



Ontario

Ontario Parent Council

Conseil ontarien  
des parents



Annual Report

July 1,

2001

June 30,

2002

*Ensuring Parents Have a Voice  
in Ontario's Education System*

20 Bay Street  
4th Floor, Suite 405  
Toronto ON M5J 2N8  
Telephone: 416 314-0426  
Facsimile: 416 314-0425  
www.ontarioparentcouncil.org

20, rue Bay  
4<sup>e</sup> étage, bureau 405  
Toronto ON M5J 2N8  
Téléphone : 416 314-0426  
Télécopieur : 416 314-0425  
www.conseilontariendesparents.org



# Ontario

Ontario Parent Council

Conseil ontarien des parents

The Honourable Elizabeth Witmer  
Deputy Premier and Minister of Education  
22nd Floor, Mowat Block  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister:



On behalf of the Ontario Parent Council (OPC), I respectfully submit the Council's Annual Report for the period of July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002.

In accordance with its mandate, the OPC provided advice from a parental perspective on a number of topics related to elementary and secondary education in Ontario, and strove to promote parental involvement in the education system.

The activities are detailed in this report with an emphasis on our continually evolving communication efforts, which have allowed the Council to offer parents valuable information as to where they can have effective input into education.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the leadership of past Chair Greg Reid, Vice-Chair Dale Thomson and interim Vice-Chair Manon Lavallée, and to all members of the Council for their dedication towards improving Ontario's education system. They have devoted a lot of time and energy to meet with parents in their local communities and regions to collect their feedback, respond to their concerns, and to assist in their parental efforts. Council members have also met with representatives from organizations in the broader education community and have taken part in the work of several committees. The members of the Ontario Parent Council have made valuable and positive contributions to the education of Ontario's children.

I would also like to thank the OPC staff for their commitment and support.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you require further information about the contents of this report.

Sincerely,

Trudy Griffiths  
Chair,  
Ontario Parent Council

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# 1 The year in brief

The year covered by this report, July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002, had started, in April, on a note of change and renewal. The Minister of Education had restructured the Ontario Parent Council to broaden parental representation on the Council by including six new members selected among parents nominated at regional school council forums held by the Ministry of Education. In total, 16 of the Council's 20 members were newly appointed.

The Council held nine two-day meetings to review and discuss topics and initiatives of importance to parents, or to address areas identified by the Minister. Between meetings, committees of Council continued to do research, collect data and prepare documents.

During this period, the Council met twice with the Honourable Janet Ecker, Minister of Education, once to discuss parental concerns and the second time for the signature of the OPC Terms of Reference. Several OPC members were also present for the release of the Minister's Report to School Councils on Education in January 2002. Since her appointment, the Council has apprised the new Deputy Premier and Minister of Education Elizabeth Witmer of the most current parental concerns. Moreover, the OPC Chair met with the Minister and the Minister's staff on several occasions, and attended press conferences and the legislature on OPC's behalf.

*The honourable Janet Ecker, Minister of Education, and OPC Chair Trudy Griffiths sign the Terms of Reference on April 13, 2002.*

The OPC also met with the former Minister's Parliamentary Assistant, Garfield Dunlop, for a discussion and response to his listening tour involving input on technical and vocational education in secondary schools.

Members of the Council committed a great deal of their time to consulting parents in their own communities and responding to requests for information. By keeping in touch with parents, the OPC is able to provide the Minister of Education with well-informed advice on a wide variety of education topics from a parental perspective.

*"Parental involvement in education contributes to student success and an enriched learning environment."*

*Trudy Griffiths, Chair of the OPC.*



Some highlights of the OPC's work in fulfilment of their mandate during the period covered by this report include the:

- *Provision of relevant and timely advice to the Minister of Education;*
- *Launch of a new website;*
- *Development of new Terms of Reference;*
- *Development of a mission statement;*
- *Review and revision of operational procedures;*
- *Input on the first ever Ontario parent satisfaction survey;*

- *Input on Teacher Testing & Performance Appraisal legislation pertaining to the role of the parent;*
- *Representation on external committees.*



**The Mission Statement committee: l. to r.:** Janet Burghart, Bert Kreps, Michael O’Gorman (missing: Philip Leong)



**The Operations committee: l. to r.:** Donna Lucas-Astley, Bonnie Lafontaine, Michael O’Gorman, Cathy Cove, Dale Thomson



# 2 Activities

## Policy

The Ontario Parent Council's direct input into the various stages of policy and program development enables it to work with its education partners to improve Ontario's education system.

