 20, Halton.



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Telling their stories

Violence and racism against Indigenous women in Canada



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—Thomas King
The Truth About Stories

You might be surprised to hear that more than 500 Indigenous women have gone missing across Canada over the last decade. Or that Indigenous women are three times more likely than other Canadian women to experience violence

from a spouse, eight times more likely to be killed by their spouses after separating, to be forced into a life of drugs and prostitution, or to contract HIV. And if they are between the ages of 25 and 44, they are five times more likely to die of violence than other Canadian women. These shocking statistics and more are detailed in Amnesty International’s report *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada*.

While violence against women is pervasive all across this country, Indigenous women are affected by particular circumstances, which exacerbate

and contribute to the abuse inflicted on them. As a woman with an Indigenous ancestry that goes back many generations, I have struggled with how to convey the complexities of these issues. I have chosen to do this through the characters of Sara, Kerrie, and Janie—each a compilation of the stories I have heard and read during my research.

Canadian policies: Where to belong?

Sara lived a happy life with her parents in Saskatoon. When she was six, her father left. Sara and her mother moved to her reserve to live with her family. But Sara’s mother discovered that because she had married a non-Indigenous man, she and her children were no longer legally allowed to live on the reserve. They were no longer “Indians”—their heritage discounted by the government as per the Indian Act.

Sara’s mom left the reserve and moved back to Saskatoon, homeless and penniless. While for many women such dispossession has led to poverty and an increased risk of violence, Sara’s mom found a support system composed of numerous other women who had been forced to leave the reserve. Together, they began to lobby the government, and in 1985, as a result of their activism, Bill C31, an act to amend the Indian Act, was passed. This bill repealed the law that had denied these women their “Indian” status.

Sara’s mom regained her status and moved back to her reserve. While Sara was granted status, she soon discovered that her daughters weren’t so lucky. Sara, too, had married a non-status man, and without status her children could be denied the right to live on the reserve, to inherit her estate and ultimately to belong to their community—the same rights her mother had once been denied and fought so hard to regain.

Residential school and foster care:

A travesty

Sara and Janie’s families both went through Canada’s notorious residential school system.

Janie was raised on a reserve, where her family spoke of their experiences—of having been punished for speaking their own language and forbidden from wearing their own clothes, playing their own games or practising their own ceremonies. They told of sexualized torture, spiritual and psychological deprivation at the hands of state and religious agents, and the undermining of their identities. The violence inflicted on them morphed into violence they inflicted upon themselves, facilitated by the weapon of alcohol, which they used to dull the pain.

Sara's mother, on the other hand, refused to talk about her residential school experiences. She wouldn't speak or teach Sara her Indigenous language. She was haunted by the punishments she'd received from the Catholic nuns when she tried to speak it at school. Despite her inability to prevent the abuse, she felt a sense of shame for what had been done to her. She was determined to protect her children from

the violence she'd endured.

Kerrie and her three siblings were taken from their family when Kerrie was five and they became wards of the state. Her parents were deemed by the government to be unfit to provide for and protect them. Kerrie lived with five different foster families, all of them non-Indigenous. In some homes she was treated well, while in others she experienced violence. One foster father sexually abused her. The brother of another raped her. And in all places, she knew she was different, by the colour of her skin and by the way people treated her—the lone "Indian" in the family. None of her foster homes could protect her from that.

Education: Whose?

Kerrie and Sara were educated in systems where not one of their teachers looked like them or taught in a manner that was culturally like their own. In class they were often asked to provide the "Indian" opinion, as if they could speak

for all Indigenous peoples. They struggled with the racially driven bullying and beatings they received from their classmates. With little incentive to stay at school, they began to search for alternatives. They quit school, Kerrie took to the streets, and Sara worked as a waitress.

Like Kerrie and Sara, Janie struggled within the mainstream education system. She didn't see how the knowledge she gained there related to her daily life. Her classes were not taught in her native tongue, and the traditional ways of her people were "add-ons" to course curriculum.

Janie wondered where this education would lead her, even if she did pursue it. The military had set up a base outside her reserve and flew planes overhead all day, which not only scared away wildlife but polluted the air and waterways, making it difficult for her people to hunt and trap. Robbed of a livelihood, many of the local women turned to prostitution, "servicing" the military.

Services: What services?

Sara sought help after she was raped by her cousin. While she could see that the non-Indigenous service providers had the best of intentions, she felt alienated through the process. Too often she felt that her body and mind were being separated from her spirit through the healing tactics that were used. She knew that her perpetrator was also a victim. He'd been brutalized through the residential school system, and he needed healing as well. She longed for her people, for someone to reach out to her in a way that addressed her whole person and the health of her community.

As in many remote communities, support services didn't exist on Janie's reserve. As a result, she kept details of the abuse she experienced at the hands of her husband largely to herself. Her community was small and she feared what would happen should she reveal her husband's violence. Like so many women who are habitually abused, Janie believed that she somehow deserved or was responsible for the violence and that it was a normal part of being a woman.

Like Janie, Kerrie didn't seek out sup-



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port services. She knew there was rarely, if ever, justice for Indigenous women in Canada. She knew about John Crawford, who had murdered four Indigenous women and how his treatment at the hands of mainstream media outlets differed starkly from that accorded Paul Bernardo, a killer of white women. Instead of asking for help, Kerrie made the decision herself to get off the streets, to begin her healing process and to assist in the healing of her community through the use of traditional practices. The positive results of her work encouraged her to continue down this path.

The complexity of the violence

Although each of these stories is a compilation of experiences, they are real nonetheless. They attest to the harsh reality facing countless Indigenous women in Canada today.

Throughout history, and even now, Indigenous women have been highly regarded in their societies—as healers, mothers and elders—yet years of subjugation increasingly erode this status. Mainstream media portrayals of Indigenous women as easy sexual targets, prostitutes and drug users, who have no value as human beings or a right to love and to life, contributes to this erosion.

The violence these women experience is a result of Canadian policies such as the Indian Act and Bill C31, which discriminate against Indigenous women. The act doesn't go far enough to re-establish the status of the next generation of women and leads to their dispossession and poverty. The residential school and foster care systems have torn families and communities apart, and the abuse experienced there has led to the future generations of violence. Lack of culturally relevant education compounds the situation further. Without culturally sensitive social services and legal recourse, Indigenous women will not report violence. And by not reporting this violence, the scale and understanding of the contributing factors that help create it cannot be adequately understood. Even if it is understood, without political will and the desire of Canadians to address the violence, the situation will not change.


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 An illustration on a green, textured background. A large, thick yellow pencil is curved across the top. A black graduation cap with a tassel hangs from the pencil. Below the cap is a white diploma scroll with the word "Diploma" written in red cursive.

Credit

How Johnny can succeed

ON March 26, 2007 Ontario Education Minister Kathleen Wynne had some especially good news—or so she thought—for the provincial legislature: “Mr. Speaker, I rise in the house today to announce that, in total, 12,000 additional high school students have graduated over the past two years—this, thanks to a five-percentage-point rise in the graduation rate during those two years. And we expect even more students will be wearing cap and gown when the current school year finishes.”

Good news announcements in education are not rare for the Liberals; since taking office in October 2003, they’ve made almost 300 of them, many of dubious significance. But this particular announcement was special. The graduation numbers, combined with an average 10 percent increase in provincial test scores announced the week before, now seemed to provide solid statistical evidence that the government’s education policies were finally paying off—just in time for the fall election.

Responding to Minister Wynne’s speech, NDP education critic Rosario Marchese called into doubt the value of the announced numbers:

“We do not share your enthusiasm with graduation rates. We would, if we thought for one minute they were indicative of higher success rates in our schools. Unfortunately, like the education quality assessment results, the government is more concerned with generating a politically successful number than ensuring the real achievement and future success of our students. In order to pad the numbers, secondary teachers have been put under tremendous pressure to pass students.”

Marchese’s source for the latter claim was my article “Why Johnny Can’t Fail” (*Education Forum*, Fall 2006). The issues identified in it have since become something of a *cause célèbre* for many teachers fed up with misguided administrative policies on failure and accreditation. Sensitive to this growing discontent, the NDP have

integrity



made the issue a part of their new educational platform. In his rebuttal, Marchese—never one to pull punches—went on to make the following accusations. “Teachers are feeling pressure to adjust failing marks”; “student success teachers...in many cases spend more time trying to negotiate a change in the grade than they do working with students to legitimately improve the grade”; and “the credit recovery process is described by many as a token rubber stamp program where enrolment virtually guarantees a credit.” The member from Trinity-Spadina then offered this disturbing anecdote: “Just last week, in fact, I met a secondary school teacher who’s thinking of quitting because he’s tired of being told by the principal when he should re-grade his students and give them a passing grade.” Minister Wynne’s announcement had turned out to be yet another example of the government’s self-serving rhetoric, another one of the 300.

