



Ontario
College of
Teachers
Our Evolving
Mandate

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In 1997, the Ontario government set 11 objects into law to determine the regulatory responsibilities of the Ontario College of Teachers. Those objects remain unchanged.

But, in 2009, public expectations of professional self-regulators have changed significantly.

As the contemporary context shifts, so do the ways in which the College regulates Ontario’s teaching profession in the public interest.

Objects of the College			
1. To regulate the profession of teaching and to govern its members.	2. To develop, establish and maintain qualifications for membership in the College.	3. To accredit professional teacher education programs offered by post-secondary educational institutions.	4. To accredit ongoing education programs for teachers offered by post-secondary educational institutions and other bodies.
5. To issue, renew, amend, suspend, cancel, revoke and reinstate certificates of qualification and registration.	6. To provide for the ongoing education of members of the College.	7. To establish and enforce professional standards and ethical standards applicable to members of the College.	8. To receive and investigate complaints against members of the College and to deal with discipline and fitness to practise issues.
9. To communicate with the public on behalf of the members of the College.	10. To perform such additional functions as are prescribed by the regulations.	11. To develop, provide and accredit educational programs leading to certificates of qualification additional to the certificate required for membership, including but not limited to certificates of qualification as a supervisory officer, and to issue, renew, amend, suspend, cancel, revoke and reinstate such additional certificates.	
Duty			
In carrying out its objects, the College has a duty to serve and protect the public interest.			

Here are six factors that have helped to shape the College’s evolving mandate.

1. Increasing regulatory responsibilities

When the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* was passed in 1997, the College inherited a teaching profession with just over 165,000 active members. Today, the profession is almost one-third larger, with more than 219,000 College members in good standing.

In 1998, our first full year of operation, 8,633 individuals applied for registration with the College. This year we will receive over 60 per cent more applications – in excess of 14,000.

Ten years ago we were still planning and piloting our accreditation program; today, we accredit 49 pre-service teacher education programs at 18 institutions and thousands of in-service courses offered by 35 providers.

Another measure of our growth could be that we annually translate more than five times as many words as we did in our first year – a reflection of the significantly expanded services we now provide to French-language members and francophone Ontario, as well as our much higher overall level of activity.

2. New administrative obligations

New administrative obligations have also significantly affected our mandate.

In 1999 the requirement for all new applicants to undergo a criminal-records check was introduced.

In 2000 the provincial government required the College to introduce detailed language-proficiency standards for teacher applicants.

Since 2006 we have been required to track and report on the certificates of our new members their successful completion of the government’s New Teacher Induction Program, which is administered by district school boards and other employers.

In fact, since 1997, there have been 15 changes in legislation and 18 in various regulations, many of them with significant impact on the College.

3. Curriculum and education policy

Important changes in curriculum and education policy are the third development that has played a key role in the evolution of our mandate.

Certainly the most significant of these has been the sweeping changes to the Teachers’ Qualifications Regulation.

We called the report on our review *Preparing Teachers for Tomorrow* and that is what we as a profession are doing – on our own initiative.

The involvement of thousands of our members across the province with Council members and College staff in the revision of our qualifications programs has brought home the true meaning and benefits of professional self-government for Ontario teachers in a very real, practical way.

In the same way, we have worked with teacher educators and the whole sector to develop a shared understanding of our accreditation mandate and the benefits, challenges and requirements of this important responsibility, which will form the foundation of a new accreditation regulation.

The College has responded to the Ministry of Education's introduction of revised technological education curriculum and the demand for appropriately qualified teachers with new qualifications and guidelines, to be followed by a new schedule under our regulation. Over the last two years we have significantly increased our involvement with Aboriginal communities as we play our part in Ontario's commitment to improve education opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Through our outreach activities, we are encouraging Aboriginal students to consider teaching: through accreditation, working with faculties to provide focused teacher education and through our Teachers' Qualifications Review process, ensuring that our members have access to improved in-service preparation for teaching Aboriginal students and subjects.

The evolution of our involvement in Aboriginal education since 1998 is remarkable, but all these activities clearly respond to our legislated objects and duty to act in the public interest.

4. Professional self-regulation

The fourth factor that has contributed to the evolution of our mandate is the change in the field of professional self-regulation over the last decade.

