

President's Message

August 31, 2020

Hello and welcome to the start of the 2020-21 school year! My name is Ann Pace and I will be your president for the coming school year. I am on secondment from the York Region DSB, where I have been an educator and administrator for 28 years. I know that this school start-up has been, and continues to be, quite stressful, and you've all had a very short break. Hopefully you were able to find some time to spend with family and friends and give yourself some rejuvenation.

The coming days and weeks will be unlike other years. We know that students, staff and families are excited and anxious to be going back to a "new" reality. There will be glitches and bumps along the way. Everything won't go smoothly. As leaders, we are also models in our schools. We'll also have tough and frustrating days. But we've shown that we can continue to offer a high-quality education setting even during a global pandemic.

I encourage you to rely on your colleagues, your board EAP program, our [Starling Minds program](#) and the OPC if you need any assistance, guidance and/or support. I want to extend a personal invitation for you to call or email me if you simply need someone to listen. As difficult as it may seem, you must take care of yourself first.

Advocacy Work

Our advocacy on your behalf continued throughout the summer. We took part in meetings with the ministries of Education and Labour, CODE, OPSOA and our principal partners CPCO and ADFO. We also developed and released statements on the new requirement that a [director must no longer be a teacher](#), one responding to the [government's first back-to-school plan](#) and one with [further recommendations for the safe return](#) of our Members, students and staff. These were released publicly and are posted on [our website](#) so you can access them at any time.

Government Releases

Last week the government released the [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools](#) document. Developed in consultation with public health experts, the guide aims to help schools identify and isolate COVID-19 cases, reduce the spread in schools and prevent and minimize outbreaks. In August, the government released [PPM 164 on remote learning](#), detailing its approach to learning during periods of interruptions or school closures such as COVID-19. It also defines remote, synchronous and asynchronous learning. [OSBIE also released a memo](#) on submitting incidence reports and guidance for when to report a COVID-19 case.

OPC Census

We are pleased to announce that we are moving forward with our first OPC Census. It will allow us to gather up-to-date information on how you self-identify, whether you have suffered discrimination or harassment in employment and the demographic make-up of our membership. The Census is one of the first undertakings of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Standing Committee, and has been developed in consultation with an external consultant who specializes in equity work. The results of the Census will enable us to better serve, advocate and represent our diverse membership in an informed and effective manner and to further the [mandate of the Committee](#). While your participation will be voluntary and confidential, it is essential that we have the participation of as many Members as possible. Please watch for updates about the Census in the next few weeks, including confirmation of when it will be released.

Media

- [How the youngest learners are about to become the toughest test for back-to-school](#)
(OPC quoted in article)
[Remote learning won't be one-size-fits-all](#)
- [If you're sick, stay home](#)
- [Pandemic-focused school fundraising threaten to widen inequalities](#)
- [Ontario nurses call for smaller elementary class sizes for return to school](#)
- [Researchers say more students in classrooms equal more days lost to COVID-19](#)
- [Government releases back-to-school ads to communicate with parents](#)
- [Federal government announces \\$2 billion to help reopening plans](#)

Queen's Park

The House is in recess until September 14.