

# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES SEMINAR

By **Nelly Kelders**, Member Services Director

The agenda was packed, the room was full and anticipation was high as the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario launched its annual Employment Services Seminar on September 26, 2008. More than one hundred members were in attendance of which half were new to the process.

The event was chaired by Glenn Miller, chair of the Member Security Committee. He stated that the purpose of this seminar was to give participants the tools needed to do their work effectively. The committee used the feedback provided at the end of last year's seminar to create the agenda for this seminar. Glenn acknowledged the hard work of the committee, as did President Joan Duckitt in her opening comments. They both commented on the fact that the planning began immediately after the January 2008 seminar ended.

The session began with a review of the resources CPCO makes available to negotiating teams. Paul McGuire, a retired principal, has been assisting CPCO with work in contract research and the online tool, *Contract Manager*. This is an online tool developed by CPCO to assist negotiating teams in their research and preparation for discussions with senior administration regarding their terms and conditions of employment. *Contract Manager* includes a variety of reports including salary histories, ministry memos, technical funding papers and member contracts. Access to this tool is restricted to negotiating teams. Paul is also working on an *In-school Administration Calculator* that will assist negotiators in determining how many school administrators their board's funding permits.

Paul took the group through the highlights of a survey CPCO conducted in the spring of 2008 for negotiating teams. Seventy-five per cent of the teams responded to the survey. The data collected also helped the Member Security Committee in their planning for the seminar. Respondents recognized the importance of a legal review of their terms and conditions contracts. However there was no pattern as to which items were regarded as most important to review.

Member Services Director Nelly Kelders provided an update in the use of the survey tool, *Surveymonkey*. Seventeen principals' associations have taken advantage of this resource to assist them in determining the priorities of their members regarding terms and conditions of employment. Nelly reviewed the various components of the survey that the teams might consider in developing further surveys. She also addressed the problem of members opting out of previous surveys. She outlined how they can be re-instated so that they have an opportunity to provide their feedback.

Participants received a binder as part of their registration. This organizational tool was reviewed by Joe Czaczkowski, executive liaison to the Member Security Committee. Members had indicated in the feedback from the last seminar that they valued the binder and

preferred it to receiving information on a CD. Joe stressed the importance of using the contents of the binder as a history of negotiations that could be passed on to the next group of negotiators.

Mehul Mehta from the Education Finance Branch of the Ministry of Education explained various components of the *Education Funding Technical Paper 2008-09*. He emphasized the government's priority to maintain a strong, publicly-funded education system. He noted that the three major components of the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) are the foundation grant, special or unique needs and pupil accommodation funding. Almost half the dollars go to the foundation grants as described in the technical paper. Funding for school administration is included in the School Foundation Grant. Boards can staff schools according to their local needs but there are some restrictions based on special programs.

Times have definitely changed and more people are using the courts to air their frustrations and demands. Complaints to the Human Rights Commission and the Ontario College of Teachers have risen in recent years. Principals and vice-principals need to be pro-active in their own legal protection in these instances. Victoria and Kevin Girling from STERLON Underwriting Managers discussed the importance of indemnification clauses in terms and conditions of employment contracts. After defining the meaning of an indemnity clause, they worked through several case scenarios of possible situations where it would be important for school administrators to have the indemnity clause in their contracts.

James Cameron a lawyer with Raven, Cameron, Ballantyne & Yazbeck LLP continued the discussion on legal issues with a description of the types of complaints that tend to be filed with the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). Most complaints fall into four categories: special education, failure to supervise, Human Rights complaints and financial issues. He emphasized that how administrators react to the complaint is very important. They should not see the complaint as a reflection upon themselves. Often the principal is only one of several people named in the complaint and often the complaint is a matrix of issues. James reminded members to contact STERLON whenever a complaint is made about them to the OCT; they need to get advice as to next steps. Early intervention is key to resolving many of these issues.

From an experienced lawyer the focus shifted to the experiences of four veteran negotiators, Dan Tighe, Gretchen Schuler, Clara Pitoscia and Randy Bissionette. They were asked to respond to a series of questions ranging from how they gather information and assemble their teams to succession planning for future negotiations to support needed from CPCO. One of the most important points made during the discussion was the need to continuously build a positive relationship with senior administration. Another important aspect was that of communication with members and letting them know what is

happening relative to the discussions. Linked to the communication is the need to build consensus within the local association.

