



Lou Rocha
CPCO Executive Director



Do You Hear What I Hear?

This morning the radio announcer warned motorists to be careful on Sunday. The warning had nothing to do with flooding from three days of heavy rain. There were no snowstorms in the area and threats of a tsunami do not bother people in Toronto. No, the warning had to do with the Santa Claus parade, the official start of the Christmas shopping season. The announcer also reported that 150 people stood in line during three days of rain to get the first 100 Playstation 3 computer entertainment systems.

The stores are playing Christmas carols to spread "Holiday Cheer" and the clerks are complaining about the monotonous Muzak choirs. In our schools, the principals, vice-principals and teachers are well into report cards. Advent liturgies, Christmas pageants and food drives are just around the corner. Yes, the joyful season of Christ's birth is once again upon us and spirits are uplifted by thoughts of some much-needed holiday time with friends and family.

But wait! What is that growing murmur of a cappella voices? They are not singing joyful carols. These voices sound weary and angry. I can see their faces now. What could be the matter - why the deep sighs and long faces? Who are these people who do not seem to have the season's spirit? My goodness, they are principals and vice-principals. What is going on here?

Excuse me. I couldn't help notice your glum look. What's troubling you? What's that, you say? You've been living on raisins for lunch while doing yard duty every day? You wait how long for the third bus run to leave the school every day? You're exhausted from doing hours of scheduled supervision each week and then covering classes because all the substitute teachers are covering in-services for your teachers? You ran out of on-calls last week? You've been in your office all weekend completing the paper work to account for the extra funding that you were given one week to spend? You're frustrated because your e-mail is down and the board just cut the tech staff? (This might be a blessing, my friend!). You have how many report cards to read in the next three days? How many training workshops did you attend last month? How much was the cut to your school budget? What do you mean you're burned out and looking into early retirement? What do you mean no one is listening?

I moved back from the passing throng and watched the slumping shoulders pass by. I could not help but notice there were many younger faces in the crowd.

Hello there! Could you tell me why you look so tired? What do you mean you have two jobs at once? Oh, you're a teaching principal. There are more of you this year? I thought those jobs were abolished? Didn't the government grant enough money for every school over 50 students to have a full-time principal?

Another voice called out, "At least she's in one place all day. I have to travel 30 km between my two schools. My gas bills are so high I am going to start taking the bus. At least I can eat my lunch on the way". The murmur rose noticeably. There was growing confusion as people started to argue about who had more students. Then they started counting their teachers; then their class sizes; then their portables; then their buses. Before long, the air was blue with numbers, large and small, and the voices got louder and louder. But no one was listening.

Along came another group of people who did not wear rubber boots and yard-duty coats. These people were also talking about numbers; one point one million; two point seven million; 21 million. They argued about their reserve funds and supervisors. The principals and vice-principals were awestruck by such big numbers. The people with the really big numbers looked perplexed. The noise got louder and louder. But no one was listening.

Suddenly a single voice called out. She promised to check on the numbers. She said she wanted to put all their concerns and suggestions in a basket to take to the big pink house in the park where a man might be able to help with these horrible number problems. She said she would do her best to help everyone.

The principals and vice-principals looked at the people with the really big numbers. The people with the really big numbers looked at the woman. Everyone was puzzled but they seemed willing to give her a chance. They wondered if the man in the big pink house in the park could solve the horrible number problems. Could he make the principals and vice-principals happy again? Could he do something so that more people would want to become principals and vice-principals? Would the man in the big pink house in the park listen to her?

Lou Rocha
Executive Director