We have seen the bar raised significantly in terms of the transparency of the judicial system, with the most important court decisions now available instantly online and increasing interest in improved access via televised court proceedings.

In the light of these developments, the College reviewed its practices for providing access to the written decisions arising from public disciplinary hearings.

We found that our past practice was inconsistent and introduced a new protocol to ensure that we meet today's standards for access to quasi-judicial proceedings.

As we exercise our regulatory authority in the public interest, justice must not only be done – we must be sure that it can be seen to be done.

In the last 10 years we have also seen new provincial legislation that requires the legal profession and all the regulated health professions to match and in some areas exceed the transparency the College provides through our online public register.

Society's evolving standards for accountability by professional regulators were clearly expressed in the 2006 amendments to the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*, which require Council members to swear an oath of office to serve and protect the public interest and which provide for the Public Interest Committee to advise Council on its public interest mandate.

5. Social and demographic developments

Social and demographic developments in Ontario are a very important part of the contemporary context that shapes our mandate.

In 1998, when the College inherited a certification system that traditionally dealt with a few hundred international applicants annually, no one could foresee that we would, 10 years later, be undergoing legislated audits by a provincially appointed Fairness Commissioner to ensure that our application processes are fair, transparent and barrier-free for the thousands of internationally trained teachers who now apply to us each year.

At our establishment, few would have thought that we would be called on to justify our certification requirements or registration appeals process before the Ontario Human Rights Commission, but today this is an unremarkable fact of life for us and other regulators. Over the last decade we have worked with our partners in the community and the Ontario Teachers' Federation to assist our new-Canadian applicants and members to make the transition to teaching in Ontario.

Like other professional regulatory bodies, we have recognized that the public interest in licensing new entrants to our profession requires more from us than issuing a piece of paper. Ten years ago the College played a key role in drawing public attention to the demographic realities that would create a short-term shortage of qualified teachers in this province.

Today, we see a surplus of unemployed and underemployed qualified English-language teachers.

However, Ontario education continues to suffer from a chronic shortage of qualified French-language teachers in both French- and English-language school boards.

We continue to be concerned about the numbers of uncertified and unqualified individuals teaching in French across the province, an issue that falls squarely within our objects.

So it is clearly in the public interest that we address that concern proactively by making it part of our mandate to promote teaching as a career to Franco-Ontarian youth, to use our accreditation authority to encourage innovative French-language teacher education programs, and to publicize opportunities in this province to French-language teachers.

6. Labour mobility

The sixth factor that has shaped our mandate over the last decade has been the remarkable progress in Canada and internationally on the removal of barriers to labour mobility.

Canada's premiers have set a deadline of August 1, 2009 for the implementation of barrier-free movement of professionals and tradespeople within Canada. It is a simple goal that carries with it complex administrative issues and some serious issues for the College and other regulators to resolve in carrying out our public-interest mandate.

At the same time, Canada's commitments under the Lisbon convention require a sea change in the credential evaluation procedures of professional licensing bodies – and for the College,

further evolution in the way we exercise our authority to set qualification requirements and to certify teachers from outside Ontario, whether they are new to the profession or bring years of experience.

All of these six factors have helped to shape the initiatives and decisions of the members of four Councils, who have responded to developments that have changed the context of College decision making in ways that few anticipated 10 years ago.

The constants in that context are our duty to serve and protect the public interest and our 11 legislated objects. Those objects define the scope of the College's authority. Our mandate speaks to how we exercise our authority.

The College's goal in carrying out our mandate is to reflect the ethical aspirations of our profession and to be consultative, proactive, transparent, accountable and fair.

Regulating teaching in the public interest

The Ontario College of Teachers was established in 1997 to allow teachers to regulate and govern their own profession in the public interest. The College is governed by a 37-member Council – 23 of whom are elected by their peers and 14 members of the public appointed by the provincial government.

Teachers who want to work in publicly funded schools in Ontario must be certified to teach in the province and be members of the College.

The College is accountable to the public for how it carries out its responsibilities. The qualifications, credentials and current status of every College member appears on our public register of members at www.oct.ca → [Find a Teacher](#).



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Ordre des
enseignantes et
des enseignants
de l'Ontario

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