



Protecting and enhancing public education since 1919



Merry Christmas?

I normally like to focus on positive news in my December Newsletter, and if you give me a chance, I will try to make this point a positive one. Christmas can be a very challenging time of year for many of us, our families, and our students. We all found our way into education to make a difference in the lives of students, but sometimes we need a reminder to look after ourselves. I often use the analogy of the oxygen mask on an airplane. The safety demonstration always emphasizes that you need to put on your own mask before helping those around you. Education workers are often called upon to support students who are going through the normal stresses of life in addition to some of the devastating traumas and crises that confront them. We sometimes fail to see the impact on our own mental health and well-being that comes from assisting others. In

order for us to properly support those around us, we need to be healthy! Despite the craziness that the Christmas season can bring, I encourage you all to make time for your own mental health. Get some sleep! Get some exercise! Listen to some music! If you need more - reach out for support! All members who have Long Term Disability Insurance coverage have access to the [POS ACTION Employee Assistance Plan](#). This free service can be reached by calling 1-800-668-0193. We often find it easy to offer help to others and so very difficult to ask for help for ourselves. The positive news is that you are not alone and there are supports out there for you!

Lobby Day 2018

OSSTF held its annual Lobby Day at Queen's Park, where local leaders met and lobbied MPPs on issues that are important to our members. This year I was accompanied by Jeff Scott, Chair of our Communications and Political Action Committee. We had the opportunity to meet with our Member of the Provincial Parliament, John Yakabuski. Our theme this year was "Public Education is for Everyone". Jeff and I had the chance to highlight the quality of Ontario's public education system and some of the exceptional programs that are being offered in our schools as well as some of the outstanding students our schools have produced. We discussed accessibility and inclusivity of our schools and the critical role of a full-service education team in meeting the needs of our students. One of the stories I shared with our MPP highlighted some of the fantastic things happening at Opeongo High School. (I am attaching that

story on page 3.) We ended our meeting by asking Minister Yakabuski to stand with us holding a "I support public education" sign. The Ford government has a penchant for signs, we will see how much support public education will receive from the Conservatives in the coming months.



Retirement Workshops

OTIP will be holding two Retirement Workshops this spring, one in Renfrew on April 3 and one in Pembroke on April 4. (see page 4 and 5 for more information and a link for registration.) If you have never been to one of these workshops, I strongly encourage you to go! (You will learn something new every time you attend!)

Giving

One of the best parts of my job has become my annual tour to local food banks and to the Children's Poverty Action Network (CPAN). I donned a Santa hat as I went around distributing cheques! Again, this year we donated \$14,000 (\$200 to 7) local food banks and \$750 towards the purchase of winter clothing to CPAN. It is especially gratifying to know how many of our members and educational workers are involved in these charities. This year we also

sponsored radio spots on MYFM Radio that promote giving to, and the use of, KIDS HELP PHONE (1-800-668-68-68). Those radio spots are playing on the radio this week. I have included some pictures of those donations as well as my radio appearance. (I have a face for radio!).

Sens Tickets

Our colleagues at ETFO are offering Senators tickets for a post-Christmas game at a discounted rate. These tickets will make great stocking stuffers and can be in your hands before the holidays! (if you live in the Pembroke or Petawawa area.)

Tickets are only \$90 and seats are in sections 218 and 219 for the Ottawa Senators versus the Calgary Flames on Sunday, February 24th at 7:00 pm.

Please send an email to allieryan@gmail.com to get your tickets today. Payment by etransfer is preferred, but can be made via cheque sent to Allison Ryan c/o Highview payable to the Renfrew County Teachers' Local.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!
In Solidarity!
Jeff



Passing the Torch

On November 9th, I had the honour and privilege to be invited to attend the Remembrance Day Ceremony at Opeongo High School. I originally wanted to write a letter of appreciation to the staff and students for the work and effort they invested to create such a meaningful assembly. As I reflected on what to say in my letter, I realized I had more to say and that I needed to share it with a larger audience. It was a moving event which included music by the school's band, the singing of our national anthem, a historical vignette, achingly beautiful songs performed by students, dramatic poetry readings, images, videos, wreath laying, the playing of the last post, a moment of silence and reveille. I encourage you to watch for yourself this powerful assembly online

at <http://bit.ly/OpeongoHSRemembers2018>. Perhaps the two most powerful moments for me were the reading of "In Flanders Fields" and the introductory remarks by John Pierce.

Near the end of the ceremony, the student council President introduced and started reading "In Flanders Fields" from the podium on stage. She only read the first two lines before another student in the audience stood up and continued the poem, only to be replaced by other students in other parts of the auditorium until the poem was finished. It warmed my heart to see how the poem was presented since I truly felt that any student in that assembly could, and might, stand and recite the next line. John McCrae's torch was still being passed on that day.

