

DPSU AGM
President's Report
May 13, 2010

Colleagues,

As we entered into the second year of a four-year Collective Agreement based on the Provincial Discussion Framework it became clear that there was much work to be done in order to ensure an effective and full implementation of same. The Provincial Discussion Table (PDT) Framework was an incentive framework agreed upon by the provincial government, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association (OCSTA) and the Ontario English Catholic Teacher's Association (OECTA). As you may recall the government had called all education sector unions to the provincial discussion table to develop a four-year framework for collective agreements. While all but ETFO achieve a 3% annual increase for all four years of the agreement, all groups were given the opportunity to achieve benefit enhancements in 2010.

PDT and Benefits

The Unit is engaged therefore in discussions with the employer in order to establish benefit improvements that will take effect September 1, 2010. We hope to announce these enhancements before the end of the current school year and will work hard to make operational whatever is achieved for the beginning of the next school year. Future Info faxes and communication in this area will be distributed as necessary.

Government & Board Initiatives

On-going challenges that the Unit will continue to face include the implementation of:

- Bill 168 - which has the potential to address some key Health and Safety issues in the area of the prevention of workplace violence.
- The Growing Success Document – Assessment and Evaluation
- Bill 157 – Bullying Responsibilities
- Bill 119 – Diversity
- Bill 242 – EKLP – (more on that later)
- FACE Initiatives – Friends and Advocates of Catholic Education

Release Positions and Advocacy

Let me begin by saying that the level of expertise, experience and professionalism associated with the DPSU release officers is truly nonpareil and I would like to commend Peter MacDonald - who will be continuing in his stellar capacity as Teacher Welfare Officer, Brian Hiembecker who will extend his relentless advocacy role as Health and Safety Officer and Maria De Berardinis who has quickly established herself in her role.

At last year's AGM DPSU members elected a third release officer linked to the position of DPSU First Vice-President. The position has been professionally filled by Maria De Berardinis who has met every challenge and evolved the position into more than was ever envisioned. It is clear that the membership's decision to support this additional release position was well worth it due to the resultant enhanced service to members directly associated with this commitment to advocacy. Some key areas that received essential, additional support include Professional Development, Program, Adult Education and Continuing Education.

While our strengths are always in evidence, we continue to explore opportunities for reinforcing and building our interactive dynamics as they join with me and the rest of the Unit Executive in our continued advocacy on behalf of Secondary Teachers in Dufferin-Peel.

DPSU Administrative Staffing

Upon receipt of Marjory Calendar's letter of retirement, I know that I speak for the entire membership when I say that despite knowing that this day would eventually arrive, we all reflected on Marjory's years of dedicated service and realized what an eventful and sometimes tumultuous era her years at DPSU encompassed.

Marjory's presence, calming influence and ability to distill the most complex tasks into realizable outcomes was extraordinary. Through all of the Unit's many activities, trials, tribulations, good times and not so good times, she remained a steady and reliable point of reference that helped us all emerge positively.

On a personal note, I thank Marjory for: finishing my sentences, enduring my eccentricities, making me look good (sometimes not so easy a task), her positive attitude and all that she did beyond what was required. For all of this and so much

more I and all who have worked along side Marjory before me are most grateful and fortunate.

On a related note the past year also involved a significant staffing change at the Unit office as Tina Harrison has stepped into the role of office manager during Marjory's leave for a second year and we are currently finalizing the terms of her continued involvement/employment with DPSU. Tina has embraced the role enthusiastically and we are truly fortunate to continue to access her well-honed skills and abilities.

Organization of Early Childhood Educators

During the first weekend of March Break your 38 strong DPSU delegation represented the Unit at the 2010 Provincial AGM. Despite much debate and 65% of the delegates being in favour, OECTA will not be organizing Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) due to the 90% threshold number that was required. A lost opportunity no doubt as they will likely be organized by another union that may indeed have a very different agenda when it comes to Teacher rights and the Catholic perspective – time will tell.

