

MOVING FORWARD

AGM ADDRESS

By **Joan Duckitt**, President-elect

In the past few weeks, I have reflected on the meaning of the conference theme, *Sowing the Seeds of Faith*, the related parable, the celebration of CPCO's 10th anniversary and my journey to this moment in time. Nineteen ninety-seven marked my first year as a Catholic administrator. In April of 1998, I was facing the same decision as many of you were after being removed from the teachers' bargaining unit. Should I join an association for Catholic principals and vice-principals, namely the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario? I decided that I must get involved in CPCO. Thus, the seed of involvement was planted first at the local level, then regionally and since 2004, on the provincial executive. Who would have thought in 1998 that I would be president of CPCO.

We know that a small seed, given the proper conditions of soil, sunlight, moisture and nurturance can produce fruit so much larger than the single seed it came from. For the last ten years, CPCO has grown in such a way. It is a unique organization - the only Catholic association of its kind both nationally and internationally. In ten short years we have harvested many positive relationships with our Catholic partners, the Ministry and other organizations. I am not too sure what the next ten years hold for our organization, but I am committed to following the path of our past presidents; Jim, Marny, Mary-Catherine, Arlene, Brent, Nelly, Terri, Patrick, Paul, Don and Dan in sowing the seeds of faith for CPCO. I will proudly represent you and work for you in order to make the coming year the best it can be. I promise to approach this task with the same passion that supported our founding executive.

During the next school year, we will continue to focus on various aspects of the five-year strategic plan. Continuing the work with our Catholic partners in designing a strategy and allocating resources to protect the future of Catholic education has to be a priority. We must openly celebrate our distinctiveness and continue to sow the seeds of faith and hope, in our students, schools and communities.

Improving the working conditions for the principals and vice-principals of this province is of prime importance. Healthy and caring schools cannot exist when we have principals and vice-principals who are not cared for and unhealthy. After all, we do know what happens to seeds that fall on rocky ground. As we enter this next round of negotiations, our focus will continue to



be on building relationships, and on training terms and conditions teams. The B.C. Health Workers' case and the subsequent ruling regarding good faith bargaining should have a positive impact on how boards negotiate with their principals and vice-principals. We will carefully watch how this unfolds over the next few months in the various districts. Further monitoring of principal and vice-principal workload issues, especially in areas of supervision will be required in response to the new teacher contracts.

Lobbying the government on the topics of the role of the principal and job protection will continue to be a focus in the coming year. If we are indeed as vital to the success of education in this province as past ministers of education have proclaimed, then it is time for them to act on those words.

Last February when addressing the Council of District Representatives, Minister Wynne pledged that there would be no new initiatives in the coming year and that we would be given time to consolidate past initiatives. The CPCO Professional Learning staff have been actively engaged in attempting to align those various Ministry initiatives for our members. We must continue to engage our local superintendents and directors as well as other partners about the continued downloading of responsibilities to principals and vice-principals.

It will be necessary to monitor the impact of Bill 212 in the coming year. I look forward to hearing your personal stories and experiences regarding timelines, workload and victim's rights.

The principal and vice-principal performance appraisal field tests are coming to a close at the end of this school year. CPCO and other stakeholders will closely scrutinize the evaluation of the field tests. If an inordinate amount of the appraisal is weighted according to such items as EQAO results and school effectiveness, this will add to our struggle of balancing the demands on effective school leaders.

Legal services and protection continue to be of key importance to most members. Concern over the rise in legal cases, and in particular, the number of College of Teachers' complaints against principals and vice-principals has prompted us to request data in this regard for review purposes.

Our executive will continue the work of past executives in the area of succession planning, which is so vital to the future of our organization. I encourage all our members to become involved in CPCO at the local and/or provincial level. We pride ourselves on being a grassroots organization. We need your input, involvement and expertise in order to represent you and to be the true voice of Catholic education in the province of Ontario.

There are many things that can interfere with the growth of a seed - the condition of the soil, the weather and other plants can choke its growth. However, all seeds have the potential to take root and grow. Likewise, our organization has encountered

numerous obstacles in the past ten years, but because of the determination, involvement and passion of its members, previous executives and presidents, CPCO has flourished and continues to be a respected Catholic voice in education.

Our challenge for the future is to continue the harvest, commission the labourers, nurture the fruit and plant more seeds. We must remember always the words from the parable, "The seed *is* the Word," and as Archbishop Collins said, "We are the soil."

Congratulations to the new executive. It will be a pleasure to work closely with them, with Lou and the other dedicated members of the CPCO staff. To members of the past executive, Don, Aggie and Kevin who are leaving us, it has been a wonderful journey. Many thanks are extended to you for your camaraderie and your commitment to our organization. You will be missed.

To Dan Tighe, our current president, who has worked tirelessly on our behalf this year - a big thank you. Dan has served with passion and dedication, always speaking his mind. Since he took office, Dan has been cognizant of the transition work that must take place between presidents. Thank you for assisting me in this transition and for your friendship and encouragement.

Finally, I am indeed honoured and humbled to serve all of you as the eleventh president of the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario, and like those before me to sow the seeds of faith and hope. I look forward to meeting with you throughout the coming year as I visit your local associations. Continue the good and holy work you do every day for our students.



Come and Celebrate
CPCO's 11th Annual Conference



Celebrating the Human Face of God
2009 Conference & Annual General Meeting
April 30 - May 2, 2009



Hosted by the Dufferin-Peel Catholic Principals and Vice-principals.