

## President's Message

*Education costs money. But then so does ignorance.* — Sir Claus Moser



**AS WAS REFERENCED** in the last edition of Tackboard, the district is predicting a budget shortfall for 2015-16 to the tune of \$14.77 million. If it's true that misery loves company, the VSB is certainly not alone as this annual blood-letting exercise is being replicated across the province in districts large and small, urban and rural, assertive

and submissive. Districts ranging from Richmond to Campbell River to Prince Rupert to Victoria have written the government about the pressing need for adequate, stable, and predictable funding for public education, all of which have (unsurprisingly?) fallen on deaf ears. According to the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA), school boards will have to cut approximately \$32 million just to cover rising costs such as MSP premiums, unfunded salary increments, general inflation on supplies/services, BC Hydro rates, benefits (EI, CPP), and employee pension plans. As a point of interest, the situation is so dire and has attracted so much media attention that the *Vancouver Sun* is compiling a comprehensive database of district shortfalls. Making the situation even worse is the government's latest demand that school boards find another \$29 million in administrative costs, most recently characterized as "low-hanging fruit" by Premier Clark: a comment that has engendered a groundswell of rage amongst parents and educators across BC. Parents are organizing FACE (Families Against Cuts to Education) rallies across the province for April 12. Teachers (many of who are parents) are encouraged to attend this event (noon at the Vancouver Art Gallery) to send a message to the provincial government that our public education system requires additional funding, not more cuts! It is absolutely shameful that the BC government is proudly reporting an \$879 million surplus at the same time as school districts are reporting unprecedented budget shortfalls.

To shed further light on the heinousness of the underfunding of public education, please consider the following data. For example, BCTF research reveals that from 2008-2012, Board Operating Expenditures on public schools increased by 13.8% in Canada and by only 3.4% in British Columbia. If operating funding had increased by the same percentage in BC as Canada, there would have been an additional \$493 million in education funding available to support public school students by 2012. It is quite outrageous that BC ranks lowest of all provinces in improvements to K to 12 education funding. Among the Western provinces, Board Operating Expenditures for public schools increased by 24.7% in Alberta, 22.1% in Saskatchewan, 15.7%

in Manitoba, and 3.4% in BC between 2008-12. Additionally, the Province of BC's *Public Accounts 2013/14 Report* shows that program spending for the province increased by only 9.0% since 2009-10 while GDP increased by 15.2%—a clear indication that the provincial government can afford to improve education funding. Furthermore, a 2014 report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives shows that over the government's three-year fiscal plan, Nominal GDP is forecast to increase by more than 12% while government plans to increase K to 12 funding by less than 1%, this being the lowest increase in government funding of four "key" services, the other three being Advanced Education, Health, and Child Welfare.

Equally disturbing is Minister Fassbender's punitive decision to appoint EY (formerly Ernst and Young) to serve as *special advisor* on the VSB's 2015-16 budget. Given the aforementioned pervasiveness of provincial underfunding of public education, one must question why Vancouver is the only district being subjected to this unique treatment/process, particularly since the Board had already engaged the services of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to provide an update to their 2012 Resource Allocation Report. As you have likely heard, the VSB Board was stymied by the government's "plan" to engage an advisor, in effect an audit team to look at the district's budget development process, capital asset management, and opportunities for cost savings. How this process will play out is still a mystery, but there is no doubt that the money could be better spent on providing service to students rather than on auditors! At a time when teachers and students are starved for resources, this duplication of service is a colossal waste of taxpayers' money and an affront to the public good. By no stretch of the imagination does the appointment of EY align with and/or support the recommendation of the Select Standing Committee

...see **President**, page 2

## VSTA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 12, 2015

4pm at Tupper Auditorium

- Financial Report
- Election of 2015/16 Executive Committee

Please make every effort to attend this important meeting.

**PRESIDENT**, *cont'd from cover*

on Finance and Government Services that the province "Provide stable, predictable, and adequate funding to enable school districts to fulfill their responsibility to provide continued equitable access to quality public education, and to meet required repair and maintenance needs."

On a more positive note, I am pleased to report that John Hall, the BCTF endorsed candidate for the Vancouver Coastal Zone, has been elected to the BC Teachers' Council of the TRB (Teacher Regulation Branch). Given the complex work of teaching and the day-to-day challenges in our underfunded schools, it is critical that we have strong teacher advocates on the Council. In total, there are 16 members on the Council, both elected and appointed. The Minister appoints three members on the recommendation of the BCTF and five positions are elected by BC educators, including public and private school teachers, administrators and superintendents. Thanks to all of you who took the time to cast your ballot.

