



## Where Have All the Presidents Gone?

By **Marisa Celenza**, Editor, and  
**Nelly Kelders**, Member Services Director



2002-03 Executive Council  
Back L-R: Brent Wilson, Patrick Murray, Don Rait  
Front L-R: Jim Leonard, Terri Macdonald, Paul Carr, Nelly Kelders, Lou Rocha

The Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario is a voluntary organization of approximately 2100 regular and associate members. The organization is governed by an executive council who meets monthly to administer the business of the organization. The only full-time member of the executive council who is released from his or her duties, as a school administrator is the president. Everyone else volunteers his or her time to CPCO. The president's term of office is one year from July 1 to June 30. The learning curve is steep: getting to know a new staff; learning the names of all the partners in

education; finding their way around the subway system in Toronto; learning to like hotel rooms and food; getting used to new living arrangements; being away from family and friends; and much more. The year rushes by quickly. The president is the face of CPCO and is the association's representative at political functions, at a variety of partner working tables, at local principal/vice-principal meetings and at CPCO meetings and conferences. It is an exciting, but busy year.

We asked each of the past-presidents to share with us their journey since leaving

office and one significant memory from their year as president. All of the past-presidents commented on their visits to local associations as one of the highlights of their term. They welcomed the opportunity to meet, speak and spend time with CPCO members across the province and remarked on the outstanding hospitality they encountered. Catholic principals and vice-principals' dedication to their students and Catholic education are "second to none". The visits served to increase the presidents' passion to advocate on behalf of the membership to address their needs as a professional community.

### Jim Byrne (1996-1998)

After his presidency Jim served as principal of Saint Thomas of Villanova Catholic Secondary School in LaSalle to June 2003. He was appointed Supervisor of Human Resources for Academic Staff with the Windsor-Essex CDSB from June 2003 through June 2005. He served as vice-principal at Cardinal Carter Catholic Secondary School in Leamington from June 2005 through January 31, 2006 at which time he retired from the board. He has returned to the board on a part-time basis in his present capacity as coordinator of the New Teacher Induction Program.

The most significant thing that happened during Jim's term was that principals and vice-principals were removed from the teachers' union by the government of the day. That act ultimately provided Catholic principals and vice-principals with the challenge of forming their own association and subsequently the opportunity to act independently and to speak with an unfettered voice on issues of importance to them.

### Marny Beale (1998-1999)

Marny returned to the Dufferin-Peel CDSB as principal of Lester B. Pearson Catholic School in Brampton following her presidency. She retired from the board in 2001. She was elected president of The Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) in 2003. In that capacity, she traveled across Canada to meet with provincial principals' organizations and sat on international principals' boards that met in Germany, Ireland, the US and Canada. As CPCO is the only Catholic principals' association in North America and Europe, she often heard how fortunate CPCO members are to have a professional organization speaking on their behalf. Marny retired to her home town of Windsor and became involved in local organizations, teaching adult literacy classes and volunteering with the Children's Wish Foundation and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. She also participated in speaking engagements for CAP.

The initial year of the association was difficult as CPCO was breaking new ground each day whether it was insurance, contracts, hiring staff,



2004-05 Executive Council

L-R: Don Rait, Dan Tighe, Brian Rivait, Joan Duckitt, Lou Rocha, Premier McGuinty, Patrick Murray, Paul Carr, Terri Macdonald, Patty Mardero, Linda Frost

meeting with new partners, or organizing our first annual general meeting. With the help of the Executive Council, Executive Director Ann Clement and the goodwill of the membership, it was a marvellous year. She strived to keep members informed about CPCO's progress in meetings with the Ministry of Education, trustees, the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) and the supervisory officers to promote CPCO's need for professional development in leadership, ensure the presence of full-time principals in each school, and enrich resources for teachers and students in our schools.

She enjoys reading the weekly updates from the CPCO president and *Principal Connections* to savour the wonderful journey CPCO continues to walk on behalf of students, teachers, parents, principals and vice-principals in our Catholic schools.

