The Sentinel



Matters for Consideration: Heather Manassis, President YCT

The New Benefit Plan:

As you are all aware, YCT will be part of the second wave of teachers in the province whose health and dental plan will be transitioned to OECTA. The OECTA Employee Life and Health Trust (ELHT) will be administered by OTIP (Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan).

Members should receive information by mid-January, via Canada Post, and access to the plan will begin February 1, 2016. All members will also receive an email from YCDSB instructing you to enrol in the new benefits plan. The email will provide detailed registration instructions including your new OTIP identification number and how to set up your new password. You will be guided through the online benefits enrolment process to review and update your coverage information to ensure you have the coverage you need beginning February 1st.

Members will have 30 days (Feb 1 - March 3rd) to complete enrolment and to transition their benefit plan. You are encouraged however to register as soon as you receive notification of access, and

after Jan. 17th, in order to ensure that there is no interruption to your coverage. Late enrolment may also result in the need to provide evidence of insurability.

The details of the plan will be included in the package. If you have not received a package before the last week of January you should contact the provincial office @ 416-925-2593.

The Extreme Weather Policy:

The Extreme Weather Policy was developed in 2006. At that time the "extreme" temperature was set at -20°C. The temperature was later raised to -15°C. Not all stakeholders were happy with this change and the policy was revisited. The current policy (revised in 2013) outlines the process for determining the "extreme cold weather" temperature: "At the beginning of each school year, administrators, in collaboration with their Catholic School Councils, will determine the extreme cold weather temperature. This temperature with wind chill, shall be no warmer than -15° Celsius and no colder than -20° Celsius".

A visit with Santa, Children's Christmas Party 2016 see pp 4-5 for more pictures

The temperature agreed upon should be shared with all staff. This will ensure that everyone can anticipate when recess routines will be indoors. Supervision schedules should allow for these routines without exceeding contractual supervision maximums. If you require assistance in order to ensure that this is the case please do not hesitate to contact the unit.

Regarding snowfall:

Everyone is now aware that playgrounds will not be plowed. This is a new practice at YCDSB, but a long-standing practice in our co-terminus board. Snowfall should not result in keeping students indoors. It is the position of the Association that unless ice makes the playground too dangerous for play or the weather is too cold, as outlined and determined according to policy, then students should be outside during recess. If you feel that indoor routines are being called too frequently and/or indiscriminately, please do not hesitate to contact the unit office.

Changing Curriculum in the Secondary Panel to Build a More Desirable Workforce Filomena Ferraro, 1st Vice President

Recently, the Premier's "Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel" prepared and published a report titled, *Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility*. The report outlined recommendations on how the province can build upon its world-class skills and education and training systems to prepare Ontario's current and future workforce for the technology and knowledge-based jobs for today and for the future.

The government has indicated on many occasions, through curriculum and program development, that Secondary curriculum and programming must reflect what industries in Ontario desire in a workforce. The government is responding to what industry has termed the "skills gap". There is a serious attempt on the part of the Ministry to provide students with the skills employers need through changes to our education system, in particular, high school. Many believe that businesses/industry will enhance their working relationship with educators and government in order to meet and sustain the needs required of the labour market.

The government has already made changes to reflect this priority. The Ministry of Colleges, Training, and Universities has been renamed "The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development". There has also been a shift away from simply certifying students, and toward developing competencies in the areas of problem solving, teamwork and entrepreneurial skills.

The government is committed to continuing to work with members of the panel over the next few months to develop an action plan for the implementation of their recommendations. The panel made eight recommendations; four of which directly impact students and teachers:

- 1. Experiential learning and mentorship The Ministry is doubling SHSM programs for students in Grades 11 and 12 from 14% to 25% over the next three years.
- 2. Promotion of Multiple Career Pathways The Ministry will ensure that every student has at least one experiential learning opportunity by the end of high school. There will be a review of the Guidance and Careers curriculum to accommodate this goal.

- 3. Skills and Competencies A program will be developed to identify ways of teaching student competencies as demanded by the evolving economy. 'Competencies' are being defined as 'problem solving, teamwork, and entrepreneurial spirit' across curriculum and through extra-curricular learning opportunities. The focus will be on those skills needed in the workforce.
- 4. Measuring Success A method will be developed to measure the effect of the Panel's recommendations on the development of a highly skilled workforce in Ontario.

