

## President's Message

*Control leads to compliance; autonomy leads to engagement.* — Daniel H. Pink



**MEDIA REPORTS**, as you are likely aware, are painting a very bleak picture of the state of public education in this province, particularly in relation to funding levels. Despite our prolonged job action

and government assurances to the contrary, school districts continue to grapple with significant budgetary concerns and “status quo” class size and composition issues. In the metro area alone, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver, Maple Ridge, Burnaby, and West Vancouver are reporting projected budget shortfalls. And, although Vancouver is projecting a decline of approximately 400 FTE in the overall K-12 enrolment for 2015/16, the projected budget shortfall of \$8.52 million (a decrease from the earlier reported \$14.77million) is still completely untenable in light of the funding shortfalls over the last decade. As school districts receive more than 90% of their funding from the Province, these shortfalls are directly attributable to operating cost increases—inflation on goods/services, MSP premiums, employee benefits, BC Hydro rates, etc.—which the Province does not fund. The consequence of this abysmal funding model, unfortunately, is that school districts have been forced year after year after year to enact reductions to the level of services they provide in order to comply with the *School Act* which requires them to “balance the budget” or face the possibility of being replaced by a government appointee.

That the funding model is broken is best evidenced by examining the VSB’s *Restoration Budget* document. Based on the level of service provided by the VSB’s base operating budget for 2002/03, the district requires a staggering \$59.5 million for 2015/16 to maintain the same level of service as existed prior to the 2002/03 budget cuts. With the exception of 2005/06, the VSB has experienced funding shortfalls every year, a 13 year trend that Premier Clark and Minister Fassbender have publically refuted. Contrary to Clark’s latest claim, there is no “low hanging fruit” left to cut in our district (or any other for that matter)! According to Ministry of Education reports\*, the number of classes province wide with 4 or more students with an IEP increased from 9,559 in 2006/07 to 16, 156 in 2014/15 (which is essentially the same as last year’s 16, 163 students). This hard truth verified by the Ministry of Education’s own data on class size and composition

belies Peter Fassbender’s claim that the government has provided a “33 per cent increase to the Learning Improvement Fund to better support complex classroom needs.” To quote Jim Iker, “Class composition in 2015 is the same as it was in 2014, which was the worst year on record. During the strike (Clark) promised to make class composition her No.1 priority, and obviously that has not been the case.” “Our premier has broken her promise to B.C .parents, students, and teachers.” I encourage you to stay informed, write to your MLA/Premier Clark/Minister Fassbender and/or speak with your neighbours, friends and colleagues about the need for government to honour its promise and adequately fund the public education system.

Adding further fuel to the fire is the government’s introduction of Bill 11, the *Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2015*: a bill that amends the *School Act*, the *Independent School Act*, and the *Teachers Act*. This omnibus bill not only grants the government authority over teacher led and directed professional development, but it also gives the minister more control over school boards (essentially forcing a model of “compliance”) and the collection and use of student data without sufficient privacy protections. Not surprisingly, the BCTF, the VSB Board and even the BCSTA (BC School Trustees Association) have taken a public stand against Bill 11. Jim Iker has characterized Bill 11 as a distraction to divert attention

see **PRESIDENT**, *inside*

## VSTA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 12, 2015

4pm at Tupper Auditorium

Members will receive financial reports ended July 31, 2014, vote to approve the Association’s operating budget 2015-16, and elect the VSTA Executive Committee for 2015-16.

Door prizes will be presented at the end of the meeting, followed by a social hour in the staffroom.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting!

**Please note:**

The VSTA audited financial statements, full AGM package including proposed budget for 2015-16, list of candidates running for election and their candidate statements, and annual reports are available at [www.vsta.ca](http://www.vsta.ca).

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

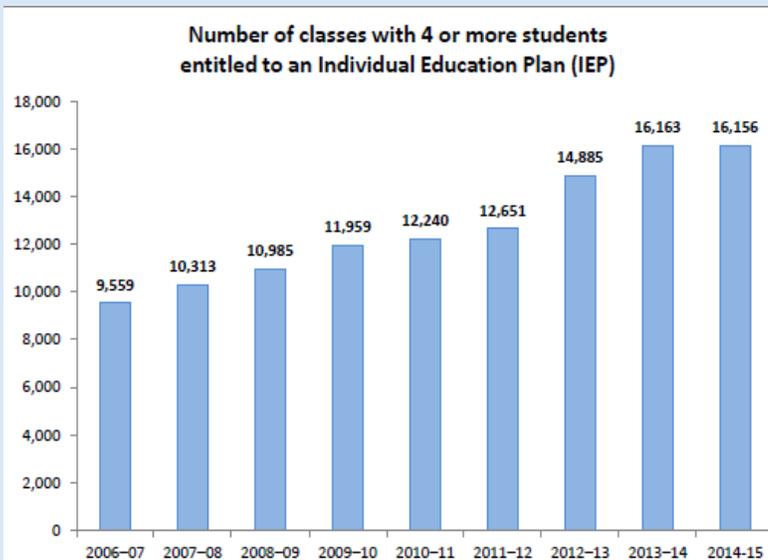
away from the real problem of underfunding facing public education in B.C. Moreover, the VSB trustees passed a motion (on April 20) demanding that the government “immediately withdraw the sections of Bill 11 that override the authority of democratically elected Boards of Education”; and, this past weekend the BCSTA passed a similar motion specific to Bill 11 and the erosion of board autonomy. That Christy Clark’s government is intent on disempowering and interfering with the inner workings of freely elected school boards is extremely troubling for everyone who values the concept of democracy. For further information on Bill 11, please read the article in this edition of *Tackboard*.