The OPC has received numerous communications from parents concerned about compliance with the requirements set out in Ontario Regulation 612/00, the regulation on school councils. To address this issue, the OPC relayed these parental concerns to the Minister of Education in May 2002.

During 2001-2002, the OPC made several recommendations to the Minister of Education. The Council has conveyed parents' concerns about class sizes and about the Grade 10 literacy test pertaining to students with learning exceptionalities. The OPC provided input to the Ministry about the design of the first ever Ontario Parent Satisfaction Survey. Following these suggestions, the survey was mailed to all Ontario parents across the province to give them an opportunity for input.



**The Compliance to Regulation 612/00 committee: l. to r.:**  
Donna Lucas-Astley, Donald Hill, Rick Macdonald, Cathy Cove,  
Dale Thomson

The Council also provided advice about the following educational issues and initiatives that surfaced over the course of the year:

- *The School Council Guide for Members, 2001;*
- *Notification of results and remediation options for grade 10 students who failed the literacy test;*
- *Responses to the results of EQAO provincial tests;*
- *The future of the EQUIP program;*
- *Concern regarding user fees for curriculum-related programs;*
- *The inconsistent implementation of the global marking system;*
- *Fundraising rules and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation licensing;*
- *Student accommodation for EQAO testing;*
- *Education funding and accountability;*
- *Teacher Performance Appraisal – parental input;*
- *Politicizing of school councils;*
- *Concern for the current grade 11 students in meeting the Community Service component;*
- *The Principal and Supervisory Officer Evaluation process.*

## Communications

### A NEW OPC WEBSITE!

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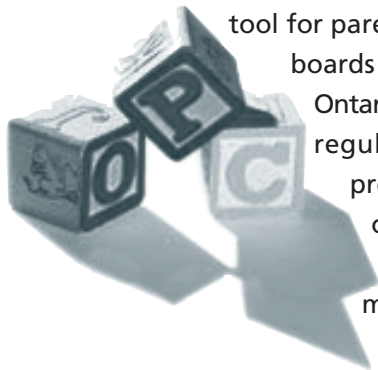
From a communications point of view, the main focus of the year was the launch of a brand new website for the Ontario Parent Council on October 30, 2001. The site address is **www.ontarioparentcouncil.org**. This website is also the first element in an effort to establish a stronger visual identity for the OPC.

The Ontario Parent Council website is a valuable tool for parents. Teachers, principals, school boards and other people involved in Ontario's education community also regularly log on to the site. It provides timely information and commentary about education facts and topics, it presents the members, the mandate and the work of the OPC and it explains the important role of parents in the education of their children. It is a user-friendly gateway site complete with over 400 links to a variety of sources such as school council information, the Ministry of Education, district school board resources, parent organizations and other education associations.

A link was created for parents to give feedback about the website, ask questions and share any comments they might have. This significantly increased the amount of parental feedback received by the OPC.

As of June 30, 2002, the OPC website has registered over 300,000 page views (700,000 hits) and more than 21,000 user sessions in its eight month existence. It has also received many favourable comments. The website has been registered with 20 major search engines.

Monthly statistical reports showing the number of hits, user sessions, top viewed pages and referring domain servers are shared with Council members.



### PARENTS IN TOUCH!

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The OPC offers support to parents across the province through its toll-free telephone number, 1 800-361-6483 and through e-mail at **opc@edu.gov.on.ca**. Calls and messages are responded to by OPC staff and re-directed where appropriate to Council members. The launch of the website brought an increase in the correspondence and calls received.

The OPC receives many telephone calls or e-mail messages, mostly from parents. Inquiries range from questions, comments or concerns about education policy to asking about the Ontario Parent Council or commenting about the website. Many parents request suggestions or help from the OPC with respect to student achievement, parent involvement or process in dealing with their school, district school board or school council.

Summaries of correspondence and calls received by the OPC are regularly shared with Council members for their review, input and suggestions. Individual Council members also receive correspondence and phone calls directly from parents. These are a valuable source of information about parental opinions and concerns.



### OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

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The Council's outreach activities continued this year, with members accepting many invitations to attend school council meetings. A slide presentation and set of speaking notes was designed for all OPC members to assist them in promoting the OPC website and the OPC as a whole.

Members of the OPC were invited by school councils to make presentations at regional school council assemblies, board workshops and other parent functions throughout the province.

During 2001-2002, the OPC met with Lynn Ziraldo, Chair of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education and Phil Hedges, President of the Ontario School Counsellors Association.

The OPC met with staff at the Ministry of Education responsible for the Ontario Education Number (OEN), the Elementary Secondary Information Project (ESIP) and the director of the Performance Systems and Quality Assurance branch to discuss Teacher Performance Appraisal. The Chair and Vice-Chair met with the Ministry directors of Education Finance, Curriculum and Assessment, Secondary School Policy and Programs and the Ontario Knowledge Network for Learning.

By building bridges to these and other organizations, the OPC maintains vital links that help it represent parents' interests and concerns.

During the period of this report, the OPC participated on the following external committees:

- *EQAO Assessment Advisory Committee;*
- *EQAO Validation Committee;*
- *Curriculum Implementation Partnership -- Ad Hoc Advisory Committee;*
- *The Learning Partnership's Roundtable on Technology;*
- *Advisory Committee for Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test;*
- *Design Team for Teacher Performance Appraisal;*
- *Client Group for Teacher Performance Appraisal;*
- *Special Education ISA (Intensive Support Amount) Work Group;*
- *OCASE (Ontario Council of Administrators of Special Education);*
- *OFSA (Ontario Federation of School Athletics Associations);*
- *Ontario Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance;*
- *Transportation Review Committee;*
- *Learning Opportunities Grant;*
- *Ontario Principals' Council Principal's Qualification Program Advisory and Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program Advisory;*
- *Ministry's Virtual Co-op Education Pilot Project.*

## MEDIA

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The Ontario Parent Council and its members have been featured or have appeared in a number of media reports, including several appearances on TVOntario, radio talk shows, a contribution to the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) as well as coverage in several provincial or regional newspapers.

## Staffing

A new executive coordinator was hired in July 2001 to provide leadership in the communications and marketing areas, oversee the production and launch of the new website, coordinate OPC activities and act as a liaison with the Ministry of Education. In addition, three new permanent positions were created, including a new bilingual communications coordinator, an administrative officer and a bilingual administrative assistant.



# 3 Members of the Ontario Parent Council

*2001-2002*



**First row, l. to r.:** OPC Chair Trudy Griffiths, Deputy Premier and Minister of Education Elizabeth Witmer, OPC Vice-Chair Dale Thomson. **Second row:** Karen Sisson, Julie Anne Heidman, Bonnie LaFontaine, Irene Murray, Diane Ellis, Marlene Taylor. **Third row:** Rick Macdonald, Don Hill, Michael O’Gorman, Susan Robertson. **(Missing:** Janet Burghart, Cathy Cove, Bert Kreps, Manon Lavallée, Philip Leong, Donna Lucas-Astley, Kathy McNeil)

### **Greg Reid** *(Chair until April 2002)*

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*Term: July 1, 1998 – June 30, 2000 and  
July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2002  
(resigned in April 2002)*

Greg Reid was appointed Chair of the Ontario Parent Council by Minister of Education Janet Ecker in July 2000 and served as Chair until April 2002.

He first joined the Ontario Parent Council in July 1998, and has consistently pursued a more definitive role for parents as key stakeholders within the publicly funded education system. Greg is committed to ensuring that parents' voices are heard, and their opinions considered in a meaningful fashion with regard to education issues concerning their children.

A sales and marketing consultant, and a parent volunteer for the past 11 years in his sons' schools, Greg has taken a very active part in their education. He served three terms on the school council, the first two as chair, at Quaker Road Elementary School in Welland where his son, Zac, is currently a grade 7 student. Greg's other son, Nathan, is in Grade 11 at E.L. Crossly Secondary School, where Greg is a parent member of the school council.

### **Trudy Griffiths** *(Chair)*

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*Appointed Chair of the Ontario Parent Council by Minister of Education Janet Ecker in April 2002*

*Term: April 12, 2002 – April 12, 2004*

Trudy Griffiths is not a newcomer to the Ontario Parent Council. She was appointed to the OPC as the Northwestern regional member in January 1998. She served as the Treasurer and Vice-Chair, then as the acting Chair from September 1999 until June 2000. Subsequent to her term on the OPC, she was appointed to chair the OPC Transition Team to make recommendations to the Minister of Education on the future role of the OPC from July 2000 to January 2001.

