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President

Advocacy: A Persistent Pursuit

As my tenure as president draws to a close, I find myself being a little nostalgic. The presidency has allowed me many amazing experiences, but the most rewarding aspect has been my journey throughout our beautiful province, visiting members' local associations. During these visits I had the opportunity to recount some of the many ways CPCO works on behalf of its members.

Advocacy for CPCO members is forged on many fronts. While the outcomes are not always exactly what we desire, let us not underestimate the impact of CPCO's contributions.

CPCO has continually reminded our Catholic partners and the government that in order for principals and vice-principals to focus on instructional leadership and realize this Ministry's three core education priorities, there are several areas that must be addressed.

CPCO has consistently lobbied our partners and the government to streamline initiatives and the reports required. Considerable effort has been made on the Ministry's part to align initiatives, as is evidenced by the merging of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and the Student Success Branches into one Student Achievement Branch. Boards are now required to submit one improvement plan that includes both literacy and student success goals. Next year this will also include the special education plan. Our concerns over safe schools legislation regarding victims' rights have been heard. We continue to struggle, however, to keep our schools and students safe due to the decreases in teacher supervision.

Declining enrolment will certainly pose hardships for boards, yet CPCO continues to advocate for a principal in every school and for boards to be held accountable for their spending on vice-principal positions in relation to the funding received. More than ever, vice-principals are needed to support instructional leadership, ensure safer schools and contribute to succession planning in school boards. Hopefully twinning and tripling of schools, and teaching principals and vice-principals, will not be the immediate solution to declining enrolment. Such action would not only be a major step backwards for school administrators' working conditions, but also for our students and schools. Education funding will be reviewed next year. It is our hope that funding for principals and vice-principals will finally be *sweatered* requiring boards to use the funds as intended.

The *Principal/Vice-Principal Performance Appraisal* document and the development of the *Effective Practices Guide for Principal/Vice-Principal Terms and Conditions of Employment* was a major

focus of CPCO's efforts this year. This was the first time that a tri-level leadership group consisting of directors, supervisory officers and principals' associations worked together in an effort to create a document that will eventually be legislated. This kind of collaboration was certainly reflective of the tri-level leadership and respect espoused in the *Catholic Leadership Framework*.

Every stakeholder in education should be concerned about how best to attract the right people to leadership. Vice-principals and principals of today are the supervisory officers and directors of the future. CPCO strongly believes that the ability to *try-on* the role for a period of up to two years, with an option to return to the teachers' union without loss of seniority is a major obstacle the Ministry must address with teacher federations, sooner than later. While these discussions have not yet begun, we remain hopeful that they will occur in an effort to bring credence to the *Ontario Leadership Strategy*.

While principal associations have not yet been successful in getting the *Effective Practices Guide for Principal/Vice-Principal Terms and Conditions of Employment* set in legislation, we see the guide as a major first step in the right direction. CPCO hopes that the guide will prove helpful to boards and local principal associations in reviewing their terms and conditions annually as this is now recognized as an effective practice.

During my presidency I have been constantly amazed and proud that in the face of ongoing distractions, principals and vice-principals have kept their eyes on the main goals; our distinctive Catholic education system, student achievement and student safety.

This has been a year with many challenges, but one filled with hope for the future. Trust me when I say that CPCO's staff, executive council and representatives have worked diligently on your behalf. There is much more to do, but not before we all enjoy some time to rest and recharge. May God bless you in the holy work you do each and every day in our Catholic school communities. I wish you a well-deserved summer holiday with your family and friends.