

# President's Message

January 25, 2021

## Ongoing Advocacy

To those of you who are returning to in-school learning this week, welcome back. Our advocacy efforts on your behalf – whether your students are in-person, online or a combination of both – continue. Weekly meetings are still taking place with ministry officials, and last week we had a positive and in-depth discussion with NDP Education Critic Marit Stiles about the challenges of the ongoing pandemic in schools. To date, we have assurance that the Minister continues to advocate that all education workers be included in the phase 2 vaccination schedule. We continue to push for greater clarity about the administration of EQAO math and OSSLT assessments this year. And following the memo released last week by the ministry indicating a new requirement for you to validate the self-screening forms for all staff, visitors (starting today) and secondary students (as of February 10), we are drafting a letter to the Minister, which will be sent in the next day or two, outlining the many concerns we have with this proposed new responsibility.

We also know that many of you are hearing from concerned parents and staff about keeping schools open or, in some cases, keeping them closed. There are many opinions as to which is the safest route for our students and staff right now. The government continues to rely on the province's Chief Medical Officer of Health to make certain decisions, and local Public Health Units have also been charged with determining whether schools should be open or closed. We are aware of the ongoing challenges you are facing thanks to the work of your Provincial Councillors, who continue to meet with us bi-weekly and share your local issues. Our advocacy efforts on your behalf, as well as our students and staff, will continue.

## OPC Term Membership

Term membership is available to retired OPC Members who are returning to work temporarily in P/VP positions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) has agreed to extend the number of days of work available to members of the plan, without requiring them to relinquish their pensions, to 95 days, so long as

- you are employed directly by a school board in Ontario, the Provincial Schools Authority or the Centre Jules-Léger Consortium
- you work in a school (includes virtual, online and remote)
- the position requires you to hold valid teaching certification from the Ontario College of Teachers or Ministry of Education (e.g., teacher, vice principal, principal, guidance counsellor, librarian in a publicly-funded school).

If you meet all of these conditions, you can work until the end of the month in which you exceed the 95-day limit during this period, without affecting your pension. OPC Term membership will cover you from the time you apply to the end of this period (or August 31, 2021, whichever is later). If your work is at the system level, then the TPP's usual 50-day limit will apply. See our [Term Membership brochure](#) and [application form](#) for more information.

## Media

- [Ministry watered down strategies to keep COVID out of classrooms](#)
- [Educational assistants concerned for their safety as schools remain open](#)
- [Teachers concerned about parental interference during virtual classes](#)
- [Decision to keep students at home questioned](#)
- [Youth vaping rates have doubled in last 3 years](#)
- [Some schools plan to re-open](#)
- [Medical experts weigh in on importance of kids returning to school](#)
- [Doctors urge more COVID testing in schools](#)

## Queen's Park

The House is in recess until February 16.