Trudy brings a wealth of experience to the OPC. She has always been and remains very active in her school council and the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board. She was a past chair and member of both the parents' association and the school council at the Eagle River elementary school. She now chairs the Dryden High School Council, where her daughter attends grade 9. She has served and provided feedback as a parent representative on a number of provincial committees. She has made presentations from a parental perspective to the Principal's Qualification Program and the Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program and successfully co-nominated a teacher in 1995 and another in 1999 as Ontario Teacher of the Year. In the last year, she has been integral in developing tools and training modules for school councils and for principals.

### **Janet Burghart**

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*Term: February 1, 2001 – December 31, 2002*

Janet Burghart is married and has two children in the public school system. Janet has been very involved in community services for the past 14 years. She served as a member of the OPC's executive committee from 1998 until 2000. She was also a member of the OPC's transition team, which made recommendations to the Minister of Education on a restructured OPC.

### **Cathy Cove**

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*Term: February 1, 2001 – December 31, 2002*

Cathy Cove has two children in the public school system. Since 1998 she has directed ParentNetwork, a non-profit provincial parent's organization. Currently Cathy holds a position on the Board of Directors of the Organization for Quality Education. Cathy was a member of the OPC's transition team and the Minister of Education's Advisory Committee on the Provision of Extracurricular Activities.

## **Diane Ellis**

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2003*

Diane Ellis has four children enrolled in French-language Catholic and public schools in the Embrun and Ottawa area. She has been involved in parent groups on the local and regional level for fifteen years and has been president of Parents partenaires en éducation (PPE) for five years. She represents PPE on the Ontario Parent Council as well as on the Commission nationale des parents francophones (a national group of francophone parents) and chairs its strategic development committee.

## **Julie Anne Heidman**

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2004*

Julie Anne Heidman has three children in elementary school and is the chair of Guardian Angels' School Council. She is an active volunteer in Orillia as well as vice-president and coach of the Ramara Soccer League.

## **Donald Hill**

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*Term: February 1, 2001 – February 28, 2003*

Donald Hill is the married father of three children and has been involved in his local school council in the Markham/ Stouffville area. He actively participates in his community through his church and coaching various levels of children's sports.

## **Bert Kreps**

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2004*

Bert Kreps has four children and has served as a member of the St. Ignatius School Council in Thunder Bay since 1997.

## **Bonnie LaFontaine**

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2004*

Bonnie LaFontaine has three children, two in the public school system. Bonnie is the Economic Development Officer for the Municipality of Huron East located in Huron County. Bonnie has worked with school councils in the Goderich area as chair and vice-chair at both the elementary and secondary levels. Bonnie was a member of the amalgamation/transition committee for the Huron-Perth School Boards, which became the Avon Maitland District School Board. She has served on various committees with the A.M.D.S.B. including the Secondary School Reform Steering Committee. Bonnie also served for five years, three as chair, on the School Council Liaison Committee, the regional council for the Avon Maitland District School Board.

## **Manon Lavallée**

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2004*

Manon Lavallée is the mother of two children and she has been operating her own business for over 13 years. For the last five years, she has been involved in the «conseil d'école» of her children's school, now the École publique de la Rivière Castor, in Embrun. She is also chair of the Public Library Board of the township she resides in.

## **Philip Leong**

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*Term: July 1, 1998 – June 30, 2000 and  
July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2002*

Philip Leong has three children, two of whom attend Our Lady of Peace Catholic School in Oakville. Philip immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong in 1987 and has been in the investment and banking profession for 15 years. He is a former principal of Dr. Sun Yet Sen Chinese School, which provides language and heritage programs for students of Chinese origin. Philip is also president of both the Chinese-Canadian Intercultural Association and the Chinese Association of Mississauga.

## **Donna Lucas-Astley**

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*Term: January 8, 1999 – June 30, 2000 and  
July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2002*

Donna Lucas-Astley has one child and lives in Bowmanville. She has been actively involved as a member of her local Catholic parent-teacher association and Catholic school council for the past eight years. Donna is one of the parent organizers for the Clarington Boys' Slo-Pitch Association and a director of the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education, representing the Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board.

