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President's Newsletter

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Trustee Elections

With school trustees' terms of office expiring on December 4th, this November's Municipal elections will also include the election of new Boards of Education. As we saw last spring here in Saanich, having a progressive Board that is willing to stand up for public education in the face of government underfunding is invaluable (it should be noted that none of the four trustees that voted to submit a deficit budget are running for reelection).

As you probably know, voter turnout for Municipal elections is underwhelming. While this is certainly a concern in a democracy, it can be good news for candidates who are effective at "getting out the vote" as a few votes can often be the difference between winning and losing an election. The Saanich Teachers' Association is not formally endorsing any candidates, but we have asked all candidates a series of questions about important educational issues, and will be circulating these answers to all STA members. We will also be circulating a list of Greater Victoria Board candidates endorsed by the GVTA.

No matter where you live, **it is critical that teachers get involved in these elections.** Read the materials being sent out to see which candidates deserve teacher support. Attend All Candidates Meetings (see below) to hear what prospective trustees have to say about the issues that are important to teachers. And, of course, **get out and vote on Saturday, November 19th!**

Saanich All Candidates Meeting:

Wednesday, November 2nd, 7-9pm @ Royal Oak Middle School

Greater Victoria All Candidates Meetings:

Tuesday, November 1st, 7-9pm @ the Fernwood Community Centre

Wednesday, November 9th, 7-9pm @ Reynolds School

Tuesday, November 15th, 7-9 @ Spectrum School

Sooke All Candidates Meetings:

Thursday, November 3rd, 7-9pm @ Spencer Middle School

Thursday, November 10th, 7-9pm @ Edward Milne Community School

New Teacher Induction

On Wednesday, October 26th, the Saanich Teachers' Association held its annual New Teacher Induction at Muse Winery in Deep Cove. After welcoming comments from myself and BCTF President Susan Lambert (who joined us on a very busy day!), inductees were fêted by fellow teachers, senior management and trustees as everyone enjoyed some very pleasant food and drink. Special thanks need to go to STA Program Chair Joe Winkler and Sally Glen for organizing this lovely evening.



Left to right: Susan Lambert, Catherine Cade, Lynn Wang, Dinah Pillion, Jill Dol, Marie-Anne Hellinckx, Mike Collins, Justine Shaw, Christa Cowie, Sean Hayes

To Tweet or Not To Tweet?

None of us are really sure what the brave, new world of 21st Century/Personalized Learning will bring, but one thing is certain: social media is going to play a role. Like it or not, the world of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogging is here to stay, and even if some teachers don't want to embrace it, all of us had better get used to it.

Having said all of that, it is important to recognize the potential pitfalls associated with this technology. The very elements of social media that make them so useful also make them risky - they are immediate, somewhat anonymous, and pervasive. Not surprisingly, teachers are starting to find themselves on the wrong side of these risks. Should we be able to blog about annoying parents or unreasonable administrators? Should we accept students as friends on our personal Facebook accounts? How private is private, and how anonymous is anonymous? If you were applying for a new job today, would you be comfortable with what your potential employer can find out about you online? Are teachers ever really off-duty?

Instead of giving you answers to these questions, I simply invite you to think about your own interactions with social media, and leave you with the advice given at a recent meeting I attended... if you aren't comfortable with it on the front page of the Times Colonist, you shouldn't be comfortable with it online.

Class Size and Composition Update

Although there are certainly compelling arguments to be made for a salary increase and improvements to prep time and benefits, class size and composition remains the number one issue for teachers in Saanich. The question is: what are we (the BCTF/STA) doing about it? Here is a summary of the current multi-pronged approach we are employing to gain improvements in this key area.

- ⇒ the STA is once again grieving any class organized in excess of the standards established in the School Act (“Bill 33”) this year, provided the teacher in question disagreed with the class organization
- ⇒ the STA has also filed a grievance against all classes organized in violation of our stripped (pre-2002) class size and composition language based on the assertion that this language should be returning to our collective agreement as a result of the Supreme Court ruling
- ⇒ the BCTF has filed a step 3 provincial “interpretation grievance” which alleges that Boards of Education across the province have violated collective agreements by organizing classes that exceed the standards outlined in each District’s pre-2002 language
- ⇒ the BCTF has appealed Arbitrator Dorsey’s rulings on class size and composition, alleging that he has given undue deference to the opinions of principals when they determine that a class is appropriate for student learning. We hope to have this case heard in the BC Court of Appeal in the spring
- ⇒ the BCTF has returned to Bill 27/28 discussions with government, and has just tabled a formal package in response to government’s Class Organization Fund. The BCTF package includes:
 - the immediate repeal of Bills 27/28
 - the immediate restoration of our rights to bargain working conditions (including class size and composition)
 - the restoration of all collective agreement provisions that were stripped as a result of the passing of this unconstitutional legislation
 - the requirement that government fully fund the return of any teaching positions needed to comply with any and all restored language
 - compensation to address the effects of a decade of underfunding (to be settled by an arbitrator if the parties cannot come to an agreement on compensation)