Thanks are also in order for our teacher colleagues (see pictures) who interrupted their well-deserved spring break to attend the BCTF AGM in Victoria. As is typical of the process, delegates from across the province met to discuss, debate, and make decisions on a variety of issues, ranging from finance to education policy to the health, welfare, and safety of teachers. Of especial importance to members was the decision to retain the 2014-15 annual membership fee. The fee will remain (for 2015-16) at 1.79%, but with a higher allocation to the General Operating Fund which will allow the GOF to build its fund balance. Resolutions regarding the implementation of a "one-member-one-vote" system of balloting for all BCTF Table Officer positions were soundly defeated. Access to the "key decisions" made at the BCTF AGM will be made available through the BCTF Members' Portal. If you have never attended an AGM, you are strongly encouraged to do so as part of your personal and professional growth.

In closing, I would like to leave you with the following quote by Koffi Annan: "Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development." Kudos to all of you for the many transformative moments that you make possible each and every day for your students.

Take care,

*Debbie*



## BCTF AGM 2015 – A Brief Overview

The BCTF AGM has returned Jim Iker as President, Glen Hansman as 1st Vice-President and Terri Mooring as 2nd Vice-President for the 2015-16 school year. They will be joined on the BCTF Executive Committee by returning Members-at-Large Carole Gordon, Karen Langenmaier and Norm Sabourin and James Sanyshyn and newly elected Members-at-Large Mike Ball, Gail Chaddock-Costello and Clint Johnson.

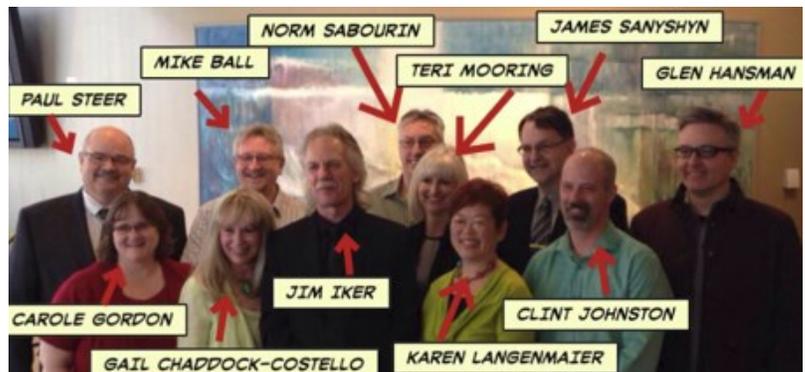
Of interest to all teachers is the decision on the membership fee for the coming year. Following some difficult discussions regarding the finances of the BCTF and the impact the past year of Job Action a decision was passed to retain the Member Fee at 1.79% of salary with an adjustment of the fee for active TTOCs at 1.0%.

Although a wide range of issues are always raised, debated and voted on, here is a set of emergent issues that were dealt with this year:

- A call on the provincial government to reverse the recent decision to further delay seismic upgrading in BC schools.
- A call to work with other unions and other organizations to oppose the federal government's broad sweeping anti-terrorism legislation, Bill C-51.
- Opposition to the BC Education Coaching Tax Credit along with a call for a tax credit that recognizes the monies spent on classroom and teaching materials by all teachers.

It was not all meetings and decision making. Over 700 delegates took the opportunity for direct action when we fanned out across downtown Victoria on Monday, March 16th as part of the BC FED's **FIGHT FOR 15** campaign. Teachers handed out information and encouraged members of the public to sign petitions calling on the provincial government to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

One of the most memorable points came in a rousing speech by Jim Sinclair as he graciously accepted Honorary Life Membership in the BCTF. It brought full circle the understanding of BC teachers' leading role in the BCFED and the Labour movement in general.





## METRO VANCOUVER TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT PLEBISCITE

# Why voting YES is the way to go

**C**onflicting views, many of which are polar opposites, abound in this conversation - all of which attempt to boil a complex issue down to a stark yes or no vote. Who can argue against better transit in our rapidly growing corner of BC? Should we upgrade bus and skytrain services? Yes. Would we benefit from improved connections between pedestrians and transit services? Yes. Is there more work needed to enhance corridors for cyclists? Yes. Is there a need to upgrade our current road networks? Yes. In contrast, should we hand over tax generated revenue to a governance model that has failed to inspire confidence? No. This is where we, as thoughtful citizens of the Metro Vancouver region, need to put the political decision by the BC Liberals into perspective and not be side-tracked by their attempts to distance themselves from any ownership of an unpalatable decision. The plebiscite, when stripped bare, is simply a mechanism that allows the governing party, despite being the very body that legislated the current dysfunctional governance model of Translink, to pass the buck and avoid a hard funding choice.

