



Welcome Back

I wish I could say welcome back to just another year of classroom experiences. However, as many have already surmised, the coming year, at least the start of it, won't be quite like just another year.

One thing that won't be significantly different is what we do for our students. The "Teach Only" campaign that was voted upon by teachers province-wide at the end of the previous school year, is intended to place more of our focus on our students, and their needs, and somewhat less focus on those things that take our time and attention away from teaching, such as administrative duties, meetings, and standardized testing, to name a few.

Teachers in BC have been struggling against unwise and unjust legislation for a full decade. But teachers recently encountered watershed moments in those struggles to protect public education.

- Bills 27 and 28 violate Charter
- Government institutes "Net-0"

These are only two of the myriad issues that have contributed to the persistent and concerted erosion of public education in BC. To become familiar with those other long-standing issues, I've been encouraging all teachers to find the time to sign in to the BCTF 'Members Only' web portal.

I hope that everyone will take the opportunity to visit bctf.ca and click on the 'Members Only' link. The login will require your employee number, which you will find on your pay advice provided by the district.

Once in the members only area, please visit the bargaining link, and read the "Bargaining Updates," and "Reports from the table."

More information will be provided at a **Special General Meeting**, which is set for **Wednesday, September 7th at 4:30 PM at Isabelle Reader Theatre at Spencer Middle School.**

Bills 27 and 28

Bills 27 and 28 were introduced in 2002 by Christy Clark, when she was our minister of education. With an emphasis on "Flexibility and Choice" for school districts, the bills ushered in a companion piece of legislation - Bill 33 - with which we have all become more familiar.

These pieces of legislation were used by the government to strip class size and composition language (in addition to other provisions) from our collective agreements. Subsequent to the stripping of our contracts, class sizes ballooned province-wide. Increasing numbers of students with special needs were assigned to already crowded classes, non-enrolling, specialist teaching positions were eliminated in grossly disproportionate numbers, joining hundreds of classroom teachers who were laid off due to the swollen classes. Services to our students were diluted, or eliminated altogether. Those unfortunate students with special needs were no longer having their needs met - in greatly increasing numbers. Through the elimination of teaching positions and services, the government saved more than 1/4 billion dollars in the first year of the larger class sizes, and equivalent amounts in every year since the introduction of that odious legislation.

While the Supreme Court determined that actions taken by the government in drafting the offending legislation were a violation of our federal charter, the court didn't require the government to restore the class size and composition language stripped from our collective agreement. Exactly what is to be done by government in response to the Supreme Court decision hasn't been decided, and discussions between the BCTF and government related to the Supreme Court decision are on-going, and separate from provincial bargaining.

Teachers across the province have demonstrated that issues of class size and composition remain at the top of their list of priorities. While we would like nothing more than to see our class size and composition provisions restored to our collective agreement, it's not something that can be negotiated at the bargaining table with any confidence, until "corrective" legislation is written by the government in response to the Supreme Court ruling.

Net Zero Mandate

The government issued an edict in the past year that outlined their stance in bargaining with those working for government. Government has said, and local district officials at bargaining tables across the province have duly parroted, that in the course of negotiations for contract renewal, any changes to collective agreements that have a cost attached will have to be paid for through the elimination of cost-related provisions that are already in place within the contract. For example, if we were to negotiate a salary increase, it would have to be paid for by eliminating things like our paid leaves and/or reducing our preparation time.

The 'net zero' stance by government is particularly irksome when we have witnessed unprecedented spending before and during the Olympics, 380 million dollars in multiple budget over-runs to the cost of Vancouver's Convention Centre, half a billion dollars for a new stadium roof, and in 2007, a 29% raise for our provincial MLAs, and a 48% raise for the premier. The MLA raises were recommended by a panel of government appointees. At that time, the government was fighting every attempt to raise the minimum wage, saying that it was unaffordable, and defending their own increase by referring to the need to catch up with the rate paid to MLAs elsewhere in the country, and a need to pay a salary that would attract the best and the brightest. Teachers in BC have long promoted the same rationale in arguing for salary and prep time parity with teachers in other provinces.

We can expect the media and the government to wax obsessively about teacher salary 'demands.' There have been no specifics introduced at the bargaining table yet, but we, like the Liberals of 2007, are asking for parity with our colleagues in other jurisdictions. We are currently the lowest paid teachers west of Quebec. If we were to achieve parity in our starting wage levels, with Alberta or Ontario, we would need a raise in the neighbourhood of 20%. And with Alberta and Saskatchewan teachers receiving negotiated increases this year, the existing gap is also set to increase.

“...where free unions and collective bargaining are forbidden, freedom is lost... freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. ”

Ronald Reagan
Labour Day Speech, 1980

What We're Asking For

You will see in the media and hear from the government that the only issue important to teachers is salary. The issue of salary is better framed as a matter of fairness or equity with our colleagues across the country. And even if parity with the leading provinces were achieved, it would not resolve the issue which teachers across the province have demonstrated as first and foremost in any list of improvements to our collective agreement: Class Size and Composition.

In 2002, in one of the greatest acts of betrayal ever perpetrated by a provincial government, the legislative powers within Bills 27 and 28 were used to vaporize class size and composition language in our collective agreements. The CS&C provisions were a product of free and fair collective bargaining, and many sacrifices were made by teachers at the bargaining table in order to preserve reasonable class size numbers, along with effective ratios of specialist support teachers.