## **Rick Macdonald**

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2003*

Rick Macdonald has two children and has been actively involved in the St. Peter School Council in Windsor for more than 13 years, serving as chair for a number of years. Rick has been co-chair of the Windsor Catholic Elementary School Councils umbrella group and is also a member of the High School Councils umbrella group.

Active in coaching with his sons' sports teams, Rick finds the time to address issues that affect students and their education. He believes that school boards and their meetings should be open to parents and their questions relating to their children's education. He was instrumental in having the "open forums" as part of the agenda at every Windsor Catholic Elementary School Board meeting. "Parents must have every opportunity to be involved with all matters related to their children's learning environment".

## **Kathy McNeil**

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*Term: July 1, 1999 – June 30, 2000 and  
July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2002*

Kathy McNeil lives in Peterborough with her husband Tony. They have two daughters – one of whom is in grade nine while the other is taking

her OAC courses. Kathy has 14 years experience with the Catholic Parent-Teacher Associations and more recently with Catholic school councils. She currently sits on the St. Peter's Secondary School Council. She is a member of the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education, which she represents on the Ontario Parent Council.

## **Irene Murray**

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2004*

Irene Murray has two children and lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake. She has been a member of elementary and secondary Catholic school councils for over nine years in St. Catharines. Irene served as a regional representative to the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education and helped to set up a regional school council in her area.

## **Michael Nychuk**

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*Term: February 1, 2001 – February 28, 2003  
(resigned in March 2002)*

Michael Nychuk has two sons, Connor and Coleton who are in grades 1 and 2. He has been a member of the St. Joseph School Council in North Bay for the past four years and has served as its chair for the last two. Michael owns his own marketing and communications firm. He has been involved in education and personal development for most of his life.

## **Michael O'Gorman**

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2003*

Michael O'Gorman and his wife Vicki have two elementary school-age children. He has been involved in his children's school in Milton for eight years, serving as chair of the school council for the past five years. He has also chaired the Council of Chairs meetings for the Halton Catholic District School Board. Michael operates his own accounting practice in Milton, has been an active volunteer in the Milton community and is a past president of the Milton Chamber of Commerce.

### **Susan Robertson**

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2003*

Susan Robertson is a parent who has been an active supporter of public education for many years. She is currently the first vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, which she represents on the Ontario Parent Council. She has been involved in education at the school, school board and ministry level since 1990.

### **Karen Sisson**

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*Term: February 1, 2001 – December 31, 2002*

Karen, her husband and three sons reside in Peterborough. She has served as a member of the St. Catherine School Council since 1998. Karen has been volunteering at the elementary school level and at Trent University for several years. She is also involved in the Peterborough Regional Health Centre Foundation.

### **Marlene Taylor**

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2003*

Marlene Taylor has been an active member of her school councils for the past 10 years. She is an active community member in church and other volunteer organizations. Marlene lives with her husband and two boys in rural Georgian Bluffs near Owen Sound.

### **Dale Thomson** *(Vice-Chair)*

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*Term: March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2003*

*(Vice-Chair October 2001 – October 2002)*

Dale Thomson has three children and was the chair of the Laird School Council near Echo Bay for five years. He is the chair of the School Council Coordinating Committee of Algoma District School Board Councils. Dale also served on special education advisory committees for over eight years and sat on the board of directors of the Sault Ste. Marie chapter of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario.

**Additional copies of this Annual Report may be obtained  
by contacting the Ontario Parent Council**

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20 Bay Street, Suite 405, Toronto ON M5J 2N8

Tel: 416 314-0426

1 800 361-6483

Fax: 416 314-0425

[opc@edu.gov.on.ca](mailto:opc@edu.gov.on.ca)

An electronic copy is also available on the  
Ontario Parent website at [www.ontarioparentcouncil.org](http://www.ontarioparentcouncil.org)  
under Publications.



# 4 Financial Report

## Financial Report for the period April 1, 2001 – March 31, 2002

### EXPENDITURES\*

Salary and wages	\$ 114,164
Transport and Communications	\$ 100,697
Services and rentals	\$ 261,757
Supplies and equipment	\$ 8,507
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 485,125</b>

\* Statement of expenditures was provided by the Ministry of Education.