

President's Message



Debbie & National Chief Atleo
February 21, 2014

THANKS are due this month to all our members who exercised their franchise by casting a ballot in last week's province-wide vote. As the results made absolutely clear, teachers across this province are frustrated with the Liberal government's ongoing delay tactics, egregious

concession demands, and general disrespect for our profession. Despite being at the table for over a year (40+ sessions), BCPSEA has shown virtually no signs of bargaining in good faith despite Christy Clark's professed interest in achieving "labour peace." Government's actions at the bargaining table are best characterized as unreasonable and provocative, a prime example being the tabled proposal that would once again strip our collective agreement of all class size, composition, and staffing levels---the very language that the BC Supreme Court affirmed and restored (twice)! Teachers are looking for a fair deal negotiated in good faith: one that respects our work and provides better support for our students. It is unacceptable for the government to continue to underfund BC's education system by \$1000 less per student than the national average, particularly when BC is such a prosperous province. Knowing that we have the worst student-educator ratio in the country is reprehensible and inexcusable.

That teachers are firmly behind the bargaining team was overwhelmingly confirmed by the strong YES vote (89%). Teachers have spoken *yet again*: the employer's concession demands and salary proposals are neither realistic nor acceptable. It is time for the employer to "step up" by bringing much needed resources to the table and by bargaining in good faith, rather than continuing to table a laundry list of unrealistic and/or confrontational proposals. By voting YES, teachers reaffirmed their pride in their profession and their shared commitment to public education through an act of electoral and political solidarity. The BCTF bargaining team has been empowered by the collective to gain improvements for all members through a negotiated settlement, one that addresses the issues of class size/composition, staffing levels, and a fair and reasonable salary increase. Teachers are reluctant to engage in job action, but are firmly committed to negotiating a deal at the table.

As Jim Iker has stated multiple times, *our goal is a negotiated*

March Deadlines

With the two week break coming up it is easy to miss some key dates. Here are a few significant date deadlines to make note of:



- March 15** for teachers wishing to submit a vacate card
- March 31** for requesting and increase/ change of teaching time
- March 31** to apply for leave of one year or longer beginning in September 2014

settlement, not job action. If job action becomes necessary, however, it will occur in stages and will have no immediate impact on student learning. Progress (or not) at the negotiating table will determine the timing and implementation of any job action, but a full-scale walkout would require another province-wide vote of the BCTF membership.

I strongly encourage all VSTA members to stay informed by visiting the **BCTF Members' Only Portal** on a regular basis to read the most recent bargaining updates/bulletins. For over a decade, our public education system has been under assault by the BC Liberals, beginning with the illegal "gutting" of our collective agreement in 2002. It is critical that we continue to put pressure on the employer in order to restore guaranteed working/learning conditions in this province and to gain a fair monetary settlement.

In closing, thanks again to everyone who voted to empower our bargaining team to achieve "*a fair deal for teachers and better support for kids.*" All the best for a much deserved spring break: rest, relax, and rejuvenate.

Take care,

Debbie

VSTA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 13, 2014

4pm at Tupper Auditorium

Nomination form for 2014-15 VSTA Executive Committee, VSTA audited financial statements for the year ended July 31, 2012 and July 31, 2013, and the VSTA proposed budget for 2014-15 are available at the VSTA website (www.vsta.ca) under Publications.

What was gained?

Here is a review of what was gained by the walkout in 2005 and in the bargaining round that followed:

In 2005

- Another imposed contract was legislated
- Wages were frozen
- Teachers vote to walk out – illegally
- Lasted for 10 days, public support was high

Vince Ready brokered a “deal” between BCTF and government.

Teachers gained:

- \$40 million for grid harmonization
- new provincial category 5+
- \$40 million SIP rebate
- \$20 million to reduce class sizes by hiring more teachers
- increased daily rates for TTOCs
- on-scale pay and seniority accrual for TTOCs after third day worked retro to day 1

In June 2006, the last bargaining round, government was also at the table (one of Ready’s recommendations) to monitor BCPSEA.

BCTF negotiates deal with BCPSEA:

- Five-year agreement (2006 - 2011)
- Salary increases of 12%–15% over five years
- Harmonization to top steps of salary scales
- 2% SIP allowance
- 90 min/week minimum prep time for elementary
- Portability of seniority and sick leave
- Employment equity for Aboriginal teachers
- Recruitment and retention allowances
- \$4,000 “signing incentive”

2011-13 (with Jago as government appointed mediator)

Provincial Gains

Leave Provisions

- Family Responsibility Leave (New)
- Bereavement Leave (Improvement)
- Compassionate Care Leave (Improvement)
- Leave for Union Business (Improvement)
- TTOCs Conducting Union Business (New)
- Unpaid Discretionary Leave * *Not adopted by VTF as current provision was deemed superior*
- Standardized Extended Health Benefits Plan * *Not adopted by VTF as current provision was deemed superior*

Also, a number of significant concession demands were successfully fought off:

- Professional Growth and Mentorship proposals
- Performance Review proposal

Local Gains

- Access to Information (Article A.25)
- Limits and support for teachers administering medication to students (Article E.34)
- Personal Leave Without Pay (Article G.21.26)
- Continuation of the current Employee Transit Pass Program (Local letter of Understanding)
- To limit the frequency and duration of administrator-called staff meetings (Article A.30)

How might my pension be impacted by a strike?

1. Highest Average Salary (best five years of full-time equivalent earnings)

Highest Average Salary (HAS) calculations are not affected by strike days. For any “missing” days, the calculation of HAS is done by reaching farther back for the missing days (into year six) and fully indexing that salary forward to fill in a full best five years.

2. Contributory Service (used in Factor 90 calculations)

Contributory Service is earned for each month in which a member has worked a day. Only a strike lasting more than a month would affect Contributory Service.

3. Pensionable Service (full-time equivalent service, part of calculating your pension amount)

Pensionable Service is affected by strike days. However, the impact on a pension is minimal. Pensionable Service is reduced by approximately 0.05 of a month for each strike day. A full



Sylvia Metzner & Darren Gock counting ballots, March 2014

year of Pensionable Service is worth about \$1,242 per year on the lifetime pension of the average member. Therefore, each strike day means a loss of \$6.44 a year (or about \$0.54 less per month) to the pension.

Please note: A Purchase of Service is not available to members for strike days under the pension plan rules. Anyone who plans to teach more than 35 FTE years won’t see any reduction for strike days, since 35 years is the maximum allowable Pensionable Service.

Specific questions can be directed to the BCTF Income Security Division.