When I wrote “Why Johnny Can’t Fail,” I hardly expected that it would be quoted in the provincial legislature—or that it would occasion a federation work group. Provoked by the article’s claims, OSSTF provincial council requested Provincial Executive in early December, 2006 to approve the establishment of an ad hoc committee for the purpose of establishing “parameters that define ‘real’ student success versus ‘artificial’ student success.” Named the Credit Integrity Work Group, the committee met in January 2007 for two day-long sessions, to discuss OSSTF’s concerns about failure policy, mark adjustment, soft credits and credit recovery. In April 2007, the work group submitted a report to the Provincial Executive. Among its recommendations was that OSSTF host a symposium involving representatives from the various teacher affiliates, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation and the Ontario Principals’ Council, in order to discuss and resolve issues surrounding credits and student success. The Credit Integrity Symposium is expected to take place in the late fall or early winter of the 2007–2008 school year.

OSSTF’s launch of the Credit Integrity

Work Group and symposium signals a potential breakthrough in the way provincial educational policy is determined. Giving teachers a greater voice in the regulation of student achievement and success should result in a fairer and more reasonable evaluation process. In addition, it may cause the system’s administrators to think twice before trying to implement nonsensical and impractical initiatives, largely unacceptable to front-line teachers and destined, like so many reforms, for the scrap heap. More immediately, the symposium will help expose to the public the province’s flawed failure and accreditation policies, a potentially embarrassing situation to those responsible.

The symposium’s success will depend on the merits of the solutions it proposes. Although not necessarily supported by OSSTF, here are my five proposals for restoring the integrity of the credit and ensuring real student success:

1. NO PSEUDO-CREDITS: The system is now awash in what I call pseudo-credits; these should be eliminated and the exclusiveness of the standard credit restored. I define a standard credit as one generated by a course that meets the following criteria:

- a) the course, as mandated by the Ministry, is 110 hours long;
- b) the course covers only one subject;
- c) the course involves significant study and evaluation; and
- d) the course is delivered by a teacher who is physically present to the student(s).

By this definition, credits generated by credit recovery programs, virtual schools and credit mills must all be considered deficient. As pseudo-credits, they serve to undermine the value of the standard credit in particular and the integrity of public education in general. One reason the credit was introduced into Ontario high schools in the late 1960s was so that students failing two or more courses would not have to repeat, as was then required, their whole school year, which would include even

the courses they had passed. In an ironic twist, the credit is now subject to the same fate: the failing student can avoid repeating the full credit (or even attending summer school) by taking an abridged version of the same. One wonders whether the current push for alternative methods of delivering credits is motivated as much by a desire to save students as to save dollars. For students who fail, there should be two options: repeat the full course for a new mark, or take summer school for a pass mark.

2. RAISE THE PASSING MARK:

A credit is issued if a student has attained a minimum mark of 50 percent in a course. Thus, the pass standard of the high school credit was already low, even before it was reduced by the government’s introduction of “credit-lite” alternatives. Attaining a credit means that the student has sufficiently mastered the subject to be deemed eligible for promotion to the next level of study. To equate this competency with a mark of 50 percent underestimates the potential of most students and demands too little of them; it also weighs heavily toward the possibility that they will find the next level of study unduly difficult and repeat the previous result.

What mark should then serve as the standard for subject promotion? My own preference is 65 percent, a mark commonly used for this purpose in other educational jurisdictions, and once used in Ontario to earn an exemption from final examinations. Some educators might argue even this mark is too low, others that it is too high. But leaving the pass standard at the not even majority percentage of 50 merely invites mediocrity and apathy. Our students deserve better.

3. MAKE ATTENDANCE AND DEADLINES COUNT:

Teachers know that there is a direct correlation between class attendance and student achievement: the higher the former, the higher the latter. And teachers know two more things



about class attendance: one is that it is noticeably decreasing; the other is that there's virtually nothing they can do about it. The Ministry, in spite of requiring teachers to keep scrupulous class attendance records, is reluctant or unwilling to allow them, as formerly permitted, to include attendance as a factor in student evaluation. Furthermore, it is odd that the Ministry would mandate how long a course must be to qualify for credit status (110 hours), but not mandate how long the student must spend in the course to qualify for the credit (100 hours? 75 hours? 50 hours? One hour?).

Just as absurd is the Ministry's policy toward assignment deadlines: teachers are not to penalize students for lateness. If, as defined by the Ministry itself, a mark measures how well an assignment fulfills certain expectations, such a policy implies that submitting an assignment on time cannot be an expectation. In both the matters of attendance and deadlines, reasonable and realistic expectations and deterrents are necessary to motivate student performance.

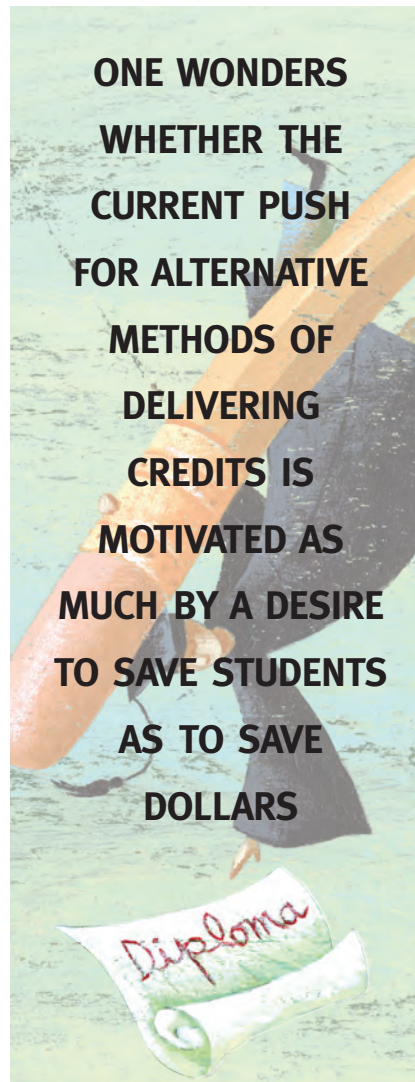
4.

REVAMP THE SCHOOL SCHEDULE:

No institution I know of is as irrational and counterproductive in its use of time as the high school. First, there's the matter of semestering. Imagine sending your child to a private music teacher who insisted on holding lessons every weekday for five straight months and then none at all for the following seven months (or even 12). This is the absurd schedule used in the vast majority of Ontario high schools. No wonder studies show that students in full-year schools outperform those in semestered schools by an average of 10 percent and that courses in full-year schools cover significantly more material. Semestered schools are simply too rushed, frenetic, intense and stressful for the effective delivery of curriculum. It's time to return to full-year schooling. The argument that full-year schooling is more expensive than semestering has not been proven; and even if it were the case, the success of our students should not be compromised by such a

mercenary consideration.

Another grievous form of scheduling is the 75-minute class, a stretch of instructional time far too long for both students and teachers to employ productively. Period length should be limited to what students can tolerate before fatigue, restlessness, boredom and inattentiveness set in—this goes for teachers, too. A shorter period, no longer than 50 minutes in length, and one




focused primarily on instruction, would allow for a shorter school day, as in many European schools. This would give students more free time to do homework, work at part-time jobs and participate in extracurricular activities—without the latter intruding, as is now increasingly the case, on curricular time. A shorter schedule would also give teachers additional open time to

perform professional duties difficult or impossible to carry out during the curricular part of the day. The argument that working parents and local authorities might be concerned about having teenage students released earlier in the day is easily answered: first, high school is not a daycare service; and second, during the school holidays, homes and neighbourhoods seem to cope pretty well when the same teenagers are free during the whole day.

5.

RESTORE VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS:

One reason why Ontario's secondary students are not performing as well as they could, in spite of government claims to the contrary, is that too many of them are not given the chance. While most of the province's high schools are academic in orientation, a sizable number of its students are not. In the 1960s, the secondary panel was split about 60/40 between academic and vocational schooling, a healthy and realistic ratio. Since then, however, the vocational sector has been subjected to a significant and unjustifiable downsizing (this in a province where there is always a shortage of skilled labour). As a result, many vocationally inclined students currently find themselves lost in academic high schools, compelled to take programs foreign to their real needs and talents, and now, thanks to Bill 52, *An Act to Amend the Education Act (Learning to the Age 18)*, 2006, they have to remain in that situation until age 18. While the growth of co-operative education is a promising development, it is insufficient to meet overall need.

Restoring Ontario's vocational schools would not only help many of our struggling students find their rightful place in the school system, it would also produce the kind of authentic success in education that currently eludes the government and its incessant announcements. 

Jon Cowans, a teacher with Durham District School Board and a member of the executive of OSSTF District 13, Durham, is a frequent contributor to *Education Forum*.



munity and adults to promote health and wellness. It was a pretty tough go at first, but together we made it happen. As a result of those programs, however, concert pianists and community leaders have been formed. It is always rewarding to be involved in shaping students' lives and see positive results despite perceived initial doubts and misgivings."

Throughout those early years, Coran was involved in the Federation but in a limited way. "My union involvement basically started at the first school I taught where I became the branch representative." In the early 1990s, however, his union involvement would become more serious and defining. He was the local collective bargaining committee chair in early 1991, when the teachers went on a 33-day strike against the board. It was just before the Social Contract was imposed, and the

years that followed proved to be tumultuous for all Federation members. Strong leadership would become a necessity.