The panelists all pointed out how invaluable the Employment Services Seminar is for them. It allows them access to information and speakers they otherwise would not have had. The networking provided opportunities for sharing of ideas and concerns. Access to legal reviews for contract clauses, *Contract Manager* and surveys were seen as particularly useful tools to the local associations.

Another topic of interest at the seminar was the status of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP). Jeff Holmes, director of pension & economic affairs at OTPP accepted the invitation to update the negotiators on the status of the pension plan. He explained the reasons for the shortfall in the Plan and how the pension board is addressing this shortfall. In a 2007 survey members clearly indicated they would prefer to see changes to the cost of living increases. Changing the 85 factor was the least preferred option. For every retiree in the Plan there are 1.6 members working. The average teacher works 26 years and is retired for 30 years. Member fees increased January 1, 2007, January 1, 2008 and another increase will come in January 2009.

Jeff recommended that members sign up for iAccess on the OTPP website so that they can track their pensions and use the pension calculator to come up with their own retirement scenarios. The results of the 2007 survey are also available on the website, as are questions and answers about the current state of the pension plan. The OTPP website is [www.otpp.com](http://www.otpp.com).

Jeff's presentation was followed by Tony Sawinski, pensions & benefits officer with the Retired Teachers of Ontario (RTO). Tony offered some practical ideas for school administrators to consider as they approach eligibility for retirement. He echoed Jeff Holmes' recommendation to register for iAccess on the OTPP website. The retirement workshops offered by RTO tend to be general in nature because the presenters do not have the pension histories of the individuals attending the seminar. He provided case scenarios of school administrators and their pensions. The gap between current net income

and pensions will be reduced because of fewer deductions, less taxes and fewer personal expenses associated with education. The rules for retirement gratuity changed in the 1990s so members need to plan how this income can be invested to their best advantage. He also noted that it is better to retire at the end of the month than at the beginning of the month as pension cheques are issued at the end of the month following the month of retirement. Consult a financial planner to assist you in making your decisions when it comes time to retire.

Minister of Education Kathleen Wynne addressed the seminar participants Saturday morning. She thanked the participants and CPCO for their leadership roles and the collegial approach we have taken in our discussions with the Ministry. She again emphasized that there is strong support within the government for the Catholic school system.

The Minister commented on the public's increased confidence for public education. This government has worked to change the tone in education. Student achievement is up, graduation rates are up and class sizes are down. The Ministry hosts delegations from all over the world that have come to Ontario to learn from our education system. She reminded us that we should be proud of our achievements. One of the biggest challenges facing the government right now is the status of the economy. She commented on the fact that Ontario needs its fair share of federal funding so that we can educate our children for the future.

The *Ontario Leadership Strategy* is an important initiative for the Ministry. Leadership, she said is one of the most important factors in creating an environment in which students can learn. Minister Wynne outlined key initiatives in the Strategy and noted that the government has already begun to implement many of them. The Ministry will establish a working group to refine the Principal's Performance Appraisal model and gather information and best practice on terms and conditions of employment. The mentoring program is moving forward for newly appointed principals and vice-principals. The success of the Strategy will require the cooperation of all partners. Minister Wynne is listening to our concerns. She will use the feedback she gets to inform future decisions.

*Congratulations to the Member Security Committee for another very successful seminar.*

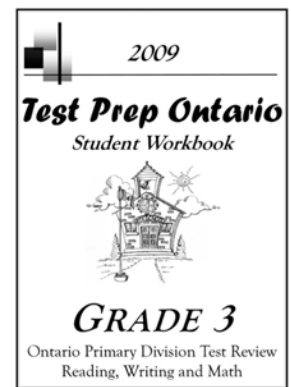
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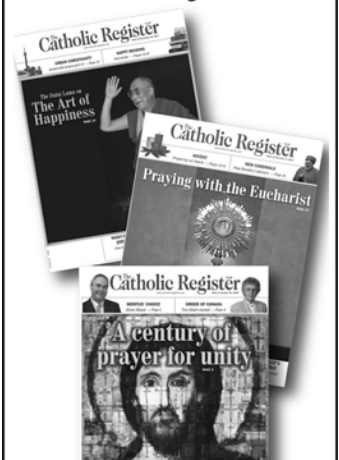
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