#### **Mary-Catherine Kelly (1999-2000)**

Following her year as president, Mary-Catherine went back to St. Stephen Secondary School in Bowmanville as principal and during 2002-04 she was at St. Peter Secondary School in Peterborough. In 2004 Mary-Catherine was appointed superintendent with the Durham CDSB. Since January 2006 she has been the director of education for the Northwest CDSB.

For Mary-Catherine there were several key moments: working with principals in the province through their first set of personal services contracts; becoming a full member on the Board of Directors for ICE; and making presentations to the government with a key focus on Bill 160 and its impact on safety and supervision in schools. The establishment of the Academy of Catholic Educational Leadership (ACCEL) to develop ministry-funded professional learning programs by practicing principals was another highlight.

#### **Arlene McCarthy (2000-2001)**

Arlene returned to the Halton CDSB to serve as principal at St. Luke's School for two years. She retired in June 2003 and moved

to Kitchener with her husband to be close to their grandchildren. They have also traveled to Alaska, Mexico, France and Italy. Arlene writes the newsletter for her local Canadian Federation of University Women club and belongs to a local Probus organization. After taking art lessons for several years, she is proudly producing works of art. In addition, fiction writing and making home movies of the grandchildren fills her days.

She remembers the challenge and stimulation of change in CPCO during her year as president. Lou Rocha was hired as executive director and Anne Clement returned to take charge of professional development. The provincial staff was increasing to meet the needs of CPCO's growing membership.

Principals and vice-principals were implementing change in their schools at the same time as their own positions were rapidly changing. Their input and requests for help in managing these mandated changes motivated Arlene to research and write the CPCO position paper on *The Principal's Role in Education Reform*, which was presented, to then Minister of Education Ecker. By making the Ministry aware of the impact on principals of its education reform initiatives, CPCO was able to ensure professional development courses across the province to meet the needs of principals and vice-principals. Arlene proudly remembers the hard work of Marny Beale and Mary-Catherine Kelly in bringing CPCO's Principal's Qualification Program to fruition in Ottawa in the summer of 2000.

#### **Brent Wilson (2001-2002)**

Upon returning to his board, Brent served as principal of St. Nicholas Adult High School. During his tenure there, he established the St. Nicholas Virtual Academy; an e-learning school that supports full-credit e-learning credits and credit recovery e-units for all students and adult learners. In January 2006 Brent was appointed Superintendent of Information Technology for the Ottawa Catholic School Board and supervises three high schools and 14 elementary schools in the east end of Ottawa.



**Gala Dinner 2005**

Back L-R: Patrick Murray, Jim Byrne, Marny Beale, Anne Clement, Paul Carr, Nelly Kelders, Lou Rocha

Front L-R: Mary-Catherine Kelly, Terri McDonald, Arlene McCarthy, Nancy Missouri

He is currently the chair of the Canadian Automobile Association for North and Eastern Ontario. In his spare time, Brent has traveled the world, and had the good fortune to play golf at St. Andrews the day after the British Open.

Brent's work in establishing and writing the first advocacy briefs to present to the ministry regarding principal and vice-principal funding and working terms was memorable.

#### **Nelly Kelders (2002-2003)**

Following her year as president, Nelly was seconded from the St. Clair CDSB to CPCO as Program and Member Services Coordinator. In September 2007 she was appointed Member Services Director at CPCO. The variety of her portfolios has enabled Nelly to continue to work with members across the province in a variety of capacities including: professional learning; the Long Term Disability program; communications and marketing; the annual CPCO conference; and staff advisor to standing committees.

Nelly's year as president held many significant events, which all related to building relationships and being an advocate for Catholic leaders and Catholic education. Some of the most memorable times included: joining with all partners in Catholic education for the first Catholic Education Symposium; presenting CPCO's submission to the Education Equality Task Force led by Dr. Rozanski; presenting a submission to the Rural Education Strategy led by Dr. James Downey; and participating in CPCO's 2003 conference and AGM.

She felt that the year was especially amazing because of the support provided by the staff at the provincial office. That such a small group of people could accomplish so much was truly outstanding. The willingness of Executive Director Lou Rocha to share his expertise and provide guidance throughout the year only enhanced the feeling that this organization models servant leadership.