The first phase of implementation, the expansion of SHSM, is scheduled for this school year, 2016-2017. We will also see a greater emphasis on changes to curriculum in the areas of science, math and technology. A Renewed Mathematics Strategy includes a better understanding of math concepts, arithmetic skills and advanced problem solving. In turn, the ministry believes the exposure to math, science and technology will help to build a foundation for our students to more diverse and varied careers in the future.

The panel also recommended a focus on re-training and professional development. This will help in redefining the role of the teacher in a counselling role while expanding their knowledge of labour market trends and emerging careers. The Careers course will be rewritten and potentially could become a full credit course which could then require a repositioning and/or rewriting of the the Civics course.

Although the need to have a competitive workforce is important, the success of these new initiatives by the government, in conjunction with industry is yet to be determined. Our secondary teachers will now be expected to re-examine and re-think the current curriculum in order to ensure that it fits the needs of industry. Teachers may also feel that the required changes to the curriculum will increase workload and result in expectations that are unrealistic in an already demanding curriculum. It is our hope that the government will seek input from classroom teachers on all new initiatives.

The government's report can be found at https://www.ontario.ca/page/building-workforce-tomorrow-shared-responsibility.

Pension Workshop 2016 Julie Pauletig, Past President

Over 200 participants were in attendance at the Pension Workshop offered to teachers in the last five years of their career. The workshop took place on Saturday, November 26, 2016 at King's Riding Golf Club. The number of teachers, alongside their spouses, who attended this workshop which was sponsored by both our local unit and our provincial association continues to grow. Many are aware of the great numbers of teachers hired to the YCDSB between 1987



and 1992. These teachers are now approaching their 85 factor; the factor which permits them to retire without penalty. Over the next few

years, the local unit will struggle to ensure that there is an opportunity for all teachers in their last five years to attend this informative pension workshop. The reality is that this workshop is filled to capacity as soon as it is posted. Unfortunately, some members had to be turned away. At the same time, other members have attended this workshop more than once. This is a matter that the York Unit Executive will need to address. The Executive will need to reconsider the number of times a member can attend the pension workshop especially since our provincial office (OECTA) no longer funds their staff for more than one workshop per school board per year. We are truly disadvantaged; particularly at a time when perhaps the largest group of York Catholic teachers are reaching their eligible retirement age. If you have a suggestion regarding how to address the ever-growing numbers wanting to attend, the executive is open to considering all options.

Every avenue will be explored by the York Unit Executive to ensure that all teachers in their last five years will have the opportunity to attend a pension workshop. The workshop ensures that members are well informed prior to making the decision to retire from this profession.

In the meantime, the Professional Development Committee has received approval from the York Unit Executive to offer a Pension 101 Workshop in April 2016. This is an after school workshop which will focus on "Knowing Your Pension". This workshop was offered a few years ago and is back due to popular demand. Registration will take place in the spring of 2017.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION YCT Communication via Gmail and Website

Greg Bolton, 3rd Vice President

It has always been the goal of the Unit to engage and inform members using a variety of methods and in as timely a manner as possible. One of most recent, and most efficient methods is through our new website and the YCT OECTA gmail account that was assigned to each and everyone of you. With the changes to the website we are attempting to streamline the login, such that you will access the website simultaneously once you successfully login to your YCT OECTA email.

The most common question resulting from one's effort to log in is "Why am I getting 'Invalid User' even though I am a member and have been for quite some time?" The Board computers are setup such that every time you login to a Board computer it automatically logs you into your Board email account. Most often that's the issue - the website automatically picks up your Board Gmail account or log in, and **not** your YCT email account. The solution is quite simple - add your YCT email account to your Board profile.

