

## ***YES, VIRGINIA, THERE IS A TEACHER SHORTAGE!***

There is a current and projected ongoing shortage of qualified professionals available to serve as Occasional Teachers. Qualified Occasional Teachers have been used to fill the demand for substitutes for teachers on statutory, medical and other approved leaves. The EQAO Grades Three and Six Testing and other Curriculum in-services delivered during the instructional day have created a high demand for qualified Occasional Teachers. Because there is a further substantial demand for substitutes to cover all remaining absences, Boards such as the TCDSB have applied to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) for permission to hire unqualified instructors. In the TCDSB the task of finding suitable unqualified instructors to supervise students in classes and programs from which the regular teacher is absent was assigned to the schools. ***HIRING NON-QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS:*** According to the TCDSB plan, schools identified suitable candidates from the local community and did preliminary interviews. Applicants filled out forms and attended in-services provided by the Board. Some schools worked together to develop a pool of unqualified instructors to share across school communities to maintain the professional context in which unqualified, community-based instructors would work. Principals had the responsibility to contact unqualified instructors on the day of a teacher absence if qualified personnel were not assigned by SEMS. ***CURRENT WORKING CONDITIONS:*** At a Joint Staff Allocation Committee meeting on March 25, 1999, Senior Staff in attendance, assured TECT that problems arising out of the shortage of qualified Occasional Teachers had been resolved. Phone calls and faxes from schools to the TECT office demonstrated otherwise. In fact, the success of the above strategy varied widely from school to school. In a meeting with the Director on February 9, 1999, the Board indicated that the names of unqualified instructors were to be incorporated into the SEMS system. Schools which had been, for a variety of reasons, unable to develop a pool of substitute instructors would now be able to access a centralized pool of unqualified instructors. It should be noted that this proposition may lead to certain contractual issues with the Metro Occasional Teachers Association.

### ***WHAT CAN BE DONE?***

- ✓ **Permission to hire unqualified instructors and assign them to classrooms and programs** falls within the authority designated to Boards under legislated provisions. The College of Teachers has responded to inquiries from TECT by directing questions to the MOET.
- ✓ **The protection of the confidentiality of student and classroom records** is the responsibility of the Board. Teachers with concerns about matters of professionalism and confidentiality should direct inquiries to the school administration, ask for direction and follow it. Teachers should document any action taken in response to a professional concern and any direction given.
- ✓ **Teachers are entitled to work in a professional setting.** Unqualified instructors are in the schools as employees of the Board and are subject to all Board Policies and Procedures.
- ✓ **It has been a standard practice of the Board to provide internal coverage for teacher absences due to coaching or other school team/club responsibilities.** However, given the current impact of substitute shortages this practice is adding to demands on teachers' time and on non-classroom programs. Parents and CSACs should be kept informed of the impact of this issue on the schools.
- ✓ **TECT is in the process of filing a grievance over the loss of Prep Time under the Collective Agreement** this year. Documentation from teachers should continue to be forwarded by courier and fax to the TECT office. Members will be kept informed of the development of this grievance.