In 1999, just after the amalgamation of school boards, Coran became the district officer for the newly created Thames Valley District and a year later was elected district president. In 2001, he ran for the position of executive officer

In 1999, just after the amalgamation of school boards, Coran became the district officer for the newly created Thames Valley District and a year later was elected district president

élèves à qui il a enseigné au cours de ces années et qui sont devenus des enseignants et des travailleurs de l'éducation expérimentés.

En 1988, il décida de briguer le poste de chef du département des sciences de la West Elgin High School et l'obtint. Il décrit cet établissement comme « une école rurale de durs à cuire. Nous devons trouver un moyen de briser les petites cliques et de concentrer les enfants sur des points plus positifs. Nous avons décidé de monter une équipe de football et essayé de faire participer autant d'enfants que possible. Nous avons également construit et équipé un centre de conditionnement physique à l'école pour faire participer les membres de la communauté et les adultes à la promotion de la santé et du bien-être. Les débuts ont été difficiles, mais nous étions partis de zéro. Ces programmes ont cepen-

dant permis de former des pianistes de concert et des leaders communautaires. Il est toujours gratifiant de participer à donner forme à la vie des élèves et de voir les résultats positifs qui en découlent malgré les doutes et les réserves du début. »

Pendant ces années, Ken Coran participa à la Fédération, mais de manière limitée. « Ma participation au syndicat a commencé

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on the OSSTF/FEESO provincial executive and won. That was followed by two terms as vice-president.

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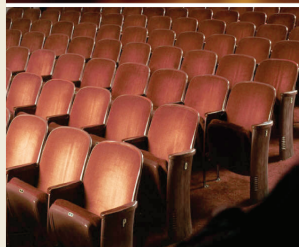
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With a mix of working-class roots and a strong passion for teaching and public education, Coran epitomizes OSSTF/FEESO activism and strong leadership. Ken is married with a teenage daughter. His square shoulders and strong athletic build are a testament to another passion—sports. A small-town boy, Ken grew up in Fort William, Ontario. Those not familiar with that name can be forgiven: Fort William ceased to exist in late 1969; it amalgamated with Port Arthur and the townships of Neebing and McIntyre, to form the city of Thunder Bay. In its heyday, it was the largest city in north-western Ontario. It owes much of its history to the fur trade, logging, mining and the railroad. Very much a working-class town, Fort William was a major centre of heavy rail and airplane manufacturing when Coran was growing up. His father worked at the Hawker Siddeley plant and was a member of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW). For history buffs, Hawker Siddeley owned A.V. Roe Canada, commonly known as Avro Canada. After the demise of the Avro Arrow, the company began to unravel. The now defunct Hawker Siddeley sold off its assets to various companies, including its Thunder Bay plant, which was sold to Bombardier in the 1960s. In the late 1960s, Coran, still a teenager, followed in his father's footsteps and worked at the plant building subway cars and heavy machinery for the logging industry. Both this experience and a passion for sports helped shape the adult Coran would become. It also confirmed that he would not continue in his father's footsteps.

From an early age, it was clear that Coran had a natural disposition for sports. He played a variety of sports, including hockey and football, and was inducted into the Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame and Museum in 1998 for one sport in particular—baseball. He was a member of the 1968 Canadian Senior Little League Champions, which claimed the Ontario title by defeating Windsor and then advancing to win the national title in the third game of the final series against North Burnaby. The team went on to represent Canada with distinction in the Little League World Series in the US. Coran played first base. His love for sports has never abated, and it helped shape and define his professional life as a teacher and, in some ways, as a union leader.

Il est marié et a une fille adolescente. Avec ses racines dans la classe ouvrière et sa vive passion de l'enseignement et de l'éducation publique, Ken Coran est l'exemple même de l'activisme de l'OSSTF/FEESO et de son grand leadership. Ses épaules carrées et sa carrure athlétique sont la preuve d'une autre de ses passions : le sport. Originaire d'une petite ville, Ken a grandi à Fort William, en Ontario. Ceux d'entre vous qui ne connaissent pas cette ville sont tout pardonnés. Fort William a cessé d'exister fin 1969 quand elle a été regroupée avec Port Arthur et les cantons de Neebing et de McIntyre pour former la ville de Thunder Bay. À l'époque, elle était la plus grande ville du Nord-ouest de l'Ontario. Son histoire doit

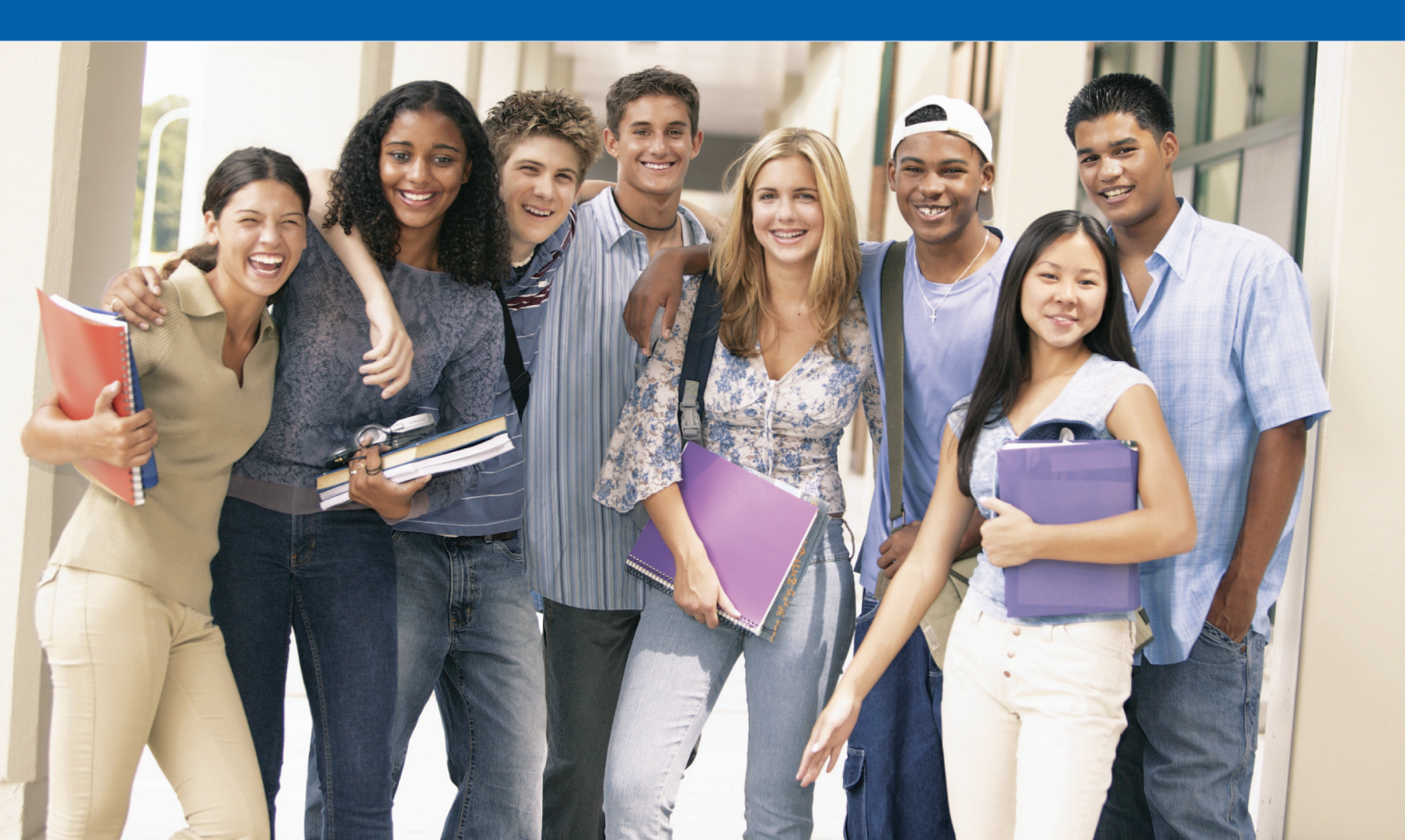
beaucoup au commerce de fourrures, à l'exploitation forestière, aux mines et à la voie ferrée. Avant tout ville ouvrière, l'économie de Ford William dans l'enfance de Ken Coran était principalement liée à l'industrie lourde comme la construction de rails et d'avions. Son père travaillait à l'usine d'Hawker Siddeley et était membre des TCA (Travailleurs et travailleuses canadien(ne)s de l'automobile). Pour les férus d'histoire, Hawker Siddeley était propriétaire de A.V.Roe Canada, connue sous la dénomination d'Avro Canada. Après l'abandon de l'Avro Arrow, la société commença à péricliter. Hawker Siddeley, aujourd'hui décédé, vendit ses biens à diverses sociétés, et son usine de Thunder Bay fut vendue à Bombardier dans les années 60. À la fin des années 60, suivant la trace de son père, Ken Coran, encore adolescent, travailla à l'usine pour construire des wagons de métro et des machines destinées à l'exploitation forestière. Son expérience et sa passion du

sport l'aiderent à devenir ce qu'il est aujourd'hui. Elles ont également confirmé qu'il ne suivrait pas la trace de son père.

