

Report of the Vice President Occasional

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I have had the privilege to serve the members of the Unit in the position of VP Occasional for seven years now. Writing an end of year report is always challenging because there is so much to reflect on over the year. When thinking back over everything that happened this year though it is overwhelming to think how much occurred, especially as none of us could have predicted what was in store at the start of September.

PROVINCIAL BARGAINING:

My year really started to ramp up last June. I was honoured to be asked to represent the Occasional Teachers across the Provincial by sitting on the Provincial Bargaining team. Our first meeting with the “other side” corresponded to a Raptors parade ending outside of the hotel we were in. Watching the crowd swelling outside our doors throughout the day and ending with a lock down after shots were fired was certainly a memorable way to start the bargaining process.

Over the summer, as we met almost weekly in Toronto, I was able to get to know our provincial team, including our provincial bargaining staff, much better. The talent and knowledge of the individuals that make up our Provincial Bargaining team is second to none. Throughout the process, the conversations were rich and often challenging. From decisions around proposals for the bargaining language, to when and what type of strike action to support, to signing off when some pieces weren't quite where we might have liked to have landed, each move made was done thoughtfully and with the consideration of the membership as a whole always at the forefront.

Over the initial stages of bargaining there were regular counts provided to the membership of “how many days at the bargaining table”. At some point, we all seemed to lose count of those, but we were well beyond 50 days, plus additional special provincial meetings to keep all Units informed of challenging decisions we were encountering. We signed the tentative deal at 2:30p.m. on March 12th. An hour and a half later, before our news hit the media, the breaking news was of the school closures due to Covid 19. The transition was so quick from one fire to the next that it feels that we did not fully stop to celebrate that Part A of our collective agreement is done.

Thank you to all the teachers who supported the process by completing the provincial survey, raising concerns about how some language impacts teachers, being active on strike days and ratifying the tentative deal. Thank you to my fellow release officers and Cathy who helped insure I was always informed and who helped support all teachers when I was out of town and could not be there to answer calls or attend time sensitive meetings.

COVID 19:

The challenges around COVID 19 have been extensive. From the time the news hit, so many more questions were surrounding us than we had answers for. As release officers, for the first few weeks it felt like we bounced from one virtual meeting to another trying to sort out this new world we are living in.

For some Occasional Teachers, the changes took on a different flavour than for contract teachers. LTOs were impacted as many medical procedures were cancelled. Some teachers on

medical leave returned early as the parameters of working from home were assessed differently than being in a school. Some teachers on maternity leave opted to return early as family financial situations were impacted by Covid.

For daily OTs, a financial payment for the two weeks of March 23 and March 30 were discussed with HR. We expressed concerns about the exclusion of our retired OTs and the inclusion of strike days and the secondary exam period, but in the end, a decision was made by the Board to follow the guidelines from the Ministry. Minor changes were implemented such as using the weeks from January to March Break to calculate the average weekly pay instead of the suggested twelve weeks.

A lot of questions abounded regarding EI versus CERB, impact to maternity leaves and receiving the two weeks of pay and impact to CERB. Although we normally can provide some answers on EI and maternity leave, for most of these, we were hearing through our members what was happening, as the rules seemed to change daily.

An outstanding question we are still pursuing is whether the Occasional Teachers who were impacted will be eligible to buyback OTPP (pension) service credit for the time they can't work due to situations with COVID outside their control and what additional steps might be necessary to ensure they are reported as eligible.

MONITORING EMAILS:

It is critical that all Occasional Teachers continue to monitor their emails, both Unit and Board.

For those OTs interested in LTOs, the Board is still posting assignments when teachers are going off on a leave. Although some postings are still on Apply to Education, and posted for 3 days, once the assignments are limited to 30 days or less, the process for 14-30 day assignments kicks in. This process involves an email to Board email with the availability of an assignment. The Board provides 24 hours from the emailed assignment to respond before reviewing responses and selecting the person for the position.

The Offense declaration is an annual term of employment. A communication goes out to teachers in May to their Board email to notify them that they need to do this. Occasional Teachers have until the end of August to complete this, but to avoid the risk of being terminated, receiving the reminder and acting on it immediately is in the best interest of all teachers.

Information about Local bargaining is going out via the Unit email system. To ensure you have a voice in the process (survey, endorsing, ratification) it is imperative that OTs who have not signed up for the Unit website, www.waterloocatholicteachers.ca, do so. For anyone who has but is not getting the emails sent out via the Unit, they should contact someone at the OECTA office.

PAYROLL:

This year we have experienced several system errors that impacted OTs.

1. The incorrect payment of statutory pay to daily OTs in November.
2. The over deduction of dues for those on LTOs corresponding to the first strike day in January.
3. The system issue that resulted in the second week of the COVID pay not being received on the regular payroll by a significant number of those who were to receive it.

These three pay issues have all been corrected to the best of our knowledge. It is due to teachers who noticed something odd on their pay and communicated it to OECTA, HR or payroll, that the issues were flagged early and addressed.

It is extremely important that all teachers monitor their pays. Unlike when the error impacts a group of teachers, when an error is localized to a specific teacher, it could get missed if that teacher does not notice the error.

