

Election 2007

Thank you to all of you who worked so hard on the various election campaigns in our area. We have succeeded in re-electing an education friendly government. Locally we had many excellent candidates in our four ridings.

We welcome Leeanna Pendergast to the Waterloo Liberal Caucus and look forward to working with her and John Milloy in the coming term. We congratulate Leeanna on her assignment as parliamentary assistant to the Minister in charge of Women's Issues.

We also wish to congratulate John on his appointment as Minister of Colleges and Universities. John has proven to be a great advocate for educators. Each time we meet, he ensures that our concerns are expressed to the appropriate people and copies us on the letter being sent. We are confident that we can continue this relationship with John and that our concerns will be heard. We know that he will be an excellent advocate for our local college and universities as well as educators across the province.

As I write this it has been made official that Kathleen Wynne will return as Minister of Education. We now have some long awaited stability in

the Ministry. Kathleen has always been open to meeting both with the Provincial and Local representatives of teacher organizations and we know that she is a patient listener as well as being passionate about education.

In short, we have a re-elected government that we can work with. We will not get everything we want. The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and Student Success initiatives will continue to pose both workload and implementation challenges. Negotiating new collective agreements across the province is an onerous task facing us. We may once again be faced with a provincial template from which to negotiate.

Funding for Faith based schools proved to be a very controversial topic during the campaign. We have the assurance of our Premier that the Liberal party will maintain funding to our system. Some people are projecting into the next election and suggesting that our Catholic schools will be the "issue" of that campaign. While we must, as a community, be ready to face this issue, there are many years between now and the next campaign. In politics, that is an eternity and the issues of the future may be very different than what we suppose they may be.

**Hey! Check the website.
New information is added often.**

TPA AND ALP CHANGES

Last spring, the Ministry changed the rules for the TPA and ALP process and is encouraging OECTA and the Board to work in collaboration to implement the rule changes. The Board began by implementing the change that required principals to visit a teacher's class only once when they are being TPA'd. The rule also changes the TPA cycle to once every five years, rather than every three years, and this change was also implemented.

The ALP is also being significantly changed. The use of the ALP has varied across the school in the system, with some principals directing teachers to place specific items on their ALP. The Ministry has clearly stated that the ALP is teacher 'owned' for a teacher's professional growth. The implication is that

teachers will be able to take more control of their ALP and have it reflect items of personal interest.

On October 16th, OECTA and Board members attended a Ministry inservice that explained all the regulation changes and the intent behind the changes. The people that attended the Ministry inservice now comprise a Board Resource Team to oversee the implementation. The Board Resource Team met November 1st to plan the roll out of the changes to all schools in our system. The current plan is to develop a powerpoint presentation, that will be presented to all principals. The same presentation will be given to all staff reps at an OECTA meeting. Principals will then use the powerpoint presentation to inservice all teachers on their staff.

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Smart"find Express

As you are well aware, the Board introduced an automated call out system this September. The introduction of this system has been plagued with the normal shake-down difficulties one expects with any new system. Several 'fixes' have been made, the last one being implemented October 15, 2007. We are watching the implementation of this system closely and request that if you experience problems either as an occasional teacher or a classroom teacher that you let us know in the office, 744-8051.

Meanwhile if elementary teachers are losing planning time because the planning time teacher is not replaced or are called in to pinch-hit for another un-replaced classroom teacher please keep track of the lost time - it is owed to you.

It has been our experience that there are errors occurring at both ends of this process. Absent teachers sometimes incorrectly enter information and codes are forgotten or lost. Occasional teachers are neglecting to enter periods of unavailability or are not registering with the system and activating their account.

We will continue to monitor this system and intervene with the Board on behalf of occasional and classroom teachers but we need your help. When you encounter issues with Smartfind let us know - even if it is a couple of days later. We cannot correct what we don't know.



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Electronic Communications

In the past few years, the amount and variety of electronic communications has increased dramatically. It seems that email, text messaging, and social networking websites are becoming the preferred way that many people communicate with one another. OECTA has a list of concerns when using electronic communication.

All forms of electronic communication have problems with a lack of privacy and security. Emails can be forged or altered. The identity of the sender can be disguised. Messages can be forwarded without your permission. Careless messages run the risk of being seen as libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene. A virtual minefield of hazards is present whenever a teacher chooses an electronic form of communication over face-to-face dialogue.

While interacting with students, parents, colleagues and administrators, you should always maintain a professional demeanour. **Never email students** and avoid a casual or familiar tone in any communications with parents. Never share or receive personal information. This makes participation in social networking websites very difficult.

If your school has a homework website limit your communication on it. Postings should be brief and factual (such as Test on Tuesday, Assignment due next Wednesday). Classroom websites are discouraged.

OECTA has the following advice for you. Protect yourself. Respond to complex messages from parents by telephone or make time for a face-

to-face meeting. If you must communicate electronically always save a copy of your original message. Proofread any document before sending it out or have a colleague read it for you. Include your name, assignment and school when signing your message. Remember to always maintain exemplary professional standards because any failure to communicate appropriately puts you at risk.

The information for this article was taken from a publication called Electronic Communications: Appropriate and Professional Use, available on the OECTA Provincial website www.oecta.on.ca.

ARE YOU THINKING OF ATTENDING A WORKSHOP OR CONFERENCE?

DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN APPLY FOR INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE FORM THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE?

OECTA Waterloo PD Committee has funds available for Workshops and Conferences. You may be eligible to receive 75% of your registration fee to a maximum of \$200 over a 2 year period.

The Application and an explanation of the criteria is on the OECTA website

www.oectawaterloo.com under "Forms".

As always, call the OECTA office if you need further assistance.

Committees the Unit release Officers are currently working on:

NTIP steering
TPA
Wellness
Labour management
Smartfind review
Teacher Education Network
Safe Schools
Parish School Relations Committee
TIE

Other Meetings Attended During October

Labour Board
OTIP Quarterlies
Arbitration prearb meetings/arb meetings
4 step one grievance meetings
OECTA Level Committees
Negotiations
Beginning teachers
PD
Recognition
Finance
DDSM