



Michael (Mike) Foulds

A message from the OTF President

Dear colleagues,

As we settle into another exciting school year, I want to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome back to each of you and to acknowledge the monumental effort you put into your work each and every day. The start of a new academic year always brings with it a sense of renewal, opportunity, and anticipation, and this year is no exception. Take a moment to acknowledge not just the monumental effort you put into your work, but also the broader issues at play that have significantly impacted our education system. Unfortunately, it is also a reminder of the ongoing challenges that we face, particularly those exacerbated by the Ford government's underfunding and under-resourcing of the education system.

Since 2018, Ontario's education system has been strained under policies that have systematically undervalued and underfunded our publicly-funded schools. Teachers have witnessed firsthand the consequences of these decisions: larger class sizes, a lack of essential resources, an increase in violence in our schools, and an erosion of support services that are vital for students' well-being and success. These issues are not just abstract concerns; they impact daily classroom dynamics and the quality of education our students receive.

The Ford government's approach to education funding has been marked by a troubling pattern of cutbacks and diminishing investment. Despite the growing needs of our schools, we have seen a consistent trend of underfunding, with resources stretched thinner each year. This has led to overcrowded classrooms where individual attention is harder to provide, eroding the quality of education and the support teachers can reasonably offer. Additionally, special education programs and mental health services—crucial for many students—have been particularly hard hit, leaving gaps that teachers (who are not trained clinicians or service providers) are inappropriately expected to fill.

Beyond the financial implications, the lack of respect for teachers and the teaching profession under this administration has been deeply concerning. The rhetoric coming from the government often seems disconnected from the reality of what it means to teach in today's Ontario. Teachers are professionals who dedicate their lives to nurturing the minds and hearts of students yet the government's policies and publicly-pronounced platitudes have often failed to acknowledge the expertise and commitment that teachers and educators bring to their roles or even to acknowledge them at all.

Despite these challenges, you continue to show remarkable dedication. You create engaging lessons, provide emotional support, and strive to make a positive difference in each student's life. Your commitment in the face of adversity speaks volumes about your professionalism and passion for teaching. That said, it is crucial to recognize that while individual efforts are praise-worthy, systemic issues require systemic solutions. The education system needs support and investment from those in power. That is why OTF will continue to advocate for policies that reflect the true value of education and to hold the government accountable.

As you teach in your classrooms, know that your voice is vital. Continue to speak out about the challenges you face and the needs of your students. Engage with your communities and make it clear that public education is a priority that must be supported by adequate levels of funding.

In closing, I want to express my deepest gratitude for your ongoing dedication to education and your unwavering commitment to your students. Your passion and hard work are the driving force behind the success of our schools and the bright futures of the young people we serve. Let's continue to strive for the changes our schools and students so richly deserve.

Yours in education,

Mike

Michael (Mike) Foulds
President



"OTF member with their students" - OTF archives

Pension Workshops for Members

Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan

Fall 2024

Join the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan for a virtual presentation to learn about one of your most important financial assets: your pension. [Access more information.](#)

Preparing to Retire

(for members within 5 years of retirement)

You have been contributing to your pension throughout your career. Now that you're thinking about retiring, find out how this asset fits into your financial picture.

This interactive and informative presentation will provide you with everything you need to know about preparing for retirement, and what to expect throughout the retirement application process.

You have several dates to choose from. Each presentation will be the same, so please choose a date below and click on it to register.

Webinar: Preparing to Retire (1.5 hrs)

October

[Tuesday, October 8, 2024 at 5 p.m.](#)

[Wednesday, October 9, 2024 at 6 p.m.](#)

[Tuesday, October 22, 2024 at 5 p.m.](#)

[Thursday, October 24, 2024 at 6 p.m.](#)

[Tuesday, October 29, 2024 at 6 p.m.](#)

Séance en français

[Mercredi 20 novembre 2024 à 18h 00](#)

November

[Tuesday, November 5, 2024 at 5 p.m.](#)

[Wednesday, November 6, 2024 at 6 p.m.](#)

[Tuesday, November 12, 2024 at 5 p.m.](#)

[Wednesday, November 13, 2024 at 6 p.m.](#)

[Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 5 p.m.](#)



Webinar: Being A Member—Your Life as a Teacher

(for early to mid-career members)

Your pension is one of your most important financial assets.

Consider this your Pension 101. Designed for all early to mid-career members, you will gain an understanding of how your contributions and pension are calculated, how to maximize your pension benefit and how some life events may impact your pension.

You have three dates to choose from. Each presentation will be the same, so please choose a date below and click on it to register.

Webinar: Being a Member (1.5 hrs)

[Thursday, November 21, 2024 at 6 p.m.](#)

[Tuesday, November 26, 2024 at 5 p.m.](#)

[Thursday, November 28, 2024 at 6 p.m.](#)

You will receive an email from OTPP confirming your registration. One hour before the time you selected, the OTPP will send a reminder email on how to join.



