



Past-president's Award

Nelly Kelders, Support Services Coordinator

The Past-president's Award is given annually to the past-president of CPCO in recognition of service to the organization in the role of president and extended service as a member of the executive council. The Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario is pleased to honour Paul Lacalamita for his commitment and work on behalf of its members.

Paul Lacalamita has been a member of CPCO since his appointment as a vice-principal (secondary) in 1997. He was the district representative for Waterloo during the first year that Ontario principals and vice-principals were removed from OECTA. He currently is the principal of Resurrection Catholic Secondary School in Kitchener, Ontario.

Paul has been an active member of CPCO through his involvement with the constitution and steering (AGM) committees, acting as both committee member and chair. Paul served as a secondary councillor on the executive council in 2007-08, president-elect in 2008-09 and most recently as president of CPCO in 2009-10. This year he sits on CPCO's executive council as past-president and serves his local association members as lead negotiator.

Paul believes that CPCO has a very important role to play in the growth and success of Catholic schools in this province, providing service and advocacy for its 2100 members. Principals and vice-principals have a sacred privilege and responsibility to help ensure stability in Ontario's publicly-funded Catholic schools. CPCO has a major role to play by providing its members a provincial voice that is committed to this province's Catholic schools and the leaders who serve them.

Paul has two children Andrea and David, and resides in Cambridge, Ontario with his wife Jane. He is very thankful for the guidance, support, encouragement and friendship of his colleagues in CPCO throughout the years.

Excerpts from the Past-president's Gala Dinner Address

Paul Lacalamita, CPCO Past-president

One of my superintendent friends asked if my speech was going to be a paid political announcement. How absurd...I am not being paid!

In accepting this award tonight, it gives me great pride to join the growing list of CPCO's past-presidents; school principals and vice-principals from Ontario's Catholic school boards who for the last 13 years have in significant ways contributed to an organization that supports and advocates for men and women committed to leading schools that embrace our Catholic faith.

Indeed CPCO's role and function have never been as important as they are given Ontario's current education landscape. Increased demands on the principal for accountability and student achievement contrasted with the concomitant decrease in authority to act have placed tremendous pressures on CPCO's members.

I recall one of the opening lines of a keynote speaker I heard last year, "Principals and vice-principals never have to worry about losing their jobs; NOBODY WANTS THEM!"

Ontario's Education Act describes the duties of a principal as being in charge of (a) the instruction and the discipline of pupils in the school and (b) the organization and management of the school. Shaping and realizing the school vision for improving teaching and learning is often compromised by the reality of the time it takes to manage a school. During my term as president, I heard stories from members across Ontario about the expectation to become more involved in committee work and additional leadership responsibilities at the system level in addition to those associated with normal school roles. When do these responsibilities and expectations begin to infringe on and erode the qualities of educational leadership necessary for effective instructional school leadership?

What if principals could focus more of their time on leading effective instruction: spending more time in classrooms; strengthening relationships with teachers; and getting to know students' learning needs better than ever before? What if professional development plans for principals involved external coaching to analyze and action how principals could use newly freed-up time to lead instruction in the school?

In my humble opinion, something has to change in order to realize a better balance between instructional leadership and management of a school. Perhaps it is



Paul Laalamita

time for a Royal Commission on the role of the school principal. In any event, I believe that there is little argument that the role of the school principal is becoming more and more complex and that our members will continue to require the support of CPCO in engaging our partners in a fruitful conversation about this topic.

If we acknowledge that the role of principals and vice-principals is becoming more complex today, we can surely acknowledge that Catholic school principals have an even more daunting task of leading the sacred components of our schools in a secular society. Catholic school principals and vice-principals have the sacred privilege of embracing programs and curriculum that clearly articulate elements of our faith and demonstrate to our students the rich language and meaning of the Gospel. Our roles as servant leaders include overseeing the transmission of our Catholic faith; ultimately promoting and sustaining Ontario as a just and caring province.

Our entire Church benefits from a vibrant Catholic school system that is fully alive. The men and women leading our schools as principals and vice-principals must feel empowered and be given permission by their school boards to be creative in ensuring the transmission of our beliefs in their schools. We must be cautious that in the zeal to satisfy a public agenda, we do not rob our principals and vice-principals of opportunities to exercise their Catholic imagination. This would be detrimental beyond repair.

Next year marks 30 years in Ontario Catholic education for me. My journey has been blessed with people and events that will remain with me hopefully for another 30 years at least. My chapter with CPCO is easily one of the highlights of my career. At the executive council's first meeting in August 2009, I presented an historic overview of the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario. From that point forward, I included CPCO's story in every Ontario principal/vice-principal association presentation I made.

I firmly believe that CPCO will continue to create a synergy that evolves from traditions and practices of yesteryear to decisions and actions that respond to today's challenges of public education. By recognizing and promoting a reflective practice that focuses on what

needs to be, as well as what needs to be done, CPCO will continue to meet our needs in our leadership roles in Ontario's Catholic schools and school boards.

In Conclusion

How comforting it is to know that the complex nature of our leadership roles is represented by CPCO, promoting and nourishing our binding beliefs in Catholic education.

Catholic shareholders across this province should be very proud of the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario, its credibility and the opportunities that this professional association brings to the Catholic school communities that our members serve every day.

To quote Jim Byrne, CPCO past-president, in his initial letter to Catholic education partners in 1998 (the first year that principals and vice-principals were removed from the teachers' union):

Much remains to be done. However, we know that we build on the strong foundation of decades of commitment to our profession and our vocation on the part of Catholic school principals and vice-principals in every corner of the province.

We know as well that we do not build in isolation but that we have the support of bishops and clergy, trustees, directors and supervisory officers, teachers, parents and students and Catholic community leaders throughout Ontario.

May CPCO's future continue to be filled with defining moments that fuel our hopes with endless possibilities.



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