John Pierce, a long-time history teacher at Opeongo, set the tone for the assembly recognizing all of the sacrifices that have been made in the many wars and highlighting that this

was the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. To help connect the audience to Remembrance Day, Pierce wove a narrative focussed on two young Ottawa Valley farm boys, Will Drynan and Pete O'Gorman. Will and Pete were best friends, who grew up close to where we all sat at Opeongo High School. These two friends enlisted and ultimately found themselves fighting in some of the mostly pivotal and costly battles of the "Great War". I am certain Mr. Pierce wanted the story of Will and Pete to resonate with the audience; listening to him speak, it was clear that Pierce himself struggled to recount the tale. Will Drynan, the decorated Canadian, ultimately lost his life while heroically tending to the wounds of a German soldier in the middle of a battlefield as his 38th Battalion fought towards Cambrai in 1918. Pete O'Gorman would be the soldier who found his friend's body that day, but his war was far from over.

We often hear the reasons that young men and women went to serve in the wars. Noble reasons: For King and Country! To fight tyranny and oppression! For Freedom! For the love of their country! I expect that those are the reasons for many that went, but I often wonder if many served for other reasons: for adventure, a sense of duty, or just to earn a living to help support their family. Pete O'Gorman survived the First World War and returned home safely to Canada where he farmed, started a family and became a productive member of society. Listening to Mr. Pierce's story I learned that Pete chaired a committee that helped to build the High School where we were remembering. I do not know why Pete went to war, but I do know that when he returned, he clearly valued Public Education.

I believe that the sacrifices that Will, Pete and others made helped shape Canada to be the fantastic country it is today. Part of what makes this such a great country is our Public Education system and its educational professionals. It is the embodiment of what makes a great society, and keeps tyranny at bay. Educational professionals, like John Pierce, who are committed to creating authentic learning opportunities, in a safe learning environment, are ensuring our country remains a world leader. We continue to need an education system that is free for all, where all are welcome and can feel safe and supported, an education system that ranks amongst the top countries in the world and prepares students for their futures, an education system that helps us to remember.

Every year I hear the debate somewhere that Remembrance Day needs to be a statutory holiday. Every year I attend ceremonies like the one at Opeongo High School, where the students enter quietly, listen attentively, and leave respectfully. Our schools are the best places for our young people to share in the learning, the reflection, and the commemoration of those who have given so much. At the conclusion of the assembly, John Pierce reflected on how the "Torch" in McCrae's poem has transformed over time from a torch of Victory to one of Remembrance. Every year we must remember the legacy that was so dearly purchased for us – our legacy of courage, compassion, and peace. Educational professionals continue to pass the "Torch" to future generations and they should be praised for their outstanding work.

Jeffrey Barber

President OSSTF District 28 Renfrew



Walk into Retirement with a Plan



Retiring in the next five years?

Have questions about retirement benefits and finances?

OTIP, Educators and your local union invite you to attend the Walk into Retirement with a Plan workshop.

During this workshop, you'll learn about:

- Retirement benefits for life – discover why OTIP is now the leading choice for plan flexibility regarding retirement health, dental and travel benefits
- Your Pension – Let Educators help you understand your OTPP and/or OMERS
- Other sources of retirement revenue, including CPP and OAS

This complimentary workshop is open only to members and spouses. A light dinner will be served. Please note any dietary requirements at time of registration.

Date:	April 3, 2019
Time:	4:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Location:	Days Inn 760 Gibbons Rd. Renfrew

Register online at: www.otip.com/events

Presented by:





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This complimentary workshop is open only to members and spouses. A light dinner will be served. Please note any dietary requirements at time of registration.

Date:	April 4, 2019
Time:	4:30 - 7:30
Location:	Best Western Inn and Conference Centre 1 International Drive Pembroke

Register online at: www.otip.com/events

Presented by:



OTIP RAED



Do you know a student
who could use an extra
\$1,500 for tuition?

They could
WIN
a bursary
from OTIP!

If you're insured with OTIP and you or one of your relatives (e.g. child, step-child, grandchild, niece, nephew, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, spouse, etc.) will be a full- or part-time post-secondary student in the upcoming academic year, enter online for the chance to win a bursary from OTIP.

Twelve bursaries of \$1,500 each are awarded annually. The deadline to enter is June 15 each year.

Visit www.otip.com/bursary
for more information.

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OSSTF District 28 Renfrew is now
on Facebook – come and join our
group!

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