LOCAL BARGAINING:

The Occasional Teacher Collective Bargaining Committee has met a couple times. A survey was created and is scheduled to go out to all Occasional Teachers (includes part-time permanent and Con Ed Occasional) on Tuesday, May 5th. OTs will have until the following Tuesday to participate in the survey. Following the closure of the survey, the committee will review the results and continue to formulate the bargaining goals for this round. Thank you to Aaron Stemmler, Richard Liu, Melanie Bristow, John Kearns, Carol Knight, Maria Sousa-Rovers, and Patrick Etmanski who join me on the committee during this process.

We expect the process for negotiations to start up this school year. A subset of the original committee will soon be selected to form the bargaining team that will meet with the Board to present a formal proposal.

SUMMER HIRING:

The Provincially negotiated Part A of the collective agreement will have some impacts to what OTs may, or may not experience for the upcoming round of hiring.

Part A of the collective agreement does not come into effect until the local (Part B) is negotiated and ratified. Due to this, we are still operating under the existing hiring practiced and likely will be as we start into the early stages of hiring for 2020-2021. As such, the Board is moving forward with the hiring to the LTO List this spring. We expect that conversations between OECTA and HR around how to transition to the new hiring processes will occur and will include how to address assignments that may have been posted prior to the ratification of Part B, but not yet processed for interviews.

Due to COVID, some hiring processes are and may continue to be slightly different than in previous years. The moving of OTs onto the LTO List may include a non-interview option. Interviews for assignments and the LTO List are currently happening using virtual tools and will likely continue to be virtual and/or face to face as we transition back to some normalcy.

The new secondary class size average is something that comes into effect September 2020 regardless of the status of local negotiations. In addition, in secondary, 37 new part-time permanent teachers were hired at the start of second semester. As per their collective agreement, the new hires are eligible for additional permanent sections prior to permanent sections being posted to OTs. With the larger class size average also impacting the number of available sections at secondary schools, OTs will likely see little to no permanent positions posted for secondary in the summer, or into the 2020-2021 school year. The exceptions would be for specialty areas where an existing teacher is not available with the qualifications.

THANK YOU:

Saying thank you is the hardest part of the report. Not because I am not grateful to the many people who surround me, but in trying to figure out where to start and where to end without leaving off those who are an important part of what makes up the whole, making me successful at what I do, and giving me the confidence and the desire to continue to serve members.

Thank you to all the Occasional Teachers who have stepped forward and took on roles with OECTA. To my OT Exec (Maria, John and Carol) and OT Reps (Carla, Aaron, Richard and Janis) who were willing to step forward and take on leadership roles, thank you! To those who are participating behind the scenes, in an unofficial way, but ensuring that we are made aware of things pertinent to OTs, I applaud you. There is always room for more OT Reps and I encourage you to get involved!

To the Teachers, whether OT or permanent, who are always looking after each other, your contributions and assistance in supporting each other, make our roles easier. To all the staff reps who lend a hand to the OTs in their school, both those on LTO or in daily assignments, your support is greatly appreciated.

There are so many teachers who went above and beyond this year when asked to step up. Thank you to each one of you who made our strike days the huge success that they were. Thank you to all who worked extra hours hauling and setting up the materials needed. Thank you to all those involved with committees that ensure our Unit functions as per our bylaws, but who also provide the extras for the teachers of the Unit. Thank you to Michelle for accepting the challenge of stepping into the role of chair of Nominations.

At the Unit office, I am extremely grateful to work with four fantastic individuals. My appreciation this year is even more so as without them, I would not have been able to balance the needs of my role at the Unit office while being in Toronto at bargaining. I am always amazed at the number of things that Simon is capable of juggling, but he never says no when approached for an opinion or assistance. Although you are the newbie (for now!) in the office, your desire for knowledge and your work ethic have erased any traces of being the last one in. Thank you for all your support this year! Ed, what to say? I met you as an OT working daily work at Doyle. You were always quick to identify a new face in your environment and offer your assistance. We walked alongside each other for years at Labour council, Labour Day picnics, rallies and OFL conventions. You took up the challenge of the role of VP secondary and ran with it. Your commitment to all members of OECTA will be long remembered and you will be missed as you move out East to enjoy your hard earned retirement. Best wishes "PS"! The role of President has a lot of responsibilities that are often not fully grasped even by those of us who work in close proximity. With this year, Patrick not only met those regular responsibilities, but shouldered so much more with the potential strike by CUPE, the strike action by OECTA and the immense challenges of COVID. The test of a leader is when times are tough and my friend, you have met and exceeded the test! Cathy, last but certainly not least. We asked so much more of you this year with all the extra things going on and you went with the flow. You were my conduit to the office when away in Toronto. I appreciate everything you did to make sure nothing fell through the cracks. During strike action, sometimes you were scary, "Do not go in the Boardroom!", but you kept us all sorted out and kept so many balls in the air. The learning curve on some of it had to have been stressful, but you never waived in your commitment to the release officers and the teachers in the Unit. Thank you so much for everything you do for us.