Before closing, I would like to remind members that our AGM will take place in the Tupper auditorium on May 12 at 4:00. In addition to approving the VSTA’s audited financial statements ended July 31, 2014, members will elect the executive committee for 2015/16. Furthermore, after 6 years in the local office--4 ½ years as president--I have decided after much soul searching to not put my name forward for next year. While the work has been professionally gratifying, it has also been extremely time consuming and not without challenges, particularly during the 2011/12 and 2014 job actions. Both of my valued colleagues, Rory Brown and Sylvia Metzner, plan to continue as table officers; and, I am extremely confident that they will provide members with exemplary service. Given that this will be my last AGM as president, it would be really great to see lots of folks in attendance. Don’t forget that there will be several “swell” door prizes and a celebratory social (complete with abundant food...I promise) immediately after the adjournment of the meeting. I truly hope to see you there!

Take care,

*Debbie*

**\* Class Composition** (updated April 17, 2015)



BCTF Research chart, with figures from BC Ministry of Education (2006-07 to 2014-15 reports). Overview of Class Size and Composition in British Columbia Public Schools, p. 3; accessible from the ministry data reporting page, <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/>

Class Composition, 2006-2007 to 2014-15			Percentage of classes with 4 or more students with an IEP
Number of classes with 4 or more students entitled to an IEP		Total classes	
Year	All grades K-12	Province	
2006-07	9,559	68,665	13.9%
2007-08	10,313	68,693	15.0%
2008-09	10,985	68,357	16.1%
2009-10	11,959	67,473	17.7%
2010-11	12,240	64,909	18.9%
2011-12	12,651	64,827	19.5%
2012-13	14,885	67,089	22.2%
2013-14	16,163	68,020	23.8%
2014-15	16,156	66,596	<b>24.3%</b>

**INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY**

**Ayotzinapa to Ottawa Caravan – April 12- May 2, 2015**

A cross-Canada caravan has been organized to raise awareness of the September 26, 2014 murder of 6 and the disappearance of a further 43 Mexicans, many of whom were student teachers at a rural teachers’ college near the town of Iguala in the state of Guerrero. To date the Mexican government of Pena Nieto has not been able to provide a satisfactory account of events and is no longer supporting families in searching for their missing children.

The caravan asks the Canadian Government (which promotes Mexico as a safe tourist destination as well as supporting free trade and Canadian corporate mining interests) to break its public silence about the violence and urge the Mexican authorities to effectively investigate the murders and forced disappearances.



Student teacher Jorge Luis Clemente Balbuena and Hilde Legideno Vargas (mother of disappeared student Jorge Antonio Tizapa Legideno) speak at an event organized by CoDevelopment Canada and the VDLC on April 14, 2015.

# VBE Attendance Support Program

The VBE has begun implementation of an Attendance Support Program including Phase 1: Informal Conversations between Administrative Officers and teachers whose reported absences have been flagged by Human Resources.

## What can we do about it?

### Ask for a Staff Rep to be present.

Article A.26 of the Collective Agreement ensures that teachers have the right to have a Staff Rep present at any meeting with a Principal or Vice-Principal if there is reason to believe discipline and/or a grievance may result. If you are caught off guard you, alt the meeting and ask to reconvene once you are able to have a staff rep present.

### This means:

- No fly by meetings to ask after your health/ absences.
- You have the right to have the meeting scheduled at a time when a Staff Rep can be present.
- You are required to attend a meeting if requested; you need not speak or answer questions.
- You and/or your Staff Rep may take notes.

Following the meeting ensure that you inform the VSTA office and forward the summary sheet of absences provided so that we can better monitor the process and defend against abuses.

## What are the rules governing the sharing of medical information?

### Doctor's Notes

The Collective Agreement makes it clear that in general, for the first ten days of illness, **no** doctor's note is required.

