



LOU ROCHA
Executive Director

Endings and Beginnings

Support for Leadership Development

AS another school year ends there are many changes occurring across the schools in this province. In CPCO approximately 14 per cent of the principals and vice-principals will retire this June. While a handful will return as occasional teachers and other special assignments, the vast majority will leave careers that have spanned 30 or more years. The next three years will see the ongoing exit of education's baby boomers (those born after the Second World War) who are able to retire at age 55. According to the CPCO census (February 2006) this trend will continue until 2009 before we see a minor decline in retirement patterns.

The leadership exodus is being experienced in many other public and private institutions. For the Catholic community this is evident in health care and family services, as well as education. The issue has been identified by a task force at the University of St. Michael's College and a think-tank is being planned in July 2006 to be followed by a larger symposium next year.

For many teachers this exodus will provide opportunities to experience leadership at the administrative level. The CPCO census indicates that our newest administrators (less than five years administrative experience) have 11 or more years of education experience. This is an increase from the 2003 census and it indicates that more experienced teachers are becoming vice-principals and principals.

For school boards the demographic information signals a need to think about succession planning at all levels. While much energy and time has been spent on teacher recruitment during the past five years, there is no doubt that school boards must carefully plan to replenish their leadership pools for principals, superintendents and directors of education. A concerted effort is required to identify teachers with leadership potential, to motivate them to consider administration, and to provide support for discernment and training. School boards must also provide increased support for those administrators who are new in their roles. Just as the Ministry of Education has mandated new teacher induction, so should school boards provide a similar support system for its new administrators.

School boards must also prepare for the development of senior leadership during the next five years. The CPCO census has consistently shown that 12 per cent of members hold Supervisory Officer qualifications. However, the census also indicates that 65 per cent of current members are not planning to take the SO qualification program. Within that group more than 55 per cent do not hold a Master's degree and are therefore not eligible to take the SOQP. This is not surprising since two-thirds of teachers currently taking the Principal's Qualification Program do not hold a Master's degree. It also means that the senior leadership pool will be smaller in future years simply on the basis of academic qualifications. It is therefore important that boards identify and support all principals who have the potential to become senior leaders in the coming years.

At the provincial level the McGuinty government recently announced school-based funding to provide a full-time principal in every school over 50 students. This funding replaces the previous enrolment based model that was the core reason for part-time, twinned and teaching principals in small schools. The government has finally recognized the key role that principals play as school and community leaders. The additional funding will positively impact on school safety and student success. By allocating a full-time principal to every school the Ministry has created the most important support for instructional leadership in the last ten years while addressing a significant part of the workload issue for principals in small schools. Schools boards now have the funding, updated at current salary levels, to support all principals in their key roles. It is imperative that this funding be used for the intended purpose. It should not be redirected to other system needs.

September 2006 will mark the beginning of a very important year for the current government because of the provincial elections in October 2007. Premier McGuinty has described Ontario as the "show me" province. During the course of the next year his government will begin to tally the successes in education. The campaign will cite improved test scores and graduation rates – the outcomes of increased education funding – and the numbers will be used to affirm public confidence in the government's education priorities.

The principals and vice-principals of this province have been integral to the success of the government's education agenda despite waiting and waiting to have their needs addressed. Before former Minister Kennedy ended his career in Ontario he set out numerous initiatives in his Role of the Principal discussion paper. It will be incumbent on current Minister Papatello to bring those initiatives to fruition during the beginning years of her assignment.

Lou Rocha
Executive Director

Notes:

(1) Jim Byrne, Windsor-Essex, received the CPCO Distinguished Service Award at the 2006 Annual Conference. He was recognized for his pioneer efforts to recruit CPCO's first members in the spring of 1998. Jim's retirement marks the passing of an era in CPCO's history. Best wishes and good health to him in the years ahead.

(2) Carole Clune, editor of *Principal Connections*, is retiring after six years at the helm of this magazine. Carole's expertise and diligence has raised our magazine from its humble beginnings to a leading publication for administrators in Catholic schools and board offices. CPCO members thank Carole for her professional efforts and wish her well in her future endeavours.