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Passing the Torch

As I write this article, it is a warm summer morning and an afternoon tee off time beckons. Not far removed, however, is the realization that the sounds of summer will soon be replaced by the clamouring of children and we will be immersed in the challenges and rewards of the 2007-08 school year. On behalf of the CPCO Executive Council ...

Welcome back! With school plans unfolding and a provincial election fast approaching, this, our 10th anniversary year, promises to be exciting and eventful. On a personal note, I am both proud and humbled to serve as president this coming year and to represent the interests of Catholic principals and vice-principals. I look forward to hearing and learning from each of you as I travel the province in the months to come.

My first few days in Toronto were certainly *interesting*. Did you know that if one drops one's garage door key card where one cannot reach it, a Honda CRV is capable of traversing a 45-degree incline in reverse? Did you also know that the travel time to drive 31 kilometres across the city at 8 a.m. is approximately one hour and 20 minutes? And, did you know that if you are upset with the driving habits of those around you, the correct response is to pull in front of their vehicle and spray your windshield washer in an attempt to cover their car? While true, these anecdotes also serve as great metaphors for a day in the life of any school administrator. Turn on your wiper blades because someone is bound to try to spray you today, back up when you must, and let the day unfold as it will, trusting that your path will eventually take you to where you need to go.

My first responsibility as president was to speak at our CPCO Principal's Qualification Program (PQP) sites in early July. Congratulations to our professional learning staff and the many site instructors for developing and delivering such an enriching learning experience for our future Catholic school administrators. It was truly invigorating to witness the knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment of the candidates in this program. Each was acutely aware of the current threats to Catholic education and the need for the entire Catholic community to be able to speak with conviction on behalf of Catholic education. CPCO past-president, Don Rait, notes that the language of education in Ontario has come to reflect the differing views of education and that terminology such as servant leadership, moral imperative and character education has become interwoven into the fabric of education jargon. Don goes on to point out that our language as Catholic educators is unique and that we must each become conversant in that language.

*Catholic leaders are called to Sacrament.
Catholic leaders are called to Discipleship.
Catholic leaders are called to Spirituality.
Catholic leaders are called to Gospel.
Catholic leaders are called to Evangelize.*

I left each session of our PQP courses confident that our future leaders shared the CPCO vision.

The Executive Council also met in July and, as we do each summer, planned for the year to come. Our meeting started with a celebration of Faith where our executive members were commissioned. We were able to offer thanks to our retiring executive members, Paul Carr and Linda Frost, and to welcome Joe Czackowski as elementary councillor. Highlights of our three days in Niagara Falls included strategic planning, reviewing our legal benefit plan, making committee appointments and examining current issues facing Catholic school leaders. In the months to come, you will hear more about the future of Catholic education, supervision, Bill 212, educational funding, principal/vice-principal appraisal, principal and vice-principal allocations, job security, legal concerns, terms and conditions, and work load to name a few.

On Thursday, July 5, 2007, I was honoured to represent CPCO at the funeral of Gianluigi (Louie) Urso. Louie, a principal with the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, was tragically taken from our midst on June 29 at the age of 36. It was indeed *A Celebration of the Life in Christ of Louie Urso* as over one thousand mourners lined the sidewalks and surrounding streets of Assumption Parish in Windsor. I would like to share just one small part of that celebration in the form of a passage by George Bernard Shaw that served as a reflection of Louie's life and, through him, a reflection for each of us to ponder.

*I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.
I want to be thoroughly used up when I die.
For the harder I work the more I live.
I rejoice in life for its own sake.
Life is no brief candle to me.
It's a sort of splendid torch which I've got to hold up for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to our future generations.*

Have a great year, keep one another in your prayers and hold life's torch high!