#### **Terri MacDonald (2003-2004)**

Terri was seconded from the Hamilton-Wentworth CDSB to the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) in the

position of Principal - School Support and Outreach following her year as president. She retired from this position and the Hamilton-Wentworth CDSB in June 2007. Terri has since returned to EQAO on a professional services contract.

She has very fond memories of the support she received from the CPCO provincial office and the membership during a very critical milestone in our organization's short history. October 2003 marked a change in government in Ontario and it was incumbent upon CPCO to establish their credibility with the newly-elected Liberals under Premier Dalton McGuinty. CPCO needed to work diligently to have a significant voice at the Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy's Partnership Table.

As president, she had much to contribute to the conversation because of the commitment and volunteerism of the CPCO membership to participate in online surveys, CDR meetings and the president's local visits. Without exception, each local association provided the facts and rich bank of comments that gave such credence to the stories CPCO shared.

#### **Patrick Murray (2004-2005)**

Following his year as president, Patrick was assigned to St. William School in Emeryville. He was transferred to St. Pius X in Tecumseh in September 2007. Following his year as past-president Patrick took a year off from serving on any committees and any involvement outside of the school. However, in September 2007 he found himself once again actively involved in areas that have interested him for many years. He is the local chair of the Personal Services Contract team and member of the local principals' executive, Teacher Leadership Team and Principal Mentoring Committee.

The entire year as president provided Patrick with a lifetime of memories. The most lasting of which was the support and friendship given by all members of this association throughout the province. The collegiality that members of CPCO demonstrate on a provincial level cannot be duplicated by any organization. Patrick stated:

*Each time I visited a local association or we held a CDR meeting my convictions about the quality of our leadership in the Catholic schools of this province was reaffirmed. Our children have been truly blessed. It is this daily modeling of Catholic leadership by our members that will ensure the success of the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario and our Catholic schools well into the future.*

#### **Paul Carr (2005-2006)**

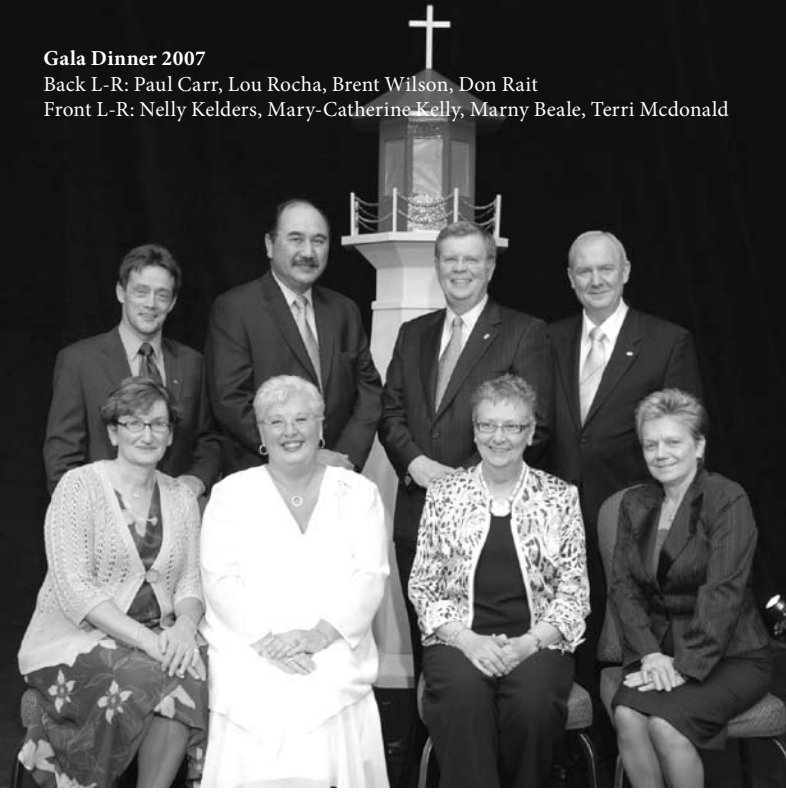
Paul returned to Thunder Bay CDSB as principal of Corpus Christi Catholic school and retired in June 2007. He is currently lecturing in Educational Law (from a Catholic perspective) at Lakehead University.