Dès son jeune âge, il devint évident que Ken Coran était naturellement doué pour le sport. Il pratiqua diverses activités sportives comme le hockey et le football et fut intronisé au Temple de la renommée des sports du Nord-ouest de l'Ontario en 1968 pour un sport en particulier : le baseball. Il fut membre de la Petite Ligue canadienne senior de 1968 qui remporta le titre de l'Ontario en battant Windsor et avança jusqu'au titre national lors du troisième match de la série finale disputé contre North Burnaby. L'équipe représenta le Canada avec distinc-

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munity and adults to promote health and wellness. It was a pretty tough go at first, but together we made it happen. As a result of those programs, however, concert pianists and community leaders have been formed. It is always rewarding to be involved in shaping students' lives and see positive results despite perceived initial doubts and misgivings."

Throughout those early years, Coran was involved in the Federation but in a limited way. "My union involvement basically started at the first school I taught where I became the branch representative." In the early 1990s, however, his union involvement would become more serious and defining. He was the local collective bargaining committee chair in early 1991, when the teachers went on a 33-day strike against the board. It was just before the Social Contract was imposed, and the years that followed proved to be tumultuous for all Federation members. Strong leadership would become a necessity.

In 1999, just after the amalgamation of school boards, Coran became the district officer for the newly created Thames Valley District and a year later was elected district president. In 2001, he ran for the position of executive officer

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élèves à qui il a enseigné au cours de ces années et qui sont devenus des enseignants et des travailleurs de l'éducation expérimentés.

En 1988, il décida de briguer le poste de chef du département des sciences de la West Elgin High School et l'obtint. Il décrit cet établissement comme « une école rurale de durs à cuire. Nous devons trouver un moyen de briser les petites cliques et de concentrer les enfants sur des points plus positifs. Nous avons décidé de monter une équipe de football et essayé de faire participer autant d'enfants que possible. Nous avons également construit et équipé un centre de conditionnement physique à l'école pour faire participer les membres de la communauté et les adultes à la promotion de la santé et du bien-être. Les débuts ont été difficiles, mais nous étions partis de zéro. Ces programmes ont cepen-

dant permis de former des pianistes de concert et des leaders communautaires. Il est toujours gratifiant de participer à donner forme à la vie des élèves et de voir les résultats positifs qui en découlent malgré les doutes et les réserves du début. »

Pendant ces années, Ken Coran participa à la Fédération, mais de manière limitée. « Ma participation au syndicat a commencé

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ple to remember Ken Coran but rather what we have accomplished together. We know that times have changed and that while things we have learned in the past and old strategies can still be useful, as a federation we have to think of new ways to achieve our goals.

“Once again, we are entering a challenging period in OSSTF/FEESO’s history. In the next two years, we will see a provincial election, declining enrollment in at least 56 of the 72 publicly funded school boards, continued threats of privatization and outsourcing, OMERS and TPP valuations and as many as 90 percent of bargaining units actively negotiating in

accompagner les gens et vous assurer que tous sont inclus. L’une des forces de notre organisme est qu’il rejoint la base. Il faut continuellement partir de la base. J’ai toujours pensé que j’avais la capacité d’atteindre un segment de membres qui ne participait pas nécessairement toujours. Cependant, quand les temps sont durs, ils représentent la majorité silencieuse dont on a besoin et revêtent donc une importance considérable. Je soutiens avec ferveur la philosophie de l’équipe éducative — il faut que toute l’équipe participe pour que ce système fonctionne et pour contribuer au syndicat. C’est la définition de notre force. »

En tant que président du syndicat, Ken Coran a dorénavant plus de latitude pour définir ses objectifs et la voie à suivre. « Je comprends qu’on ne peut gagner à tout coup, mais je comprends également qu’il faut jouer pour gagner et que parfois, c’est la manière de jouer qui détermine la réussite à venir, ajoute-t-il. Après mon mandat, je ne tiens pas à ce que les gens se souviennent de Ken Coran mais plutôt de ce que nous avons accompli ensemble. Nous savons que les temps ont changé... Si ce que nous avons appris par le passé et les anciennes stratégies peuvent toujours nous être utiles, en tant que Fédération, nous devons réfléchir à de nouveaux moyens d’atteindre nos objectifs.

« Nous entrons de nouveau dans une période qui mettra l’OSSTF/FEÉSO au défi. Au cours des deux années à venir, nous assisterons à une élection provinciale, au déclin des effectifs dans au moins 56 des 72 conseils scolaires financés par l’État, à des menaces continues de privatisation, à l’évaluation d’OMERS et du RRE et à des négociations entamées par 90 pour cent des unités de négociation en 2008. Cet état de fait se combine à notre calendrier de perfectionnement professionnel chargé et à une campagne active

d’organisation dans le secteur universitaire.

« En autant que je sache, la recette du succès est simple : Planifiez comme il se doit, préparez attentivement, faites participer autant de personnes que vous le pouvez, mettez en œuvre avec confiance et obtenez des résultats. »

Paraphrasant Vince Lombardi, Ken Coran ajoute : « L’engagement individuel envers les efforts du groupe, cela soude le travail d’équipe, le travail *syndical*, le travail d’une société, le travail d’une civilisation. En tant que président, je sais que la qualité de l’équipe est proportionnelle à l’engagement de chacun de ses membres. Je sais également qu’en tant que leader, mon travail consiste à fournir le meilleur leadership possible. Mon engagement envers l’avancement de la cause de notre Fédération sera sans faille. Je sais qu’ensemble, nous ferons des prodiges. »

“As far as I know, the recipe for success is straightforward. Plan properly. Prepare carefully. Involve as many as you can. Execute with confidence. And get the job done”



2008. These realities are added to our extensive professional development agenda and an active organizing campaign in the university sector.

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In a paraphrase of Vince Lombardi’s words, Coran says, “Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work, a *union* work, a society work, a civilization work. As your president, I know that the quality of the team is proportional to the measure of each member’s commitment. I also know that as your leader it is my job to provide the best leadership that I can. My commitment to advancing the cause of our Federation will be unwavering, and I know that together we will do great things.”



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Port Renfrew



Ches Sulkowski is a recently retired art teacher who spent most of his 30-year teaching career at Annandale School in Tillsonburg. Ches writes, “My specialties have always been art, photography and graphic design so digital photography was a perfect fit and instant passion.”

He uses Olympus and Nikon digital cameras, processes the photos in his studio, and uses both an Epson Stylus Photo 1270 and 2000P to make all his prints.

Ches and his wife Cathy now spend most of their time at their north shore camp on Lake Superior—kayaking, canoeing, hiking, camping, fishing and cross-country skiing. 🐾

Magical Places

Kayak Sunset





Long Beach

Winter Blues



Queen bee moms and kingpin dads

Advice for guidance counsellors
and others who encounter difficult parents

BY ROSALIND WISEMAN

The role of a middle or high school counsellor can be one of the most challenging and rewarding positions in a child's educational support system. From helping students navigate everything from in-school drama, to family troubles, to college applications, being a good counsellor requires incredible energy and dedication, but it's not always the students who can wear down one's stamina. For the past 15 years, I have worked with thousands of counsellors across the country, and from public, to private, to parochial schools, I have consistently been confided in about their frustration in working with parents. I have lost count of the counsellors who have said to me, "I love my students. It's the parents I could do without. They are the ones who make my job impossible."

In particular, two of the most problematic parenting types are those I call Queen Bee Moms and Kingpin Dads. When a problem (or perceived problem) arises with their child, these parents tend to be the most vocal and the most visible, often overstepping their boundaries for what they believe is in the best interest of their child. They can leave counsellors feeling bullied and belittled when they take the

heavy-handed approach to securing opportunities for their son or daughter. The Queen Bee Mom and Kingpin Dad can make any educational professional's job a nightmare, but this unfortunately comes with the territory.

So who are these people? What motivates them? And how can you work with them in a way that doesn't leave you feeling burnt out and wondering why you ever chose this line of work? First, it's important to identify with whom you might be dealing.



HOW TO SPOT QUEEN BEE MOMS

The vast majority of parents want to work with educators and their child to achieve mutually agreeable solutions to problems. But you'll know you've encountered a Queen Bee Mom when you observe the following traits:

- Socially intelligent, charismatic and doesn't tolerate disagreement.

Like girl Queen Bees, they convince themselves that their bullying behaviour is justified because they have a higher calling, to advocate for their

child's welfare—as in demanding a schedule, class or track change for their child.

- Extremely skilled at telling confidential sad/bad stories about another parent, child, teacher, or counsellor—but they don't see this as gossiping. They share the hard-luck story with the understanding that the person in question should be pitied, but their not-so-hidden message is that the person is pathetic and/or incompetent.
- A believer in the "let's let the kids work it out" parenting philosophy—until it's their kid who's being wronged.
- They won't apologize for their child's behaviour. They see other children as overly sensitive. The other child just "took it the wrong way." Or they excuse their child's bad behaviour by saying, "That's just what kids do. All kids do that."
- If they or their child do apologize for something, they expect an admission of guilt in return. When a Queen Bee Mom apologizes, she does it in a way that explicitly communicates that she's apologizing out of the goodness of her heart. As in, "Well, I'm so sorry that you took it the wrong way."