Article G.20.2.b. states "When an employee is absent for more than ten (10) consecutive teaching days, he/she shall present



Unionized employee groups made a joint submission expressing concerns with the VSB Attendance Support program at the April 13th budget meeting. Represented were VSTA, VESTA, IUOE, CUPE 15, CUPE 407 and the Building Trades.

*certificate signed by a duly qualified medical practitioner indicating the necessity for the absence. "*

### Personal Medical Information

Medical notes are requested by Human Resources. You should not supply any medical information directly to school site administration. Regardless of whom you are speaking with or submitting information to, remember that personal medical information is protected in law as highly private and confidential.

More information is available on the VSTA website under publications or on the VBE website under staff links.

## School Union Representative Training

School Reps and members of the Executive met on April 16, 2015 to receive an update on Bill 11 from Glen Hansman, BCTF 1st Vice-President, and to review Post & Fill processes.





## First Nations Acknowledgement

Both the VSTA Executive and Council have passed the following motion with respect to signature

tags on work and personal emails. This is an encouragement motion and is intended to be respectful of the First Nations Communities in Vancouver while recognizing each member's individual autonomy. Please consider including this statement on your work and/or personal email communications.

***"THAT the VSTA encourage members to use an acknowledgement in our work email that we work on the unceded and traditional territory of the Musqueam, Tsleil Waututh and Squamish Coast Salish peoples."***

## Retiring This Year?

Contact the Teachers' Pension Plan at 1-800-665-6770 for a Retirement Application Package. Send the completed application form to the TPP no later than the end of the month in which the pension is to start (preferably at least two months earlier) to ensure prompt pension payment.

Contact VBE payroll to find out when your current health benefits end to ensure you have continuous coverage until the benefits associated with the Teachers' Pension Plan begin.

Consider converting your current group life insurance to an individual life insurance policy.

Join the BC Retired Teachers' Association. Contact the BCRTA re: starting/continuing Medoc travel health insurance. Tel: 604-871-2260 or go to [www.bcrta.ca](http://www.bcrta.ca).

Apply to the BCTF for Associate Membership.

Contact the Teacher Regulation Branch of the Ministry of Education to see your options regarding maintaining your BC Teacher's certificate if you intend to teach after retirement. [www.bcteacherregulation.ca](http://www.bcteacherregulation.ca)

At age 60, if you are not working, consider applying for your Canada Pension Plan pension. For an application kit, visit the CPP website at [www.esdc.gc.ca/en/pension/cpp/index.page](http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/pension/cpp/index.page).

At age 65, apply for Old Age Security (OAS). For an application kit, visit the OAS web site at [www.esdc.gc.ca/en/pension/oas/index.page](http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/pension/oas/index.page).

Contact the BCTF Income Security staff if you have questions related to any of the above. Tel: 604-871-1921

## Post and Fill

The Post and Fill process as outlined in Article E.21 of the Collective Agreement. Teachers will apply for postings as category A, B, C, D, E, or F as appropriate. All postings will occur in one round in June.

### SOME KEY DATES TO NOTE:

JUNE 1 or earlier	Employees informed in writing of transfer due to surplus; Copies of surplus letters must be submitted to HR.
JUNE 2-8	STP Posting Period: All continuing and temporary positions
JUNE 9 onwards	Interviews and offers for continuing positions only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews and offers for temporary positions may only proceed upon approval from HR (may be used for placements)</li> </ul>
JUNE 16	HR will begin placement of all unassigned continuing contract employees (unassigned Priority Group B employees)
AUG 18-24	SPP vacancies posted
Beginning AUG 25	Interviews and offers for SPP continuing positions only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews and offers for temporary positions may only proceed upon approval from HR (may be used for placements)</li> </ul>
SEPT 8-12	2015-16 Posting Period 1

## MAY DAY MARCH & RALLY

FRIDAY, MAY 1ST, 2015

# FIGHT FOR 15



Gather: 5:00 pm–5:30 pm | Clark Park at 14th and Commercial Drive

Rally: 6:15 pm–Grandview Park–1657 Charles Street, Vancouver

After the rally, join us for May Day Punkrockeoke at the Wise Hall

Doors open at 7:00 pm. Food Carts available for dinner. General admission \$10.



Always happy to hear from you!

Debbie, Rory, Sylvia, Kim & Mo



## Bill 11 – What could it mean for Education in BC

Currently, Bill 11, the *Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2015*, is moving through our legislative process to become law. Within this single piece of legislation the provincial government is seeking changes that will enforce their ongoing agenda of underfunding public education. It raises a number of serious concerns ranging from basic democratic principles to the privacy rights of children to the professional autonomy of teachers.