Paul views his time as president as one filled with significant opportunities to serve both CPCO members and Catholic education in the province of Ontario. During his tenure, CPCO was

**Gala Dinner 2007**

Back L-R: Paul Carr, Lou Rocha, Brent Wilson, Don Rait

Front L-R: Nelly Kelders, Mary-Catherine Kelly, Marny Beale, Terri McDonald



struggling to win the support of the fledgling Liberal government for support vis-à-vis the *Role of the Principal* submission.

Paul worked with his colleagues to advocate for a reduced workload, a modified Teacher Performance Appraisal model, and the right to job security for our members. He had the privilege

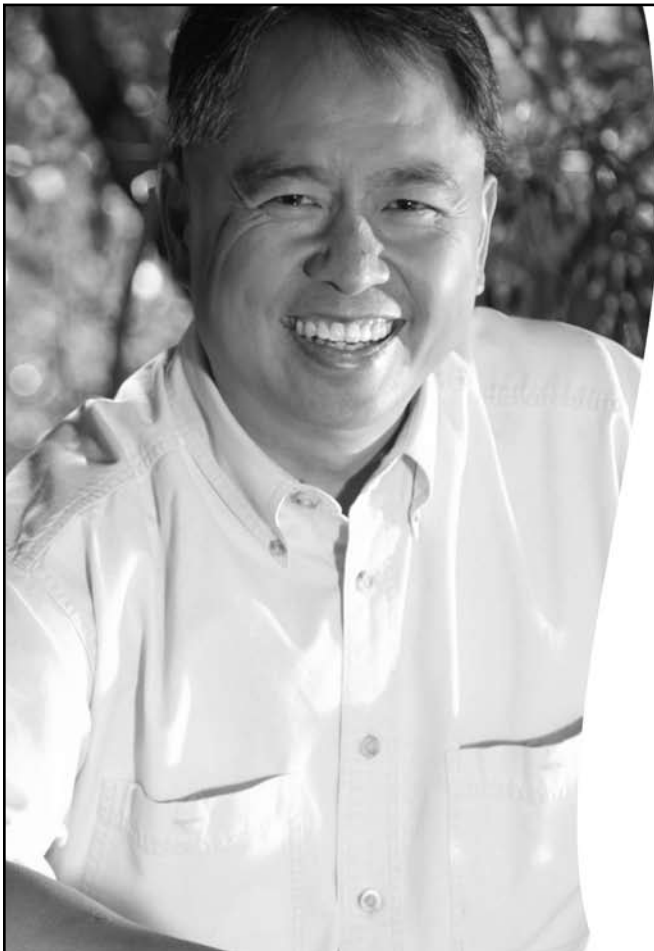
along with the Executive Council to play a leadership role rallying all stakeholders in the fight to preserve the right to Catholic education in the province of Ontario. It remains significant to Paul that CPCO hosted the first joint meeting of the provincial executives of CPCO and OECTA in order to dialogue in support of Catholic education.

With all of these challenges, the opportunity that remains most significant for Paul was being witness to the incredible ministry of our members under some of the most challenging conditions.

**Don Rait (2006-2007)**

Don returned as principal at Fr. F.X. O'Reilly School in Tottenham. He is serving on the Executive Council as the past-president. Don is one of the facilitators of the CPCO retreat, *Living Parables, Sowing Seeds*. He co-facilitated this retreat at the 2007 *When Faith Meets Pedagogy* Conference in Toronto.

The most significant aspect of the presidency for Don was to focus on the Catholic nature of the role of leader. Leading a group of seven principals, two directors of education and two superintendents to Australia in July 2007, to research succession planning and the role of Catholic leadership in schools was very significant. It is through this venture that he hopes CPCO recognizes its unique role in Catholic educational leadership not only in Ontario but also in Canada, the United States and the rest of the English-speaking world.



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