Despite, our delegation's eloquent arguments that were ultimately insufficient in swaying the minority sentiment, the Unit undertook to seek clarity around the process by which the matter was addressed as per the Provincial Handbook. A legal opinion has been sought regarding the concept of predisposed voting at the Provincial AGM and a response is anticipated shortly.

Bill 242

The enabling legislation for the aforementioned EKLP went through a process that included three days of hearings into Bill 242, the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010. A wide variety of organizations, including OECTA, made submissions. The Association's brief can be found in the Resource Library at www.oecta.on.ca

The government's amendments provide greater clarity to the Bill and will ensure that the Early Learning Kindergarten Program (ELKP) is implemented in accordance with the government's stated position. The Act also makes clear that there will be a teacher in every ELK class. An Early Childhood Educator (ECE) may be assigned, depending on class size. The roles and responsibilities of the teacher and ECE will be more clearly delineated.

Teachers maintain primary responsibility for teaching duties that are currently attributed to them under the Education Act and Regulations, including duties related to report cards, instruction, training and evaluation of the progress of pupils in JK/K, the management of JK/K classes and the preparation of teaching plans. Other changes ensure that teachers are not responsible for the extended program, and that ECEs can only be assigned to JK/K classes.

Although the consultation process was exhaustive and meaningful, OECTA expects that during the implementation process, on-going discussions with government will continue, especially while regulations and guidelines are being written. The new ELK program/curriculum will also clarify and distinguish between the roles and responsibilities of the teacher and ECE.

Length of School Year

The official decision regarding the **additional school** day was reached much earlier this year as a result of the diligence of the Unit First Vice-President and the Teacher Welfare Officer. This was in stark contrast to the process that was used last year that culminated rather late in the game and caused undue trepidation for some of our members. Culminating this process so much more expeditiously allows for appropriate plans and preparations to be made in a timely manner that respects the needs and commitments of all of our members and their families.

The day selected by the Board in order to be in compliance with the Education Act is, **Thursday, September 2, 2010**. This day will be a Ministry Professional Activity Days and not Instructional Days i.e. no students will be attending school nor will classes run.

That being said, the likelihood of required attendance by Teachers before Labour Day will occur more regularly than in the past. This is because the length of the school year is determined by the Education Act which dictates a school year must be a minimum of 194 days in length. These days have typically and historically been scheduled between Labour Day and June 30th of any given school year.

In future however, any years when fewer than 194 potential instructional days are available between Labour Day and June 30th will require decisions similar to what transpired this year decision process wherein the Unit – through the

Modified School Year Committee – will advise and recommend to the Board the placement and nature of any days of compulsory Teacher attendance.

Provincial Politics and Representation

It is most appropriate at this time for us to acknowledge Ann Hawkins and Kevin O'Dwyer – both long serving member of the Unit Executive - who continue their journey of advocacy on the Provincial Executive. Congratulations are in order to Kevin – a former Unit President - who will once again be working at the provincial office full time in his capacity as first Vice-President and to Ann as she successfully advanced to the position of third Vice-President. Both of our DPSU confreres will continue the symbiotic relationship between the Unit and OECTA Provincial to the betterment of the association and our members.

Local DPSU Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Unit I would like to commend and acknowledge the efforts of Michelle Ouellette who has served professionally on our Unit Executive and our Joint Health and Safety Committee as well as a number of important committees involving the Unit and the employer. We all wish Michelle all the best as she engages her maternity leave and we look forward to her subsequent return.

Closing Remarks

Finally, as I conclude the penultimate year of my tenure as DPSU President, I would like to thank the members in attendance tonight for your commitment and dedication to the democratic process and in demonstrating the interest commensurate with active membership. The Unit Executive looks forward to continuing to work with and for all of you as we continue to develop, sustain and encourage the dedicated professionals who have devoted their careers to education.

In solidarity,

Gian Marcon
Unit President