HOW DOES A KINGPIN DAD BEHAVE?

Kingpin Dads are similar to Queen Bee Moms because they both excuse their child's behaviour and accuse other people of having the worst of intentions. They use the higher calling of their child's interest to justify their behaviour. But the Kingpin Dad also has a couple of other attributes:

- He rarely attends school/parent meetings unless he's angry about something or forced to go by his spouse.
- He can be condescending to counsellors—who often know more about what's going on with his children than he does.
- He talks to administrators as if they're in this together against the emotional counsellors.
- He believes that threatening the school with a lawsuit is an excellent way to resolve conflict.

A POSSIBLE SCENARIO

Here's an example of this kind of parent in action. Sweetwater Middle School wants to implement a new program as part of its Grade 7 life skills curriculum. As usual, the school has given the parents an opt-out option if they don't want their children to participate. But for a few parents, the opt-out isn't good enough; they don't want the program at all. The students are over-scheduled as it is and last year's test scores, which will determine their children's track in high school, were horrible—especially compared to those in Rosedale, the neighbouring town. And how much does the school know about the counsellor running the program anyway? What are her credentials? When the principal gets concerned phone calls from the usual parents on both sides, she schedules a meeting so that the counsellor can explain the program and give the parents an opportunity to ask questions.

Far more than the usual 10 parents show up for the meeting—and it's clear that information has spread like wildfire among the parents at the carpool pickup

and soccer sidelines. As the principal and counsellor describe the program, a father who has been furiously taking notes since the meeting began raises his hand and says, "I think I speak for all the parents here when I say that we all want to know why Sweetwater is worrying about these so-called life skills when our kids' verbal and math scores are tanking."

As this father continues to hijack the meeting, some of the other parents roll their eyes or look sympathetically at the counsellor but say nothing until after the meeting when a few parents privately apologize for this father's bullying behaviour and promise that he doesn't speak on their behalf.

What we have here is a classic Kingpin Dad. And you need to stand up to him in a way that communicates your standard that everyone in the room has the responsibility to treat one another with dignity.

Remember you
deserve to be
treated with dignity.
I don't care what
kind of school
you work in, parents
do not have the
right to curse you,
patronize you
or threaten you.

Here is what I suggest you say: "Mark, I know you want what's best for all our children" (note "all our children," not "your child"), "and for good reason. You feel strongly about this issue, but we have to have a civil dialogue here. I also need to tell you that I disagree with some of what you are saying, and here's why..."

Then you should follow up with that parent individually to reinforce that you are a resource for them and their child but that you and everyone else must be treated respectfully.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Here are a few things to keep in mind about a situation like this one:

- Even if many parents disagree with the Kingpin Dad, they won't challenge him publicly. Instead they will privately give the counsellor their support and talk behind the Kingpin or Queen Bee Mom's back—especially in the parking lot after the meeting.
- Counsellors are often the easiest target for Queen Bee Moms and Kingpin Dads because they feel they can get away with it. Teachers have control over grades. Principals are by definition authority figures, but when they go into the guidance office with the tissue boxes and comfy couches, counsellors come across not as nice and caring but as the easiest person to attack.
- These experiences make the counsellor feel professionally unsafe because the counsellor has good reason to believe that if he or she stands up to this parent he'll most likely be on his own.
- Experiences like this tend to disproportionately influence a counsellor's future interactions with other parents, as if all parents are going to act like the worst Queen Bee Mom or Kingpin Dad. It is important to be aware of this natural reaction and be mindful of it when interacting with other parents.

SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

Reach out and share information about all the things you do. Parents have no idea how a counsellor's job has changed in the last generation. When they went to school, counsellors had far less training and far fewer responsibilities. Many of them may also have had a bad experience with counsellors and bring that baggage to their interactions with you.

In the beginning of the year, give yourself at least two opportunities (because everyone always needs a backup) to introduce yourself to all the parents. Back-to-School Night is an easy one, and pick one other. At that meeting, give them a letter that states how and when to



Work continues toward a UN covenant on the right to water. The omission of water from both the original UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has hampered the fight for water justice and has allowed private interests to determine the fate of the world's water. The process within the UN toward a more binding legal framework has already begun with the adoption of General Comment No. 15—emphasizing the right to water as a cornerstone for all other human rights. The eventual goal is a full UN treaty guaranteeing clean water to every citizen on earth as a fundamental right and a public service.

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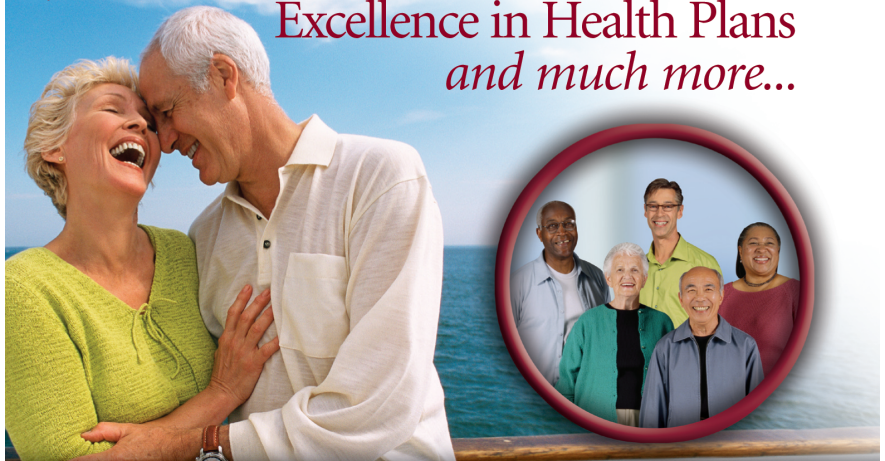
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Blue Gold

The systemic
siege of the
earth's most
sacred resource
WATER

By Maude Barlow



it is with great pleasure that I share my thoughts with you on what I consider to be the greatest ecological and human crisis of our time—the global water crisis. I have worked for many years with groups in communities all over the world who are trying to protect their local water rights, and I can tell you that the fight for the right to water is perhaps the greatest fight of them all. It is urgent that this crisis gets the attention it needs before it is too late, and for that we need our educators. OSSTF is once again blazing the trail.*

THE GLOBAL CRISIS

We are living in a period of history when the common heritage of humanity and the earth is under systemic siege. Nothing dramatizes the crisis of the commons more clearly than fresh water. Water is a sacred component for all; it belongs to our common humanity, the earth and all living species. It is, therefore, a fundamental human right and a public good that must be protected by governments and communities. It is not a human need to be supplied by the market on the basis of wealth.

Today, we are on the threshold of a global water crisis. Right now, approximately one-third of the world's population is suffering from water scarcity. Every eight seconds, somewhere in the world, a child dies of water-borne disease. If current trends continue, two-thirds of the people on the planet will not have adequate access to clean water by the year 2025. At the same time that we are massively polluting the world's surface waters, we are mining groundwater far faster than nature can replenish it, causing massive desertification.

It would be hard to exaggerate this crisis. Recent studies report major deteriora-

tion in all of Africa's 677 major lakes, and the United Nations predicts that these all could be reduced to swamps in the next two decades. Twenty-two countries in Africa are currently experiencing severe water crises. Water-borne killers such as malaria, typhoid, cholera and even the plague have returned to Africa.

Asia will soon face "untold anarchy," says a British team of scientists, as it depletes its underground supplies of water. *New Scientist* magazine recently reported on the "little heralded crisis" in Asia caused as desperate farmers, unable to use the 75 percent of surface waters so polluted they are unfit for human use, are "sucking the continent dry" with many millions of high-tech drilling pumps. Ninety percent of the groundwater under China's cities is con-



Maude Barlow spoke to more than 600 delegates at OSSTF/FEESO's annual meeting in March on the global water crisis

taminated. Seven hundred million Chinese people drink polluted water every day. Almost every country in the Middle East is facing a water crisis of historic proportion.

South America, with its abundant supplies of water, should be able to provide its people with all the water they need; the Amazon Basin alone holds 20 percent of the world's freshwater supplies. Yet more than 130 million people have no access to safe drinking water in their

homes, and only 86 million—less than one-third of the population—are connected to adequate sanitation. The reasons?—Massive pollution of surface waters; deep inequities between rich and poor; and the growth in private ownership of water, which denies water to those who cannot pay.

Two First World countries are also in deep trouble. Australia is literally running out of water, its major cities facing water depletion in three to 15 years. Yet the Australian government insists that the country has water to spare, enough that it exports massive amounts of it to China in the form of "virtual water trade," in wheat, cotton and beef. The United States is facing water depletion in the Mid- and Southwest. The U.S. Geological Survey says this part of the

country is experiencing the worst drought in 500 years. Thirty-six states are on the verge of water stress, and water has recently become a top national security priority with the White House, which is again expressing interest in Canada's water.

