



Francis Chechile, Communication professional at the Government of Canada

My education at St Thomas played a significant role in preparing me for life after high school, higher education and my career in government. I was so fortunate to have many dedicated teachers, but a few stand out. I was lucky to have been taught by Ms. Colleen Murphy in grades 7,9 and 10, who consistently helped to challenge me, encouraged creativity and critical thinking and made learning fun.

Most importantly, her compassion, encouragement and consideration of the importance of mental health – before discussing it was common – showed how much she cared for her student’s success and wellbeing.

Mr. Fred de Graff, gym teacher, coach and co-founder of the St. Thomas Zulu’s RFC, played a huge role in instilling the merits of hard work, good sportsmanship, discipline and balance. As a coach and teacher, Mr. de Graff showed his dedication to students’ personal development. If you were on his team, you are a student first and an athlete second; you only start if your academic work reflects your work on the pitch. We worked hard as a team, we won as a team, and if we were to lose, you lose with grace and as a team and taught us resiliency, respect and determination. These are all lessons that continue to serve me.

Over the last year and a half, I have worked in Ottawa, having the privilege to serve as Social Media assistant to The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, and during the last election, I served as director of Communications for MP Sameer Zuberi. In 2022 I will be joining the Office of Canada’s Minister of Health, The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos as a Communications assistant. I have an academic background in Media Arts and Political Science, and professional experience in radio, photography, and government– but before all that, I’m a St. Thomas High School alumnus.