Do the following ONCE and you will be good for all future logins:

- 1. Open your Board email's Inbox.
- 2. In the top right corner **click on circle** containing your first initial or your picture/avatar
- 3. Choose **Add Account** (if add account comes up again click it again)
- 4. Now **add** (input) **your YCT email address** (i.e. firstnamelastname@yctoecta.com)

(note there are no spaces or dots between first and last name)

- 5. If you haven't logged in this year your password is your OECTA number plus five(5) zeros (00000)
- 6. Follow the prompts until you get to your Inbox. It will have over 200 emails from Heather (you can read them at your leisure)
- 7. NOW . . . go to the top of your **browser and type in www.yctoecta.com** and **press enter**
- 8. When the page loads **click on the Google Sign In** button (below our phone numbers in the top right corner)
- 9. You will be prompted to select an email address, you **MUST select the YCT email address** that you just setup.
- 10. A one time security popup will appear, click "ALLOW"
- 11. You are now in !!!

Moving forward, in order to toggle between your Board email and your YCT email, you simply need to click on the circle (containing your initial or image) and select which account you want to access. They will not merge.

If you need any further support, don't hesitate to call the Unit and ask to speak with Greg or email support@yctoecta.com





York Catholic Teachers Winter Drive 2016 Filomena Ferraro, 1st Vice President

The YCT Political Action Committee, led the charge on a new initiative titled York Catholic Teachers: Keeping Communities Warm. Teachers were asked to donate new and gently used winter clothing and other items to those less fortunate. The campaign was a great success and many benefited by your generosity. Thank you to all who participated.







The Life of a Special Education Teacher Walter Tersigni, Teacher, Special Education

"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." This ageless opening quote from Dickens' classic book, 'A Tale of Two Cities' can readily apply to just about any situation in both life and work; but in particular, it rings true to the role of the Special Education Teacher. One uncontested reality that I've come to terms with over the course of my nearly two decades as a Special Education teacher is that we are expected to be all things, to all people, all of the time. All-the-while functioning in a vacuum that is not clearly understood or, quite frankly, not overly appreciated by all stake holders.

Special Education teachers are expected to effectively collaborate and communicate with many different individuals, including the principal, fellow teachers, E.As., parents, consultants, outside agencies, seemingly on a daily basis, as well as teach their students. We need to be accommodating and flexible in a myriad of scenarios. Our schedule needs to be malleable so we can participate in meetings, conduct case conferences, attend in-services, and complete academic assessments, all the while maintaining the integrity of our programme by actually working with our students on a regular basis. This is made even more difficult by the unfortunate fact that the Board does NOT provide us with an occasional teacher when we're away from our school. Special Education teachers work with students in different grades, and with identifications that vary from Autism to Learning Disabled, and Downs Syndrome to those multiple diagnoses.

Special Education teachers also function as a liaison with other professionals such as Behaviour Specialists, Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, etc. as required.

Now, all this involvement creates a proverbial deluge of paperwork to complete, and time lines to adhere to. By default, Special Education teachers have become the "Keeper of the Forms"; I'm sure that there's a J.R.R. Tolkien novel in there somewhere.

The role of Special Education teacher is becoming ever more tenable as we are expected to do more, with less. We have been directed to take on roles previously held by other teachers in years past. The Reading Recovery teacher role comes to mind; the Board cut these positions a few years back, and is now downloading their vital work onto the laps of Spec. Ed. teachers. The Board is also attempting to curtail our assessment/consultation time. Despite various inservices, some poorly veiled as a year-end "Appreciation Tea", to outline the added parameters of the Special Education teachers' role, this redefinition has been met with much confusion in our schools. Moving forward, there needs to be a much more involved consultation process with all pertinent staff, and OECTA, as to how the role is to be defined and fulfilled. Finally, when all is said and done, all the stake-holders need to be educated to the realities of the role. Historically, Special Education in Ontario has been a rather "hot button" issue. Long before Bill Davis became the most 'progressive' conservative premier Ontario ever had, he was the PC Minister of Education. During his tenure, the education sector in Ontario experienced tumultuous change, including full funding for Catholic schools, and legislated funding for Special Education programmes across the province. Bill Davis knew then, what many people seem to forget today, that the true measure of a society's greatness is gaged by how it responds

to, and takes care of, it's most vulnerable members. The current Liberal government has stated that it has not reduced funding for Special Education programmes. However, YCDSB is receiving less money than in previous years due to the way the ministry allocated funds to each board. Funding was based on a variety of factors including EQAO scores, FNMI populations, and access (distance) to specialized resources.

