

# The Principals' Representative

By **Nelly Kelders**, Member Services Director

He is the sole voice of all principals and vice-principals in Ontario's four publicly-funded education systems at a table dominated by teachers. That table is the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers. The lone voice is Henry Tyndorf, principal of Philip Pocock Catholic Secondary School in Mississauga. He is completing his first term as the principal representative on the Council and is hoping to be elected for a second term.

Henry Tyndorf is the father of six children, all of whom attended Philip Pocock Catholic Secondary School, as well as the grandfather of three. Henry was Pocock's vice-principal, then became acting principal in 2007-08. He was named principal in 2008-09 by the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. He loves music and sings in a barbershop chorus that ranks 18th in North America. He and his wife enjoy visiting art galleries whenever they are traveling and when he has the time, Henry dabbles in painting with watercolours. From time to time, he escapes reality by immersing himself in mystery novels.

Given all his experiences, Henry found the learning curve in his new role to be quite challenging. He had no idea of the complexity of the College and the degree to which it is integrated into the roles of teachers, school and board administrators as well as members of the faculties of education in Ontario. The College's relations are myriad including the Ministry of Education, faculties of education and professional associations. Consultations with stakeholders are always ongoing. Decisions are not made without first receiving input. Henry was on the Council for 18 months before he really began to feel comfortable with his position.

A second challenge with which he struggled was that of the make-up of the Council. There are 14 elected members, ten of whom are teachers, and 13 appointed members, a majority of whom are former teachers. His role is daunting. As the only representative of principals and vice-principals, he must ensure that the role of the school administrator is understood by those who have never experienced that level of responsibility. He acknowledges that teachers and even the College do not fully understand how the role of the principal differs from that of the teacher. They have not grasped the special role of school administrators in legislation and in the contracts that manage teaching staff. The College's attitude is that a teacher is a teacher is a teacher. There is little understanding of the pressures and responsibilities associated with that of the school administrator.



Henry Tyndorf with vice-principal Marija Burazin

When motions are brought forth at meetings, each member of the Council votes by looking at the issue through the lens of their own particular experience. Each has a difficult time seeing through the lens of the other professionals at the table. Henry Tyndorf's role is to keep the principal perspective in the forefront. Since the meetings are run using Robert's Rules of Order, he has the opportunity to speak on issues and people do listen, but they do not always agree with what he has to say. Informally there has been discussion about the idea of allowing each of the principals' associations to have one representative on the Council but to date nothing has materialized. We need to continue to promote this possibility. While the Ministry of Education supports an increased role for principals and vice-principals in the governing body, the Ontario College of Teachers as a self-regulating body has yet to be convinced of the need.

Each member of the College's Council sits on one or two committees. Henry is on the editorial board for the College's quarterly magazines *Professionally Speaking* and *pour parler profession* and he is a member of the Investigations and Hearing Committee (I&H). The I&H committee serves as the gateway for complaints against members either from others in their profession, the public or their school boards. The committee is divided into three panels of three members who review the cases. They have a duty to read the information before hand, make decisions as to how to dispose of the case and then come to a consensus as to the course of action to be taken. The most frequent occurrence of complaints against principals and vice-principals is the "failure to supervise." This is usually the result of a situation with a staff member, but the school administrators are included in the complaint. This *shotgun* approach makes principals and vice-principals more vulnerable to complaints merely because of their position.

An issue for principals and vice-principals has been the representatives on the Investigations and Hearings Panel when the defendant is a school administrator. Henry put forth a motion to the Council to allow for peer review. His motion was seconded and strongly supported by Helen Fox who was the supervisory officers' representative. The motion was defeated as the College



stuck by its notion that a teacher is a teacher is a teacher. The motion called for a roster of principals and vice-principals who would serve on the panels when a peer was reviewed. The Ontario College of Teachers has created such a roster for potential francophone panelists to be called upon when a francophone's case has to be heard. Members on the roster are mostly former members of the College's Council or professionals who have been trained by the College.

Although foiled at the Council table Henry tried again using a different tactic with the Investigations and Hearings committee. He put forth the suggestion that staff be instructed to

compile cases concerning school administrators with his I&H panel. At least that way there would be one principal to provide guidance concerning the role of the school administrator. There was however, no consensus among the panelists to allow this process to take place so cases are still randomly allocated to the panels. Henry recognizes that this continues to be a hot issue for the principals' associations and will continue to work towards a resolution.

When asked what he hoped to accomplish in his second term, should he be successful in the OCT election this spring, he sited two challenges. The first is to continue to push for principals and vice-principals being different from teachers and uniquely vulnerable to complaints. There needs to be a better process to protect them from complaints especially the shotgun approach. Secondly, he sees the *Labour Mobility Act* as having an impact on the professions in education. This act will require harmonization of qualifications across Canada first and then with the countries who have signed the treaty. The College has already begun the process by making changes to the requirements for supervisory officers working in Ontario. More regulations will follow in the next two years. As well, if re-elected he would remain on the Investigations and Hearings committee and would like to become involved in the Finance committee.

In summary, Henry Tyndorf said he was very appreciative of being elected to a position of this level in the teaching profession. It has been humbling to realize that he is the first Catholic administrator to represent his colleagues in all four publicly-funded school systems at the College. His commitment, passion and dedication to this role as principal representative were evident throughout the interview. He looks forward to using his experience and knowledge to further assist school administrators through his membership at the Council's table.

Members are encouraged to vote for their principal representative by visiting the Ontario College of Teachers website and casting their ballots.

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