The Canadian government has no national water policy to protect Canada's water, and there is no ban on the commercial export of our water, most of which runs north in the mighty rivers of the North. To transport this water to the US by pipeline would require engineering projects unlike anything the world has ever seen and

would have untold consequences for our environment. Yet Canada has already agreed that our water is a tradable commercial good under NAFTA.

THE POLITICAL MOMENT

If ever there was a moment for humanity to put aside its differences and come together to embark on a mighty crusade to save the world's water, it is now. In fact, it is too late to panic. It is time to act for our collective survival.



Yet, tragically, many of the world's most powerful economic and political elites do not believe that the world's dwindling freshwater stocks are the collective heritage of humanity, but a kind of "blue gold" that is theirs to plunder. "Water hunters" are scouring the planet for new sources of water. Last year, bottling companies put nearly 200 billion litres of fresh water into plastic bottles, creating a massive new source of pollution. If only half of the more than \$100 billion that the world's wealthy spent on bottled water in 2006 had been spent on infrastructure and treatment, every human being in the world would have clean drinking water today.

Other transnational water corporations—the largest of which are among the wealthiest corporations on the planet—are wresting control from local governments to deliver water on a for-profit basis to those who can pay and denying it to those who cannot. Not content to run the once public utilities for their private profit, some are now buying whole river systems, controlling and even denying vital water supplies to untold millions. The fastest-growing area of the commercial water industry is in water reuse—sophisticated (and totally unregulated) technology that will sell recycled water back to us to drink. So much money is being poured into this technology by governments that it could become a huge disincentive for them to protect water sources, as dirty water is already turning a tidy profit for the private sector.

This has given rise to a mighty contest: **On one side:** the global private water cartel; international financial institutions, like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, that have made the privatization of water a condition for their loans to Third World countries in the global South; the World Trade Organization, which protects the interests of the water companies through legally binding enforcement measures; and many First World govern-

ments, which are promoting the interests of their private corporations over the needs and rights of the world's people and of the environment.

On the other side: a powerful new international grassroots movement made up of small farmers, Indigenous peoples, human rights activists, environmentalists, women's groups and the inhabitants of thousands of communities around the world who are fighting for the right to


around this issue—now—and governments must come together to lay a kind of "Marshall Plan for Water." We do actually know how to save the world's water: conservation, source protection, infrastructure investment, reclamation of fouled waters, strict rules for water use by industry, sustainable farming, and control of what gets dumped into our waterways. No corporation, however, can be competitive if it operates on those principles.

Water must come back under public control.

It is crucial that we accept the limits of growth and challenge the false promises of untold wealth and consumer goods for all. Humanity cannot continue to destroy forests and wetlands—the lungs and kidneys of our water—and think that water supplies will be never-ending. We need a whole new water ethic and a whole new language to counter the false promises of unlimited growth. Sustainability, environmental stewardship, democracy and equity; these are not just pretty words but the keys to our collective survival.

A water-secure world will be based on four fundamental principles:

- **water commons**—that water belongs to the earth and all species and must be understood for all time to be a universal common trust;
- **water justice**—that water is a fundamental human right to be distributed equitably as a public service and never appropriated for profit;
- **water stewardship**—that water must be conserved and renewed, rather than wasted, contaminated and depleted, and that humanity must once again respect water's sacred place within the natural world; and
- **water democracy**—that water management decisions must involve local community participation, because local stewardship, not private business, expensive technology or government alone is the best safeguard for a water-secure future.



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control their local water sources. These groups, and many others, have formed a global resistance to the corporate theft of their water. They are leading the way to a water-secure world, based on the belief that water belongs to the earth and all species, and is a universal common trust and a fundamental human right to be distributed equitably as a public service and never appropriated for profit.

THE CHOICE BEFORE US

Most governments around the world have done a terrible job of managing and conserving their precious water resources, which has led to the situation we face today. They have abdicated their responsibility for their water resources and turned them over to mighty water corporations, which, increasingly, are setting policies regarding these dwindling resources. We need massive education




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JULY 8 to 12

Shades of Brown

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SEPT. 27 to 29

Reach out...Join In...Learn On
The 16th National Conference on Learning Disabilities is being held at the Delta Hotel and Conference Centre in St. John's, NFL in partnership with the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. Over 500 delegates are expected to attend this dynamic conference. For more information, visit www.nald.ca.

NOV. 3

Ontario Family Studies Home Economics Educators' Association
Mark this date for OFSHEEA's annual conference, to be held in Peel. A variety of workshops is being assembled, including global education and social justice. For more information, visit www.ofsheea.ca.

NOV. 5 and 6

Schools that Shine with Character 2007

The third annual National Character Education Conference for teachers, counsellors, consultants and administrators will be held at the Deerhurst Resort, Huntsville, ON. Organized by Huntsville High School and the Trillium Lakelands District School Board, this two-day event promises inspirational speakers, terrific workshops and sharing of best practices. For more information and to register online, visit www.ncec.ca.

NOV. 9 and 10

Ontario History and Social Science Teachers' Association

The annual conference of OHASSTA will be held at the Holiday Inn, 970 Dixie Rd., Toronto. A promise of exciting workshops and best practices makes this conference a must to attend. For more information, visit www.ohassta.org.

NOV. 22 and 23

Shoulder to Shoulder...Putting Students First

Sponsored by OSSTF/FEESO with support from the Ontario government, this conference will be the pièce de résistance of professional development for all educational workers. It's an opportunity to network with colleagues across the province on best practices, essential skills, transitions and connections; keynote speakers and spotlight speakers abound. The Renaissance Toronto Airport Hotel, 801 Dixon Rd., Toronto is the location of this event. Watch for conference flyers that will be available in workplaces in early June. Contact: Mike Budd, e-mail buddm@osstf.on.ca; or Diane Laurie, e-mail lauried@osstf.on.ca. Telephone 1-800-267-7867.





Former CFL all-star and Hamilton area principal, Steve Oneschuk was also a world-class carver. His carvings are renowned for their lifelike qualities. Examples of Steve's work, below: a Loon at home in a winter setting, facing page: an Upland Sandpiper.

into a unique diorama as a tribute to him. There is no additional charge to view the Oneschuk woodcarving exhibit but regular gallery admissions do apply.

Upcoming exhibits at the St. Catharines

Museum include *Canada at Play: 100 Years of Games, Toys and Sports*, June 4 to July 22; and *Ships in the Mind's Eye and The 75th Anniversary of the Welland Canal*, August 4 to October 14.

The St. Catharines Museum is located at 1932 Welland Canals Parkway on the Welland Ship Canal at Lock 3. For more information, telephone 905-984-8880 or visit www.stcatharineslock3museum.com.



Last Word *continued/*

may have changed somewhat, but the underlying Tory philosophy appears to be the same: tax cuts, privatization and union busting are good; public services are bloated and must be cut down to size; government should not consult, let alone listen to, front-line education workers (and certainly not unions) on issues to do with education.

For the good of public education and the sake of students, we must rise up once again and participate in the political process. To that end, the provincial executive and staff are busy putting the finishing touches on the final phase of a provincial election action plan that has been three years in the making. Phase One involved developing our education platform and promoting the valuable work of all OSSTF/FEESO members. Phase Two focused on the promotion of *The Students First Plan*. Phase Three addresses the specifics of the actual election campaigns leading up to October 10.

As in the last election, OSSTF/FEESO needs you, the members, to become conversant with *The Students First Plan* and

about the needs in your own workplaces and boards so that you will be able to speak knowledgeably about local issues that remain to be addressed. We need our members to speak to neighbours, friends and relatives about these issues in order to keep public education on the front burner during the upcoming election process. If the electorate is not aware of the inadequacies in the public education system, they will believe what the government says is true: that all is well with the world of public education.

In addition, I encourage you to read and act upon all provincial, district and bargaining unit communiqués regarding the election, to vote on election day (or preferably at an advance poll), and to participate in the election in whatever way you feel comfortable, whether by speaking up about education issues at every opportunity, stuffing envelopes at a campaign office, working the phones or canvassing for a local candidate.

It is up to us to ensure that the revitalization of public education does not grind to a screeching halt—or worse, regress to a state reminiscent of the Harris/Eves years. 🐦

Mot de la fin *suite/*

négociations d'enseignants et nombre de celles des unités de négociation du personnel de soutien expireront. Les Conservateurs avec John Tory comme leader se sont déjà déclarés en faveur du retour du crédit d'impôt des écoles privées. Si certaines expressions ont changé, la philosophie sous-jacente des Conservateurs semble rester la même : les réductions d'impôt, les privatisations et la répression des syndicats sont de bonnes choses, les services publics sont hypertrophiés et leur taille doit être réduite, le gouvernement ne doit pas consulter ni écouter les travailleurs et travailleuses de l'éducation de première ligne (et certainement pas les syndicats) sur des questions liées à leur domaine.