**ONTARIO
TEACHERS'**

PENSION PLAN – RÉGIME DE RETRAITE
DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS

EMAIL: inquiry@otpp.com

Phone: 416.226.2700 or 1.800.668.0105 (toll free)

FAX: 416.730.7807 or 1.800.949.8208 (toll free)

Call service hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday



A message from the OTF Secretary-Treasurer

Ian S. Pettigrew



"First Location of OTF: 1260 Bay Street, Toronto" - OTF archives

Keeping your head above water and finding your "flow"

When I was in my mid-teens, I had a near-drowning experience swimming in white water on Vancouver Island. Fortunately, I was a strong swimmer and had a buddy nearby to call on for life-saving help. A few months after that incident, I enrolled in a whitewater kayaking course, and in so doing committed myself to the aquatic equivalent of "getting back on the horse." In time, alongside instructors, then peers, I ended up in some BIG water—one whitewater class/category below "waterfall"—doing end-overs, surfing river waves, and effecting qajaq rolls mid-stream after capsizing.

As this 2024–2025 school year got underway, I found myself reflecting on that experience from decades ago. These reflections occurred when I was kayaking on flat (lake) water this summer, again as I found myself watching (and listening to) the sound of flowing water...in our backyard's fountains, at local waterfalls and meandering streams and raging rivers, and lastly watching both the film *Nyad* (2023) and the documentary *The River Runner* (2021).

As teachers, we use the summer months (or parts thereof) to rest and recharge between school years. When school resumes each September, it can feel like being thrust out of a languid tidal pool or calm eddy into rolling surf or a strong current. It's shocking until we find our sea legs and reacclimate to, yes, the flow and rhythm of the school day.

To be sure, teaching is not getting less complicated year over year. Just ask seasoned, veteran teachers. Post-pandemic ripples and constantly changing currents make navigating our professional duties tricky and tiring. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, sometimes called the father of flow, observed that "the best moments in our lives are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times...[but those that] occur if a person's

body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile." Sounds like teaching, perhaps?

Sometimes we find our flow while going WITH the flow and other times by battling AGAINST it. And those instances aren't necessarily mutually exclusive. Like life in general, classroom and school life can fluctuate near-instantly between an inner-tube trip down a lazy river and a whitewater rafting expedition in a raging torrent. Too often, as teachers, we don't have the luxury of agency over all aspects of the flow of teaching and learning. What we do have, however, is our friends, family and colleagues who can celebrate our triumphs (big or small) and help us cope with and overcome our most vexatious challenges (big or small). With that in mind, my earnest hope for each of you, my colleagues, is that as you lean into your work, that you will find your own state of flow—whatever that looks like—this school year. Safe (and happy) paddling!

Ian

Ian Pettigrew
Secretary-Treasurer



"OTF Board of Governors spring meeting c. 1944-1945" - OTF archives

Board of Governors Ontario Teachers Federation 1944-5.





Our Ici on parle français PD grant program

The application deadline for 2024–25 is 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 10, 2024

Ici on parle français was first launched as a pilot project in 2020–21. The original intention of the program was to provide small grants to individual FSL teachers across the province to support a variety of professional learning activities. The program is funded through the French as a Second Language Labour Market Partnership (FSL-LMP), led by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA).

In 2021–22, the program was expanded into a larger professional learning opportunity, inviting involvement both by individual FSL teachers and by those working in collaborative learning teams of two to four members. Funds can be used to participate in a professional learning activity or program or to purchase teacher/educator resources to support teachers' FSL proficiency and pedagogy. For those working in a team, the maximum grant is \$500 per team member (maximum of \$2,000 per team) and for those working individually, the maximum grant is \$250.

The application deadline for 2024–25 is 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 10, 2024

Successful applicants will be notified by early November 2024. For more information and to apply visit

[Ici on parle français—PD grants for FSL teachers](#)



NATIONAL HEALTHY SCHOOLS WEEK

OCTOBER 7-11, 2024

National Healthy Schools Week is an annual event in October to prioritize, plan, and engage your school community in Healthy School conversations at the start of the school year. This week is meant to be tailored to your unique school community, giving you the opportunity to identify opportunities most relevant in your context.

Engage students, staff, and community members in conversation, experiential learning, and action planning to support the well-being of your school community throughout the entire year.



Toolkits are now available for you to prepare and support national healthy schools week 2024!