With a stroke of a pen, our agreed-upon CS&C provisions were eliminated, and Bill 33 was brought in, complete with its purposefully obtuse wording, in order to make challenges to violations of government's own new class size limits absolutely byzantine in its processes.

So, what are we asking for?

- Restoration of, and ultimately improvements to, our stripped CS&C provisions
- Improvements to our preparation time, approaching parity with our neighbours
- Salary equity with equivalent jurisdictions
- Improvements to provisions for paid leave
- Ability to bargain local issues locally



What Has Been Offered By BCPSEA

- no salary adjustment
- no improvements to prep time
- ability to lengthen the school day or year with no adjustment to salary
- reduction of sick leave provisions
- streamlined, annual evaluations
- professional development to become a measure of teacher performance
- professional development directed by the employer
- power to dismiss a teacher for not fulfilling professional growth requirements
- concessions, contract stripping, and more concessions...



Phase One

We are essentially at yet another legislative impasse with the government. In public and private discussions, some within government have already dropped hints of legislation that has been considered (if not already drafted). It has been almost 15 years since government has fairly negotiated a collective agreement with teachers. All of our settlements in that time have been imposed by a government unwilling to respect the bargaining table, and perfectly willing to impose autocratic resolutions to its negotiations with teachers.

With a firm refusal to discuss any improvements to our contract, and with offers only of contract stripping and concessions, BCPSEA and the government have brought us to this unwelcome, but necessary step in the process of collective bargaining: job action.

The Labour Relations Board has reviewed the Phase One provincial job action that will be in place come September 6th, and with an eye to the 'essential service' status of public education, have issued the following list, indicating that teachers "need not...":

- Participate in meetings or interviews with parents/guardians and/or district teaching staff outside of instructional time, or during instructional time unless coverage is provided.
- Participate in meet the teacher activities outside of instructional time, or during instructional time unless coverage is provided.
- Prepare or distribute report cards.
- Provide any student assessment data to Administrative Officers or the school office, except Grade 12 marks required for graduation, post-secondary applications and scholarship purposes.
- Complete and submit student referral forms outside of instructional time.

- Attend staff meetings.
- Attend staff committee meetings.
- Attend any meeting called by School District management.
- Participate in any standing or ad hoc District committees.
- Attend school based meetings called by an Administrative Officer, unless the meetings are related to an emergency.
- Provide Administrative Officers with any routine printed, written or electronic communications.
- Accept any printed, written or electronic communication from an Administrative Officer, unless it relates to an emergency.
- Participate in the preparation or organization of assemblies outside of instructional time, or during instruction time unless coverage is provided.
- Participate in any accreditation activity.
- Participate in any School District or Ministry in-service.
- Participate in any professional development that is not teacher directed.
- Participate in any school photo organization.
- Provide coverage for a teacher who is absent, except for a Teacher On Call hired specifically for that purpose (consistent with principles in B421/2001 and B444/2001).
- Administer or supervise FSA or any District or Ministry test (consistent with principle in B418/2001).
- Collect money from students or participate in fund raising.
- Order supplies, textbooks, etc., unless needed immediately to effectively maintain ongoing instruction.
- Assist the Administrative Officer in administrative tasks like building timetables or computer organization.
- Do inventory.
- Organize textbooks.
- Answer school office phones.
- Supervise detentions before, during or after instructional time.
- Prepare overviews or previews for the Administrative Officer, except when associated with a teacher evaluation process.
- Distribute School District or administrative letters, newsletters, memos or announcements to students, unless it is health and safety related.
- Pack up classrooms to facilitate painting, renovations or maintenance.
- Perform department head/position of responsibility duties except during allocated time in the timetable



- ✓ If any of your personal information has changed, please contact the STA office to update
- ✓ At the **first staff meeting of the year**, you will need to elect a Staff Rep, Pro-D Rep and Staff Committee Chair. Please note: TRAINING DAY DATES are posted on the Calendar of Events.
- ✓ We are going green so please remember to keep checking the sooketeachers.com website for updates, new information and upcoming events. Newsletters will no longer be printed.
- ✓ If you haven't done so already, please sign up for the BCTF *mybctfportal*. The link is on the website.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 2011

- 6 Back to School
- 7 **Special General Meeting**
4:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Isabelle Reader Theatre
- 12 **TTOC AGM**
4:00 p.m.
Spencer Library
- 14 Exec Start Up – STA Office 4 p.m.
- 19 Non-Instructional Day
- 22 **Staff Rep Training Day**
8:30 a.m. Highland Pacific Golf Club
- 28 **Staff Committee Training Day**
8:30 a.m. Highland Pacific Golf Club

October 2011

- 5 Exec Meeting 4:00 p.m.
STA Office
- 6 **Pro-D Rep Training Day**
8:30 a.m. Highland Pacific Golf Club
- 10 Thanksgiving
- 12 Scholarship Social
7 p.m. Highland Pacific Golf Club
- 21 Provincial Pro-D Day
- 26 General Meeting

November 2011

- 2 Exec Meeting 4:00 p.m.
STA Office
- 8 New Teacher Orientation
- 11 Remembrance Day
- 16 Rep Assembly 4:00 p.m.
Spencer Library
- 24 Early Dismissal
- 25 Non-Instructional Day