Pour le bien de l'éducation publique et des élèves, nous ne pouvons laisser cela se produire. Nous devons de nouveau monter au créneau et participer au processus politique. L'Exécutif et le personnel provinciaux s'affairent d'ores et déjà à mettre la dernière main à la phase finale d'un plan d'action pour les élections provinciales qui a demandé trois années de préparation. La phase un passait par la mise au point de notre « plate-forme d'éducation » et faisait la promotion du travail remarquable de l'ensemble des membres de l'OSSTF/FEESO. La phase deux était axée sur la promotion du *Programme de priorité aux élèves*. Quant à la phase trois, elle portera sur les données particulières de la campagne élec-

torale menant aux élections du 10 octobre.

Tout comme lors des dernières élections, l'OSSTF/FEESO a besoin de vous, en tant que membres, qui devez bien connaître le *Programme de priorité aux élèves* et les domaines à améliorer sur vos lieux de travail et dans vos conseils respectifs, de façon à parler des questions locales qui restent à régler en toute connaissance de cause. Nos membres doivent parler de ces questions à leurs voisins, parents et amis pour garder le sujet de l'enseignement public en tête de l'agenda des prochaines élections. Si l'électorat ne sait pas que le système d'enseignement public souffre encore de certaines insuffisances, il croira que ce que dit le gouvernement est vrai : tout va pour le mieux dans le domaine de l'enseignement public.

D'autre part, je vous enjoins de lire tous les communiqués des unités de négociation provinciales et de district au sujet des élections, d'y réagir, de voter le jour des élections ou préférablement lors d'un scrutin avancé et d'y participer de toute manière acceptable, soit en parlant des questions d'éducation à chaque occasion, soit en rem-

plissant des enveloppes au bureau de campagne, soit encore en décrochant le téléphone ou en sollicitant les suffrages d'un candidat local.

Il nous appartient de faire en sorte que la revitalisation de l'enseignement public ne soit pas arrêtée nette... ou pire encore. 🐦

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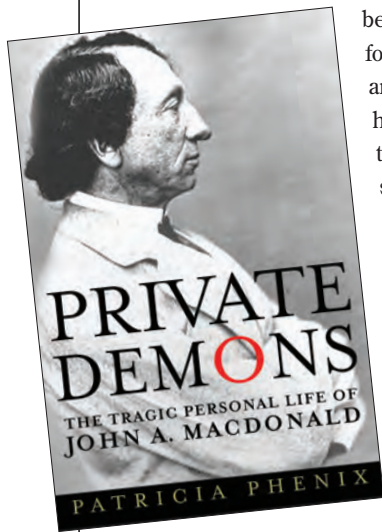


younger brother, James, age five, at the hands of a drunken family friend and employee identified only as “Kennedy.” Kennedy was minding the boys, and apparently, while under the man’s care, the boys were force-fed gin in a Kingston pub. On the way home, when James tripped and fell, the drunken Kennedy beat him to death. The Macdonald patriarch, Hugh, for reasons unknown, chose not to press the matter, and the death of James Shaw Macdonald went unpunished and relatively unheralded—even his final resting place remains a mystery. Phenix suggests, “while Hugh may have chosen not to remember the incident, John A.

seems to have been unable to forget it.” We are told that he recounts it to his private secretary, Sir Joseph Pope, many years later during a moment of quiet melancholic reflection. How sin-

gular this tragic episode may have been in shaping the adult Macdonald is left up to the reader to surmise. Perhaps John A. needed what in current psychobabble is termed “closure.”

Some of Canada’s historians have not been kind to Phenix’s book, drawing attention to its numerous anachronisms and dismissing it as “tabloid history” for the “tabloid/history-for-dummies audience.” Despite, or perhaps in spite of, its shortcomings, *Private Demons* has its place in Macdonald historiography, if for no other reason than to attract readers who might not otherwise read a book about Canadian history. It might not be meant to supplant more academic works like Donald Creighton’s masterful two-volume set, *The Young Politician/The Old Chieftain*, nor should it be viewed as a substitute for reading more historically focused works.



In an age seemingly obsessed with celebrity and the need to air one’s dirty laundry in public, *Private Demons* will find a receptive audience. Now, if only we could have checked John A. into rehab, who knows what may have happened?

THE GOD DELUSION By Richard Dawkins

Published by Houghton Mifflin, 2006
406 pages, \$27
Reviewed by Richard Young

Along with politics and sex, religion is a topic that is not to be discussed in polite company, lest irreconcilable differences of opinion should arise and conflict ensue. Obviously, it is a lesson that someone forgot to teach Richard Dawkins, British evolutionary biologist, self-acclaimed atheist and best-selling author.

In his ninth book, *The God Delusion*, Dawkins takes no prisoners in a well-crafted polemic against organized religion and what he calls “supernatural” gods. He states his purpose clearly in the preface; he wants to “raise consciousness to the fact that to be an atheist is a realistic aspiration, and a brave and splendid one.” It is a book that will delight Dawkins’ atheist followers and one that will enrage his theist detractors, most of whom will come away convinced that he is indeed Satan incarnate. One thing is certain: it will keep readers turning its 406 pages and surely become a topic of conversation around the staff room, if indeed most educators are willing to admit they’ve read it and are willing to discuss it.

After clarifying why he thinks belief in God is a “delusion,” Dawkins structures his argument around four main strands. First, he discredits the traditional reasons usually given for belief in God; second, he presents arguments as to why God proba-

bly does not exist; third, as a Darwinist, he searches for the evolutionary roots and survival value of religion; and finally, he tries to convince readers that they can lead happy and meaningful lives without worshipping any god or adhering to any organized religion.

One consistent theme is his contention that religion has been, and continues to be, harmful to humankind. Historical and contemporary examples of this harmful influence, such as the Crusades, 9/11 and the excesses of certain fundamentalist Islamist and Christian groups, are presented, sometimes in satirical detail. The recent controversy and violent fallout over Danish cartoons allegedly depicting the prophet Muhammad in a blasphemous manner, and the “Hell Houses” created by a Colorado Christian fundamentalist group to frighten sin-prone children immediately come to mind.

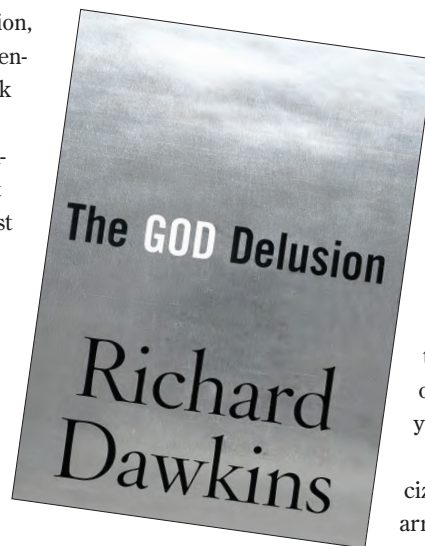
Calling the religiosity in the United States today “something truly remarkable,” Dawkins laments the “genie of religious fanaticism...rampant in present-day America,” even suggesting that at its most extreme it constitutes nothing short of an “American Taliban.” He warns read-

ers of the undue influence that he feels evangelical Christians yield on America’s political leaders. Regarding atheists in the hyper-religious US, he asserts that the “status of atheists in America today is on par with that of homosexuals fifty years ago.”

Dawkins has been criticized for his perceived arrogance and single-mindedness, both of which

ring true in this book. But love or hate him, agree or disagree with him, *The God Delusion* is a book that is worthy of a few hours of your time.

Richard Young teaches history at Sir Frederick Banting Secondary School with the Thames Valley District School Board in London, Ontario.



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In an effort to integrate the South Asian experience across the curriculum, this conference will pull together human resources, role models, research, images, visual resources, books and experiences. Educators, youth and the community will learn strategies to integrate these resources and experiences into the curriculum, classrooms, policies, administration and leadership. The venue for this conference is York University. Parents and students are invited to attend July 8. Educators, administrators, researchers and service providers are invited July 9 to 12. To register online visit: www.shadesofbrown.org.

SEPT. 27 to 29

Reach out...Join In...Learn On
The 16th National Conference on Learning Disabilities is being held at the Delta Hotel and Conference Centre in St. John's, NFL in partnership with the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. Over 500 delegates are expected to attend this dynamic conference. For more information, visit www.nald.ca.

NOV. 3

Ontario Family Studies Home Economics Educators' Association
Mark this date for OFSHEEA's annual conference, to be held in Peel. A variety of workshops is being assembled, including global education and social justice. For more information, visit www.ofsheea.ca.

NOV. 5 and 6

Schools that Shine with Character 2007

The third annual National Character Education Conference for teachers, counsellors, consultants and administrators will be held at the Deerhurst Resort, Huntsville, ON. Organized by Huntsville High School and the Trillium Lakelands District School Board, this two-day event promises inspirational speakers, terrific workshops and sharing of best practices. For more information and to register online, visit www.ncec.ca.

NOV. 9 and 10

Ontario History and Social Science Teachers' Association

The annual conference of OHASSTA will be held at the Holiday Inn, 970 Dixie Rd., Toronto. A promise of exciting workshops and best practices makes this conference a must to attend. For more information, visit www.ohassta.org.