### Democracy

Our electoral system in British Columbia provides for the election of school board trustees through regularly scheduled municipal elections. These duly elected trustees are directly accountable to the local citizens who voted for them. The proposed amendments in Bill 11 would expand government powers to allow for full control over school boards at the Minister's discretion. Currently, the Minister of Education determines the funding provided to school districts and can remove and replace a school board for failure to submit a balanced budget. The Minister also currently has the ability to address the improvement of student performance. The proposed wording of the new legislation indicates that the Minister may order "administrative directives" if a school board:

- a. Is failing or has failed to meet its obligations under the *School Act*; or
- b. It is in the public interest to do so.**

The proposed legislation does not define "in the public interest" but we can expect it to lead to an increased centralization of authority with the Minister, who, through policy, budget and now legislative initiatives, will be free to pursue the government's accountability agenda "in the public interest." Free to pursue changes bereft of consultation with any of those tasked with the actual delivery of service to students (such as teachers and school board trustees). Local school board decision making would be completely over-ridden by government and could force participation in administrative directives with respect to shared service delivery agreements. In other words, if a duly elected school board refuses to take action to cut programs or to close schools for example, the board could simply be removed and replaced by a government appointee. This is not an idle threat in light of the most recent Ministerial Order directing school boards across the province to find \$83 million in administrative costs ("low-hanging fruit" according to Premier Christy Clark) as part of the current budget cycle. Little wonder that school trustees across the province have raised an out-cry, pointing out that this is in direct contradiction to the 2014 Memorandum of Agreement committing to collaboration with school boards and the genuine co-governance model they were promised. At the April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Board meeting, the VBE passed a motion to demand that the government immediately withdraw sections of Bill 11 that override the authority of democratically elected Boards of Education, thereby joining a growing number of school board's across the province voicing their concerns.

### Student Privacy

Currently, students' privacy is protected through the use of a PEN (Personal Education Number) to allow for the separation of data from identification of a student's private, confidential information. Of note is that the proposed legislation re-names the section of the *School Act* previously entitled "Non-disclosure of student records" as "Student personal information." Bill 11 then proceeds with amendments to the *School Act* that are permissive in nature including removing wrongful disclosure of student personal information from being considered an offence. At this early juncture it is unclear how the changes proposed in Bill 11 may impact

student privacy, but the convergence of the provincial implementation of MyEducationBC, the new student information system, and this legislative change may allow public bodies to disclose student personal information without obvious protections. MyEducationBC will collect and retain more student data than ever before. Bill 11 specifically provides for the disclosure of student personal information contained in a student record by all public bodies in the following three areas:

- a. A purpose authorized under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act;
- b. To ensure efficient and effective use of grants paid under sections 114 and 115 of this Act and under sections 12 and 13 of the Independent School Act;
- c. To evaluate the effectiveness of boards, francophone education authorities and authorities governed by the Independent School Act and the programs, courses and curricula delivered by them.

In other words, data could be released to individuals or corporations in the interests of helping determine the “effectiveness” of school boards or even shared with other public bodies such as Health and Social Services, with little attention to any apparent safeguards. The legislative changes also appear to allow for the indefinite retention of student personal information which raises questions of the long-term storage and protection of this information as well as the individual’s right to be forgotten where sensitive information is concerned.

### **Professional Development**

Bill 11 establishes a continuing professional development framework for all certified teachers that would introduce an entirely new requirement for annual professional development as a condition of certification.

Within Bill 11, continuing education activity is defined as:

- a. participating in or presenting a training or educational program, course or seminar,
- b. providing mentoring, or
- c. participating in a similar learning activity that is relevant to the training or qualifications of certificate holders.

Striking in this legislation are the provisions that put full control of ongoing professional development into the hands of the Minister and his appointees. It expressly excludes the Teachers’ Council from having a role in setting standards for ongoing certification and does not provide for teachers or university education faculties to have any role. A complex and potentially costly bureaucratic regime is being proposed despite no evidence of a need to legislate a change in professional development practices and certification. BC teachers are amongst the most highly qualified teachers in Canada and are constantly working on improving their practice. The BCTF has a long history of actively promoting and supporting many meaningful programs and initiatives. Some of the proposed amendments in Bill 11 are to come into effect July 1, 2015 while the details of others are yet to be determined through regulation. The Minister has indicated that teacher professional development will be discussed over a two year period before relevant provisions are implemented. Regardless, if the government is going to make changes to professional development, they need to respect teachers’ professionalism and autonomy as well as deliver new funding to support any changes. BC teachers will not support a top-down, government-mandated approach to professional development. It is difficult to know at this point if this is an attempt to achieve legislatively what they were not able to achieve in the last two rounds of collective bargaining or a diversion to draw attention away from the real issue, the chronic underfunding of public education. What is clear is that it has the potential to put our current relative labour peace at risk; a peace both the Minister of Education and the Premier herself having publicly indicated they desire.