[2024 NHSW Planning Toolkit](#)
[2024 NHSW Communications Toolkit](#)

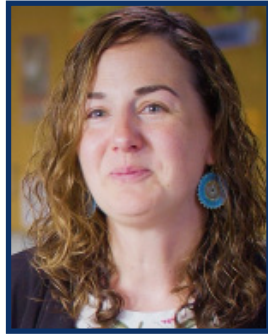
[Register for National Healthy Schools Week 2024](#)

"OTF timeline 1973–1993" - OTF archives



OTIP Teaching Awards 2024

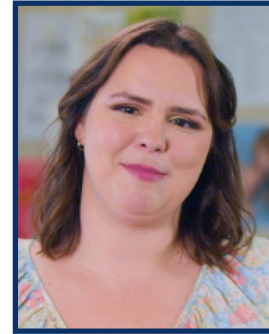
Three outstanding recipients honoured



Karyn Bélanger-Sherman



Susan Shoemaker



Jessica Duncan

The Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) and the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) are proud to announce the recipients of the OTIP Teaching Awards for 2024.

The recipients of this year's awards are:

Karyn Bélanger-Sherman, Elementary Teacher
Académie de la Tamise, London

Susan Shoemaker, Secondary Teacher
Brooklin High School, Whitby

Jessica Duncan, Beginning Teacher
Morse Street Junior Public School, Toronto

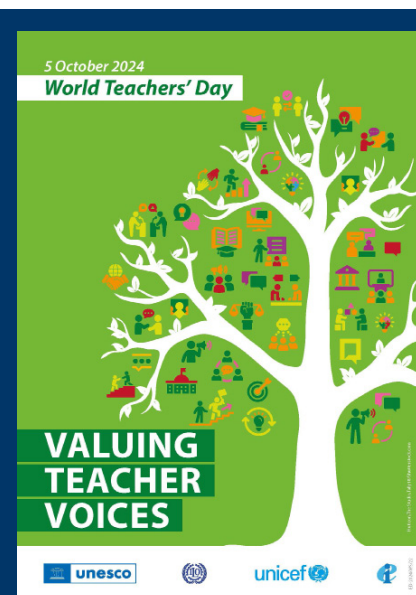
"Each of our winners has shown remarkable commitment, creativity, and passion in their roles—whether in the classroom or by supporting the broader school community," said Vic Medland, CEO of OTIP.

"Their efforts have inspired students to reach their full potential, and we are incredibly proud to recognize their contributions."

"Teachers support conditions in their classrooms and in the wider school community that fuel students' dreams and help them aspire to be the best version of themselves," said OTF President Mike Foulds. "The awards highlight the talents and passion of three such individuals and celebrate their exemplary work as teachers."



More information on the OTIP winners can be found at teachingawards.ca.



World Teachers' Day, celebrated on October 5th, honours the vital role teachers play in shaping future generations. OTF is very proud of its members - teachers in publicly funded schools in Ontario.

On this day we want to acknowledge your dedication, often amidst challenges, and express our appreciation for your tireless efforts and contributions that make Ontario's education system world-class. At OTF, we remain committed to elevating the teaching profession and to supporting efforts that improve teaching conditions and resources. Happy World Teachers' Day! Federation, thank you for all you do.

Happy World Teachers' Day!



"Overview of the Teaching Profession Act of 1944" - OTF archives

"OTF archival resources"

Bill 124

Bill 124 and new collective agreements: Retroactive salary increases and your pension

To help you plan for your retirement, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan answers the most common question they've received about retroactive salary adjustments: How will the increases due to Bill 124 and new collective agreements affect my pension? See an example showing how they'll calculate the increase to your pension, and how you can estimate your salary when using the pension calculator.

Ontario Teachers' also provides an overview on the Bill 124 process and what's next. For additional information and updates, check the Bill 124 FAQs .



The OTF Special Recognition Award, established in 2020, is presented annually to an organization, group or individual in acknowledgement of outstanding contributions to publicly funded education in Ontario, beyond the school board level.

The 2024 recipient of the award is The Period Purse.

The Period Purse, founded in 2017 by teacher Jana Girdauskas, strives to create menstrual equity by ensuring sustainable access to period products for all, and by ending the stigma associated with periods through education and advocacy. The Period Purse always encourages people of all genders and backgrounds to take part in its education sessions, in order to open up the conversation about periods to everyone—not just menstruators. The Period Purse works hard to continue developing their education program for diverse communities. Today, The Period Purse is the first (and only) Canadian registered charity to deal with menstrual equity.

The Period Purse also offers five period-positive education sessions for free, in both English and French. They are geared towards students in Grades 5–12, post-secondary and adults of all genders and delivered virtually and in-person (where available) by trained facilitators. They also offer a presentation, geared toward Grade 9 students through adulthood, that was created by, and for, First Nation, Métis, Inuit groups/organizations.

The Period Purse's efforts not only complement the Ontario Health curriculum by addressing crucial aspects of menstrual health but also go beyond, encouraging students to become leaders and advocates for change in their communities. Through their innovative programs and inclusive approach, they empower students to champion menstrual equity and contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all.



L to R: Yves Durocher, 2023–2024 OTF President; The Period Purse founder Jana Girdauskas, 2024 winner; and Ian Pettigrew, OTF Secretary-Treasurer