BCCT RIP

As I write this newsletter, the Legislature is debating Bill 12 – *The Teachers’ Act*. This legislation will dissolve the BC College of Teachers, and replace it by a Ministry-run **BC Teachers’ Council**. This Council will be charged with overseeing teacher training, certification, education standards and teacher discipline. The new Council will consist of 15 members: three (3) teachers nominated by the BCTF; five (5) educators (likely teachers) elected from five newly established regions; seven (7) persons appointed by the minister (to represent other interest groups); one non-voting government representative.

Although teachers will continue to have a majority on the council (eight of 15), all discipline will be handled by a nine member Discipline and Professional Conduct Board that includes a minority (four) of teachers. Discipline Hearing Panels will consist of three members (only one being a teacher).

BCTF members will be charged \$80 per year to offset the costs of the new Teachers’ Council.

Know Your Collective Agreement

Here are a few corners of the Collective Agreement that folks should know more about...

Part-time Teachers

Articles

B.31.2 When a statutory holiday falls on a normal school day (Monday - Friday) and a part-time teacher is not scheduled to work on that day, the teacher shall be granted equivalent time-off, prorated on the basis of the teacher's assignment, with the Board assuming the cost of the teacher-on-call.

B.31.3 Teachers who transfer from a full time assignment to a part-time assignment under Article C.15.1 may, for pension purposes, request and shall be granted a leave of absence from the full time position, so as to be eligible to purchase pensionable service in accordance with the Pension (Teachers) Act

C.15.1 A full-time teacher may, without prejudice to that appointment, request a part-time appointment. The teacher shall specify the fraction of time and the period for which the part-time assignment is requested, at the time of making the request. The Board shall not unreasonably deny such requests.

C.15.2 A teacher, who receives a part-time appointment under section C.15.1, shall be entitled to return to a full time assignment, similar to the one previously occupied, at the start of the school year immediately following expiration of the part-time appointment. The teacher may return to a full time assignment at an earlier date, or may extend the period of part-time appointment, upon the approval of the Board.

D.14.8 As a part of their regular duties, part-time teachers shall participate in attendance on Non-Instructional Days as follows:

- a. Part-time teachers who work part of each day shall participate in a Non-Instructional Day on at least a prorated basis to the teacher's assignment;
- b. Part-time teachers who do not work on each instructional day shall participate in a Non-Instructional Day for their normal instructional time when the Non-Instructional Day occurs on that day of work;
- c. Part-time teachers requested by the administrator to participate in a Non-Instructional Day longer than their scheduled time, or on a day not scheduled for work, shall be compensated in the form of pay or time-in-lieu as set out in B.38.1, the form of such compensation to be determined by the teacher

Translation

e.g. If you are a 0.8 FTE teacher who doesn't work Mondays, you are entitled to 0.8 of a day off for any Monday stats. This does not apply if your time off is for medical reasons (you are on medical leave, not a part-time teacher).

If you *chose* to work part-time, you should ask for leave under this article so that you are eligible to purchase back pensionable service (see tpp.pensionsbc.ca for rules and regulations).

Teachers need to do a better job of formalizing part-time requests using this article. If you are choosing to work part-time, you should formally write HR with the request (including point-time and period), quoting this article. (N.B. if you are wanting to reduce for medical reasons, you should see your doctor and take medical leave if appropriate.)

Paying attention to these articles allows teachers to protect their rights to return to full-time.

e.g. If you work 0.5 FTE (every morning or afternoon), then you must attend at least half of any given NID.

If you work only certain days, then you only have to attend NIDs that fall on one of your regular days of work (but you must attend the full day).

This should really only happen on School Planning Days. If you are requested to attend the entire day by your administrator, and you would have normally only had to attend part of that day (or not at all), then you should be given time-in-lieu or pay for the extra time you attend.

It is critical that the STA and BCTF have accurate, up-to-date contact information for all teachers. Please email Sally (sally@saanichteachers.com) if you have had an address or name change recently.