The YCDSB maintains an "Inclusive Model" of delivering the special education programme; although there are some exceptions to this, such as the PACE (Gifted) programme. This inclusive model has served both special education and regular students well, in that, regardless of their needs and strengths, all students work together throughout the day. Of course, this is only made possible with the involvement of the Special Education teacher who creates the Individual Education Plans (IEP) for each spec. ed. student in order to facilitate the parameters within this inclusive model. Personally, I find it extremely rewarding to see special education students, particularly the ones with special needs, play a meaningful role within the life of their school. I firmly believe that many Special Education teachers tolerate the 'slings and arrows' of their role because of the wonderful engagement exhibited by their students.

As always, the process is much more important than the product, as the journey truly is more meaningful than the destination. It's a trek I have no regrets in taking.

Role of Trustees, Part 2 Heather Manassis, President

In the last issue of the Sentinel, as well as in my last newsletter, I referenced some concerns the Association has regarding recent actions of the trustees. It is the position of the Association that the trustees have operated outside of their mandate, thereby interfering with our work. We have put the Board on notice and hope that we can continue to work with the Board to address these concerns, while respecting the terms of the Collective Agreement, teachers and teacher workload. Recently you received information regarding a letter which was sent to members who do not have completion of Religious Education Part 1 indicated on their OCT qualifications card. Please note that the Association has always supported the completion of said course, as stated in our Collective Agreement. In fact, in order to support members needing to complete the course I turned to our provincial association for assistance. Two sessions of the course are now being offered on-line to York members, through OECTA. The first beginning in January and the second in the spring.

The letter issued by the Board stemmed from a motion put forward by Trustee Mazzotta, in October, which initially called for the termination of all members who had not completed the course by the end of the current school year. The motion failed. In a previous correspondence I provided the names of the 5 trustees who supported the original motion, one of whom was Teresa McNicol. Trustee McNicol later contacted me to express her regrets for supporting the original motion. At the December 20th Board meeting, Trustee McNichol announced publicly her regret for supporting Trustee Mazzotta's motion.

It was some time later that the trustees determined that a letter would be issued. I have since spoken with several trustees about the associations concerns regarding the letter. I will continue to discuss these concerns at Labour Relations.

Upcoming Important Dates

Benefits:

Jan 17 - 31 - Enrol in new Benefits Plan Feb 1 - Coverage begins

Mar 3 - Deadline to Enrol

Other Important Dates:

Jan. 20 - PA Day, Elem - Report Writing

Feb. 3 - PA Day (Elem.& Sec.)

Mar 6 - UAGM for Resolutions (AGM)

Mar 10-13 - Provincial AGM

97th Working Day: Feb. 3 0.5% Salary Increase on Grid

Holidays:

Feb 20 - Family Day Mar 11 -19 - March Break



Addressing Issues of Mental Health and Wellness with Dr. Andrew Miki

Staff Reps and several other members had an opportunity to attend one of Dr. Miki's presentation over a period of two days in late November/ early December. "What Makes Teachers Vulnerable to Mental Health Issues?" and "Strategies to Improve Teachers' Resiliency to Stress" were the focus of his presentations. Andrew's passion is to use education to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. "The more we understand it, the less we'll fear it." Members learned how to define stress, to better understand how it manifests, and given strategies regarding how to deal with it. In summary, "to better understand it so they need not fear it." The workshops were enjoyed by all who participated. Attendees were also given access to the online CBT program offered through Starling Minds.

Dr. Andrew Miki is a registered psychologist in BC who specializes in neuropsychology and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). He received his PhD. in Clinical Psychology from York University in Toronto. His doctoral work included extensive CBT training in hospital and academic settings. Since 2009, Andrew has worked with superintendents, principals, support staff, and more than 100 BC teachers in his private practices. His understanding of the stressors and challenges specific to the education profession led to an innovative group CBT treatment program that was initially supported by BC Teachers' Federation. The protocol was designed specifically to help educators learn how to understand and better manage their stress. The success of the groups inspired Andrew to develop an online CBT program called Starling Minds (www.starlingminds.com) so that more educators throughout the country can have access to mental health education and training. Starling is currently used by educators in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and the Northwest Territories.