Currently, traffic congestion is costing us all, both literally and figuratively, on multiple levels. Productivity in the workplace is impacted and longer times for conducting business will translate into increased costs for goods and services downloaded to consumers. Time is lost from ourselves and our families with its consequent impact on quality of life. These tangible and intangible costs, including the cost to health from deteriorating air quality, will only continue to rise if there is no plan in place for improvement. The cost of this proposal is estimated at \$0.34 per day per household while the cost of doing nothing is substantial. In terms of dollars alone, inaction will result in an estimated cost of \$500 per person over the period covered by the plan. With an anticipated growth of over one million people in the Metro Vancouver region over the next 25 years, this is simply not good enough. Funding must be secured to ensure that improvements to transit and transportation are realized. The plan as outlined estimates that 70% of residents in the region will see a 25% increase in bus services, including night buses and handydart; furthermore, we will see a 20-30 minute reduction in commute times. The time to act is now. Consider voting yes in the Transportation and Transit Plebiscite.

# FIGHT FOR 15

Count me in



For information on the BC FED's campaign to raise the minimum wage, go to  
[www.fightfor15bc.ca](http://www.fightfor15bc.ca)



## Day of Mourning

Last year, 173 B.C. workers died. Now, 173 families mourn. Let's make our workplaces safer.

Tuesday, April 28





## Early Retirement Incentive Plan (ERIP) for 2015 June 30

### Rules of Eligibility:

- be on a continuing appointment
- be retiring with a pension
- have a minimum of ten (10) FTE years' service with the Vancouver Board of Education.
- be at the maximum of their scale
- have been in active service for the previous four (4) years (from September 2010), during which there may be a maximum of one year leave not including leaves under Article G.21.30., and/or leaves granted due to disability (within the meaning of *The British Columbia Human Rights Code*)
- be a minimum age of 55, and a maximum age of 64 as of June 30th in the year of retirement
- submit request to retire, in writing, **on or before 2015 May 31** for a retirement date of 2015 June 30.

Based on the salary upon retirement, excluding allowances, the minimum salary to be PB(5), step 10, the maximum to be 6M, step 10, minus PB(5), step 3, and to be adjusted by the applicable earnings as at age upon retirement date:

**Note:** For more information on applying for the ERIP, please call the VSTA office or Human Resources.

Age	Pay Grades				Payout Percentage
	4PC	5PB	5PA	6PM	
55	\$19,661	\$19,661	\$25,924	\$27,031	100%
56	\$17,695	\$17,695	\$23,332	\$24,328	90%
57	\$15,719	\$15,729	\$20,739	\$21,625	80%
58	\$13,763	\$13,763	\$18,147	\$18,922	70%
59	\$11,797	\$11,797	\$15,554	\$16,219	60%
60	\$9,831	\$9,831	\$12,962	\$13,516	50%
61	\$7,865	\$7,865	\$10,370	\$10,812	40%
62	\$5,898	\$5,898	\$7,777	\$8,109	30%
63	\$3,932	\$3,932	\$5,185	\$5,406	20%
64	\$3,932	\$3,932	\$5,185	\$5,406	20%



Always happy to hear from you!

Debbie, Rory, Sylvia, Kim & Mo



### What is TeachBC?

- Online resource of teaching materials, lessons, and research relevant to K-12 BC curriculum
- Allows users to download, upload, and share resources
- Search by subject, grade, resource type, title, description, language, and more

### Who can use it?

- Everyone! The website is public
- Teachers, provincial specialist associations, and other organizations

### How can teachers contribute?

- Upload your favourite lesson plans, unit plans, activities, resources, or research and make TeachBC the go-to site for K-12 BC resources
- Tell your colleagues about TeachBC and help us build the site

In the spirit of teachers helping teachers, thank you!

[teachbc.bctf.ca](http://teachbc.bctf.ca)

## Factor 90 or 65 yrs of age? Don't Wait

You can save the long-term fee (approx. 1.2%) from the date you reach age 64 or Factor '88'.

Members are no longer entitled to long-term benefits under the Salary Indemnity Plan once they hit Factor 90 (age plus cumulative service) or age 65. As the BCTF does not have access to your personal pension information, it is up to you to apply to withdraw from LTD.

### How and when to apply

A member who has attained age 64, or has reached factor '88' or is in receipt of a retirement pension under a registered pension plan, may **voluntarily** withdraw from the long-term portion of the Salary Indemnity Plan. In making application for withdrawal, you should ensure that in the event of serious illness or accident you have sufficient accumulated sick leave which, when combined with 120 days of benefit from SIP short-term, will protect your salary to the end of the month in which you reach factor "90" or the end of the month you attain age 65, whichever comes first.

**Applications are available online at:**

[bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SalaryBenefits/SIP/LT-withdrawalForm.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SalaryBenefits/SIP/LT-withdrawalForm.pdf) or call the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.