



Tackboard

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President's Message

All of us here in the VSTA office want to congratulate teachers on making it to the end of an exhilarating and exhausting year.

As you know, many changes are being contemplated in Vancouver due to the ongoing underfunding of public education by the provincial government. While most of us are going through files and planning for next year, our colleagues at Britannia Secondary and Gladstone Secondary are dealing with the fall out of finding their schools on the list of potential consideration for closure for September 2017.

The Long Range Facilities Plan, required by the Ministry in order for the School Board to get seismic upgrades that many schools need, has resulted in a list of 10 possible elementary schools and annexes and 2 possible secondary schools for closure at this time. Schools are identified through a range of factors including, but not limited to: facility capacity usage, projected future enrolment, ability to accommodate students in neighbouring schools and high deferred maintenance costs. Should the political climate remain the same after next year's election, we will most likely see further names added to the potential consideration for closure list.

When we reconvene in September, the 60 day consultation period will have been met, and staff will produce a report

by September 12 with the details of the final recommendations. The board will then make its final decision in December.

The VSTA has been actively involved in bringing teachers' voices to the table with the employer as well as organizing rallies with our union colleagues (CUPE 15, CUPE 407 and IOUE) to show support for the school board trustees who have chosen to stake their jobs on their refusal to pass a balanced budget, the results of which we are already feeling in our secondary timetables. For many of us, this feels like an endless fight, but in the immortal words of Philip K. Dick, "Just because something bears the aspect of the inevitable one should not, therefore, go along willingly with it."

Our strength truly does lie in our collaboration and commitment to public education. We receive calls daily from members engaged in their work and making unsung contributions to our students' lives. This is what gives us the energy and conviction to carry on our work at the VSTA office. To that end, we wish you a truly restful summer and a well-deserved break. We look forward to seeing you all back here in September, renewed and supported for whatever next year brings us.

Rory, Sylvia & Katharine



On behalf of the more than 1500 members of our Association, we would like to take the opportunity in the last few days of school to profoundly thank Sylvia Metzner for her six years in the VSTA office. Serving as both first and second Vice Presidents, with her caring heart and diligent ethic, she represented some of our most vulnerable members through many difficult situations. Sylvia will join the staff at Eric Hamber Secondary as the Special Education Department Head and will continue on the VSTA Executive as the Social and Environmental Justice Committee Chair. Sylvia also continues to represent the VSTA on the Vancouver and District Labour Council. In this capacity she very ably furthers the voice of teachers in the organized Labour Movement, a role that will continue to be crucial in the coming year. We wish Sylvia the very best in her work at Hamber and know that we will call on her expertise in member Health and Wellness as needed. Good luck Sylvia. We will miss you!

No Change to Extended Health Benefits

The VTF met on Tuesday, June 21, 2016 to review our Extended Health Benefits Plan as per the motion passes in January of 2015. While the provincial plan will see improvements in future years there were no changes scheduled to come into effect in 2016. During the course of the meeting VTF membership voted to support the VTF Executive recommendation to retain our current Extended Health Benefits Plan.

VSTA Annual General Meeting Report

The VSTA Annual General Meeting took place on May 17, 2016 at the Tupper auditorium. In addition to electing the Executive Committee, the 2016/17 proposed budget was passed. This included an increase in membership fees from .73% of salary to .83% of salary. As was explained at the meeting, the fee increase will address an anticipated deficit in our operating funds as well as allow for release time to build capacity within the VSTA for the work of our Treasurer, Standing Committees, and Local Representatives to the BCTF. There were also two constitutional amendments passed. The first was a revision of the Social & Eco-Justice Committee name and terms of reference. The committee will now be known as the Social and Environmental Justice Committee. The second was an addition to the section governing the Salary Indemnity Fund allowing for the suspension of the enrolment of new members if necessary.