The Occupational Health And Safety Act and You Diana Corazza, Councillor

Working conditions are something that work environment for its employees. Unare near and dear to all teachers. Teachers regard 'working conditions' as the number one issue facing them in today's classroom. As you know, working conditions go beyond the physical aspects of our classrooms and school buildings, but to the more intrinsic areas such as personal safety and mental wellbeing. To that end, teachers and other workers province-wide can take solace in knowing that our rights are protected not only within our collective agreement but are entrenched in the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA).

In 2010, the Ontario government passed Bill 168, which amended the Ontario Health and Safety Act (OHSA) to include a definition of workplace violence and harassment, which changed the landscape of worker safety and protection with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace. This law reflected the need to address the increased incidences of violence and harassment in the work- sion, where the course of comment or or violence. However, if a situation does place and place greater accountability on conduct is known or ought reasonably to the employer to ensure a safe and healthy

der section 32 of the OHSA, employers are required to implement policies and programs with respect to workplace violence and harassment, ensure that procedures are in place to allow workers to report incidents of violence or harassment and, that such incidents, are investigated and resolved.

Subsequently, in November 2015, the Ontario government introduced Bill 132, which expands the scope of violence and harassment in the workplace under the OHSA to include workplace sexual violence and sexual harassment. It was passed into law and came into effect September 8, 2016.

The OHSA defines workplace sexual harassments as:

"Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expresbe known to be unwelcome; or Making

a sexual solicitation or advance where the person making the solicitation or advance is in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the worker and the person knows or ought reasonably to know that the solicitation or advance is unwelcome."

Teachers who are subjected to workplace violence or harassment are encouraged to report it immediately to the unit office and the health and safety representative. We go to great lengths to educate our students about their rights and to protect them from harm. It is reasonable that this also be applied to teachers. We all have the right to work in a safe and welcoming environment free from harassment and violence of any kind, and as such, we all need to be vocal and advocate for ourselves and for one another. Furthermore, the act ensures that vexatious and/ or malicious complaints are dealt with seriously. Hopefully, through the course of our teaching careers, most of us will not encounter situations of harassment occur it is important to know your rights.

Preparing for Retirement 2016/2017

Joe Pece, Staff Liaison, OECTA, shared vital information including pension calculations, benefits, and matters to consider before making the decision to retire. For those in attendance on Nov. 26 the volume of information presented at the five hour pension workshop may have seemed somewhat overwhelming. Most teachers at the workshop had already visited the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan (OTPP) website and "iaccess" to see their personal information. Many were also aware of the implications of retiring: in June vs mid-year, before reaching their 85 factor, and of their pension income. Nonetheless, many questions arose surrounding pre and post survivor benefits, spousal benefits, the Canada Pension Plan offset and how it affects pension payments, inflation adjustment and circumstances surrounding the 10 year pension

guarantee.

The second session offered a valuable overview of personal retirement planning and the key to successful retirement. The areas covered included health and well being, health care benefits, financial planning and finally the process of filing for your pension benefits. The last session focused specifically on various financial considerations prior to retiring. Many were surprised by the matters they had overlooked, in particular the importance of a will and its relevance when a pension becomes an estate matter. This workshop continues to be the most widely attended workshop by York Catholic Teachers. With the rising number of teachers retiring over the next five to seven years, the need to assist members in becoming more informed with regards to their pension will continue to be a priority for your Unit executive.

Announcements:

BIRTHS AND ADOPTIONS

Katherine Boylan, teacher at St. Brendan on the birth of her son Charlie. (June 2016)

Kayla Brodie, teacher at St. John Paul II on the birth of her daughter Claire.

Stephanie Busato, teacher at St. Mother Teresa on the birth of her son Andrew.

Anita Bussoli, teacher at St. Jean de Brebeuf CHS, on the birth of her daughter Tessa.

Josephine Capone, teacher at St. Emily, on the birth of her son Massimo.

Amanda China, teacher at Our Lady of Peace, on the birth of her daughter Chloe.

Diana Cirota, teacher at St. Raphael the Archangel, on the birth of her daughter Maya.