NOV. 22 and 23

Shoulder to Shoulder...Putting Students First

Sponsored by OSSTF/FEESO with support from the Ontario government, this conference will be the pièce de résistance of professional development for all educational workers. It's an opportunity to network with colleagues across the province on best practices, essential skills, transitions and connections; keynote speakers and spotlight speakers abound. The Renaissance Toronto Airport Hotel, 801 Dixon Rd., Toronto is the location of this event. Watch for conference flyers that will be available in workplaces in early June. Contact: Mike Budd, e-mail buddm@osstf.on.ca; or Diane Laurie, e-mail lauried@osstf.on.ca. Telephone 1-800-267-7867.



Keeping the momentum going

AS we move into the summer months and look toward the next provincial election on October 10, 2007—and beyond that to the next round of bargaining—we must prepare to become active and knowledgeable participants in the political process. Over the last four years the current Liberal government has done much to repair the damage done by the eight years of the previous Conservative regime. The work is far from done, however, and in order to continue the improvements, OSSTF/FEESO must again step up to the plate to ensure that the next four years are led by a public education-friendly government.

In 2002, OSSTF/FEESO developed and promoted the *Student Success Plan*, thereby laying the groundwork for turning around a public education system that was in desperate decline as a result of the drastic Harris/Eves cuts. This plan was adopted by both opposition parties, and much of what OSSTF/FEESO advised has been put in motion by the current government: students must now indeed continue their education until age 18; schools are providing support programs for students at risk of dropping out including expanded co-operative education, technological and apprenticeship programs; the private school tax credit has been repealed; and OSSTF/FEESO is being consulted and listened to on educational issues.

That said, the turnaround is not complete. Last summer OSSTF/FEESO introduced *The Students First Plan*, which builds upon the foundation provided by the *Student Success Plan* to provide direction in areas that the current government has yet to fully address: more course options, smaller classes, support programs and a well-supervised and a properly maintained educational environment. The public education system is still burdened by a flawed funding formula which does not provide for the education support personnel, resources and facilities which are required to give students the academic, life and social skills necessary to become confident, contributing, socially-aware citizens.

It is particularly important to ensure that a public education-friendly government is elected because, on August 31, 2008, the collective agreements of every teachers' bargaining unit, and those of many support staff bargaining units, will expire.

John Tory's Conservatives have already gone on record as favouring the return of a private school tax credit. The names

Poursuivre sur notre élan

Alors que les mois d'été approchent et que l'impatience grandit quant aux prochaines élections provinciales du 10 octobre 2007 et au-delà, pour la prochaine série de négociations, nous devons nous préparer à être des participants actifs et avertis du processus politique. Au cours des quatre dernières années, le gouvernement libéral a beaucoup fait pour réparer les dommages infligés pendant les huit années du régime conservateur précédent. Ce travail est néanmoins loin d'être terminé. Pour poursuivre les améliorations, l'OSSTF/FEESO doit de nouveau monter au créneau pour faire en sorte que les quatre années à venir soient menées par un gouvernement favorable à l'enseignement public.

En 2002, l'OSSTF/FEESO a élaboré et promu le *Programme de réussite des élèves*, préparant le terrain pour renverser un système d'enseignement public en déclin désespéré suite aux restrictions drastiques menées par Harris et Eves. Ce programme a été adopté par les deux partis d'opposition et une bonne part des conseils de l'OSSTF/FEESO a été retenue par le gouvernement actuel. Les élèves doivent en effet poursuivre leur éducation jusqu'à l'âge de 18 ans, les écoles fournissant les programmes de soutien aux élèves risquant d'abandonner—notamment par l'enseignement coopératif et des programmes technologiques et d'apprentissage—le crédit d'impôt des écoles privées a été abrogé et l'OSSTF/FEESO est consultée et écoutée sur les questions liées à l'éducation.

Ceci dit, notre travail n'est pas terminé et c'est pourquoi l'été dernier, l'OSSTF/FEESO a lancé le *Programme de priorité aux élèves* qui reprend les bases du *Programme de réussite des élèves* pour montrer la voie au gouvernement actuel sur des questions qu'il n'a pas encore entièrement résolues : davantage d'options de cours, des classes plus petites, des programmes de soutien et un environnement d'apprentissage positif. Le système d'enseignement public est toujours aux prises avec une formule de financement inéquitable qui ne permet pas de fournir le personnel de soutien, les ressources et les installations requis pour que les élèves acquièrent les aptitudes scolaires et sociales nécessaires pour devenir des citoyens sûrs d'eux, s'engageant envers la société et s'en sentant responsables.

Il est particulièrement important d'assurer l'élection d'un gouvernement favorable à l'enseignement public car le 31 août 2008, les conventions collectives de toutes les unités de



Last Word *continued/*

may have changed somewhat, but the underlying Tory philosophy appears to be the same: tax cuts, privatization and union busting are good; public services are bloated and must be cut down to size; government should not consult, let alone listen to, front-line education workers (and certainly not unions) on issues to do with education.

For the good of public education and the sake of students, we must rise up once again and participate in the political process. To that end, the provincial executive and staff are busy putting the finishing touches on the final phase of a provincial election action plan that has been three years in the making. Phase One involved developing our education platform and promoting the valuable work of all OSSTF/FEESO members. Phase Two focused on the promotion of *The Students First Plan*. Phase Three addresses the specifics of the actual election campaigns leading up to October 10.

As in the last election, OSSTF/FEESO needs you, the members, to become conversant with *The Students First Plan* and

about the needs in your own workplaces and boards so that you will be able to speak knowledgeably about local issues that remain to be addressed. We need our members to speak to neighbours, friends and relatives about these issues in order to keep public education on the front burner during the upcoming election process. If the electorate is not aware of the inadequacies in the public education system, they will believe what the government says is true: that all is well with the world of public education.

In addition, I encourage you to read and act upon all provincial, district and bargaining unit communiqués regarding the election, to vote on election day (or preferably at an advance poll), and to participate in the election in whatever way you feel comfortable, whether by speaking up about education issues at every opportunity, stuffing envelopes at a campaign office, working the phones or canvassing for a local candidate.

It is up to us to ensure that the revitalization of public education does not grind to a screeching halt—or worse, regress to a state reminiscent of the Harris/Eves years. 🐦

Mot de la fin *suite/*

négociations d'enseignants et nombre de celles des unités de négociation du personnel de soutien expireront. Les Conservateurs avec John Tory comme leader se sont déjà déclarés en faveur du retour du crédit d'impôt des écoles privées. Si certaines expressions ont changé, la philosophie sous-jacente des Conservateurs semble rester la même : les réductions d'impôt, les privatisations et la répression des syndicats sont de bonnes choses, les services publics sont hypertrophiés et leur taille doit être réduite, le gouvernement ne doit pas consulter ni écouter les travailleurs et travailleuses de l'éducation de première ligne (et certainement pas les syndicats) sur des questions liées à leur domaine.

Pour le bien de l'éducation publique et des élèves, nous ne pouvons laisser cela se produire. Nous devons de nouveau monter au créneau et participer au processus politique. L'Exécutif et le personnel provinciaux s'affairent d'ores et déjà à mettre la dernière main à la phase finale d'un plan d'action pour les élections provinciales qui a demandé trois années de préparation. La phase un passait par la mise au point de notre « plate-forme d'éducation » et faisait la promotion du travail remarquable de l'ensemble des membres de l'OSSTF/FEESO. La phase deux était axée sur la promotion du *Programme de priorité aux élèves*. Quant à la phase trois, elle portera sur les données particulières de la campagne élec-

torale menant aux élections du 10 octobre.

Tout comme lors des dernières élections, l'OSSTF/FEESO a besoin de vous, en tant que membres, qui devez bien connaître le *Programme de priorité aux élèves* et les domaines à améliorer sur vos lieux de travail et dans vos conseils respectifs, de façon à parler des questions locales qui restent à régler en toute connaissance de cause. Nos membres doivent parler de ces questions à leurs voisins, parents et amis pour garder le sujet de l'enseignement public en tête de l'agenda des prochaines élections. Si l'électorat ne sait pas que le système d'enseignement public souffre encore de certaines insuffisances, il croira que ce que dit le gouvernement est vrai : tout va pour le mieux dans le domaine de l'enseignement public.

D'autre part, je vous enjoins de lire tous les communiqués des unités de négociation provinciales et de district au sujet des élections, d'y réagir, de voter le jour des élections ou préférablement lors d'un scrutin avancé et d'y participer de toute manière acceptable, soit en parlant des questions d'éducation à chaque occasion, soit en rem-

plissant des enveloppes au bureau de campagne, soit encore en décrochant le téléphone ou en sollicitant les suffrages d'un candidat local.

Il nous appartient de faire en sorte que la revitalisation de l'enseignement public ne soit pas arrêtée nette... ou pire encore. 🐦

Tout comme lors des dernières élections, l'OSSTF/FEESO a besoin de vous, en tant que membres



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- Provincial mailings such as OSSTF Education Forum, Update and the Pocket Planner
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- Retirement information
- Pension information
- Local social and other community activities
- It's fun to stay in touch with former colleagues!



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