Silvia Delvecchio, teacher at St. Peter, on the birth of her son Gabriel. (April 2016)

Christine D'Sylva, teacher at OLL CCS, on the birth of her son Adam.

Dolores Falletta (Mele), teacher at St. Francis of Assisi, on the birth of her son Christian.

Jessica Gallo, teacher at OLL CCS, on the birth of her daughter, Ava

Laura Giunta, teacher at Our Lady of the Rosary, on the birth of her son Benjamin. (August 2016)

Jessica McGinnes, teacher at St. Brendan, on the birth of her daughter Emma.

Melissa Miccoli, teacher at St. Joan of Arc CHS, on the birth of her son Nathan.

Rosaleigh Neal, teacher at St. Brendan, on the birth of her daughter Chelsea.

Jenny Pagniello, teacher at Prince of Peace on the birth of her daughter Valentina.

Michelle Paris, teacher at Blessed Trinity and Peter Paris, teacher at Our Lady of Hope on the birth of their son Daniel. Chiara Rao-Paulino, teacher at St. Catherine of Siena on the birth of her son Amadeus.

Stephanie Rea, teacher at San Marco on the birth of her son Julian.

Renee Rizza, teacher at St. Patrick-Markham on the birth of her daughter Charlotte.

Melissa Russo, teacher at St. Emily on the birth of her son Marco.

Erinn Stavrev, teacher at St. Augustine CHS, on the birth of her daughter Siena.

Laura Traina, teacher at St. Peter on the birth of her daughter Zarra. (September 2016)

Josie Vecchiarelli, teacher at St. Veronica on the birth of her son Adriano.

CONDOLENCES & SYMPATHY

Emilia Adorante, teacher at St. Elizabeth CHS on the death of her father and father-in-law to George Adorante, teacher at St. Augustine CHS

Sam Agrippa, teacher at Fr. Bressani CHS on the death of his wife, Caterina, and sister-in-law of Cathy Arrigo.

Veraline Akello, teacher at OLL CCS on the death of her grandmother.

Helene Bhersafi, teacher at Sr. R. Scott, on the death of her mother-in-law.

Joe Buttigieg, teacher at St. Jean de Brebeuf CHS on the death of his grandmother.

Lorena Cappola, teacher at St. Mary, Nobleton, on the death of her grandmother.

Adele Castriota, teacher at Fr. McGivney CHS on the death of her mother and mother-in-law to Vivek Naidoo, teacher at Fr. McGivney CHS

Stefanie Ceci, teacher at St. Mary, Nobleton, John Ceci, teacher at Sacred Heart CHS and Kate Ceci, teacher at St. Paul on the death of their grandmother.

Carolina Cundari Torchia, teacher at Fr. John Kelly on the death of her father.

Christina D'Ammizio, teacher at St. Paul, on the death of her father-in-law.

Emanuela DelMastro, teacher at St. Rene Goupil on the death of her mother.

Rose Fini, teacher at St. Agnes of Assisi on the death of her father-in-

Marika Gilligan, teacher at Prince of Peace on the death of her father. Mark Henry, teacher at OLL CCS, on the death of his father-in-law. MaryAnn Holman, teacher at All Saints on the death of her mother. Stefanie Kaczmarek, teacher at Christ the King on the death of her grandmother.

Grace Lavallata, teacher at St. M. d'Youville on the death of her mother.

Catherine Luongo, teacher at St. Stephen on the death of her mother-in-law

Nadia Manza, teacher at Divine Mercy on the death of her father-inlaw.

Vera Marchese, teacher at St. Gabriel on the death of her mother. Donna Meffe, teacher at St. Padre Pio on the death of her father. Wendy Nunes, teacher at St. Jean de Brebeuf CHS on the death of her mother and mother-in-law to Nuno Nunes, teacher at Holy Cross CHS

Antonio Panetta, teacher at Holy Cross CHS, on the death of his father.

Solina Panza-Di Girolamo, teacher at Our Lady of Peace on the death of her father-in-law.

Lara Rodrigues, teacher at St. John Paul II on the death of her mother-in-law.

Peter Sekirin, teacher at St. Joan of Arc CHS on the death of his

Danuta Wolosik, teacher at Our Lady of Peace, on the death of her sister-in-law.