Elected to the VSTA Executive Committee for 2016-2017:

President: **Rory Brown**; 1st Vice-President: **Katharine Shipley**; 2nd Vice-President: **Trish Mugford** (MAGEE); Treasurer: **Terry Stanway** (VT); Local Representatives: **Rory Brown**, **Treena Goolieff** (EH), **Phil Lee** (VT); Alternate LR: **Sylvia Metzner** (EH); Members-at-Large: **Michael-Don Borason** (VT), **Ryan Fullerton** (GLAD), **Leanne Hagglund** (VASS-Pinnacle), **Natalia Mayor** (MAGEE), **Scott McKeen** (LB), **Peter McLennan** (MAGEE), **Nancy Palejko** (PW), **John Silver** (JO); *Standing Committee Chairs* - Professional Development: **Diane Phillips** (PW); W/LC & Bargaining: **Treena Goolieff** (EH); Health & Safety: **Brett Gabelman** (TEMP); Social & Environmental Justice: **Sylvia Metzner** (EH); Technology: **Peter Halim** (EH); Teacher-on-Call Rep: **Sara McGarry**.

Following the regular business of the meeting, door prizes were awarded and members enjoyed a social hour. We wish to extend our thanks to outgoing members Katie Leung and Phoebe MacMillan, and the rest of the 2015-16 Executive Committee for their dedication and countless hours of service over the past year.

Summer Interview Committees

The summer posting period will run from **August 16 to 22, with interviews commencing August 23**. School interview committees will need to be convened to conduct these interviews. The VSTA position is that the school union representative on the interview committee *must* have attended the post-and-fill training provided at the April *School Union Rep Training* session. If none of your school's reps will be available for August interviews, please contact the VSTA office to arrange for a table officer to conduct the interviews. A limited amount of compensatory "time-in-lieu" will be made available by the VSTA for those staff reps who conduct August interviews.



Teachers, Support Unions and Parent groups rally to support public education. June 27, 2016

How did Vancouver end up in this current school closure crisis?

The standard response from government has been that it's due to declining enrollment and mismanagement of money by the Board. But consider this; it would take approximately \$82 million dollars to restore the level of services in place in Vancouver to 2002/03 levels. The services currently provided to students are almost unrecognizable in comparison to what was in place in 2002. This cannot be explained away through declining enrollment or yearly budget decisions alone. Systematic changes to the regulations around class size and composition, the design of the Graduation Program and an arbitrarily conceived minimum (95%) for capacity utilization have created a false crisis.

How to create a false crisis and force school closures:

- Step 1** Crowd more kids into each classroom – *fewer teachers are needed.* (*Stripping of teacher's Collective Agreement in 2002*)
- Step 2** Disregard support for individual learning needs – *fewer teachers are needed.* (*Stripping of teacher's Collective Agreement in 2002*)
- Step 3** Weaken limits on certain class sizes – *fewer classrooms are needed* (*Change in Education Act to include a lengthy list of exempt classes*)
- Step 4** Reduce breadth of senior courses required – *fewer courses are offered.* (*Set minimal requirements in the Graduation Program*).
- Step 5** Choose an arbitrary number for school "capacity utilization" (95%) and tie it to funding for seismic upgrades.

You now have what appears to be excess capacity in your school district and no money for seismic upgrades unless you close schools and cut core educational services to children.

BC's Plan to protect Canada's strongest economy looks more like BC's Plan to direct tax dollars away from public education. Despite a concerted media campaign by the provincial government to promote their "balanced" budget, it achieves its bottom line at the expense of public services such as education.

Amazingly, this budget has room for significant expenditure increases such as:

- over \$230 million in provincial tax cuts for the wealthiest 2% of British Columbians and
- \$358 million in education tax dollars to Private/Independent Schools

While at the same time squeezing funding to Public Schools through:

- Maintaining the second lowest per pupil funding in Canada!
- Providing unstable funding of public schools well below the yearly rate of inflation
- Failing to include money for downloaded costs such as carbon offsets, hydro rate increases, administrative salary increases, and so on.

In the end, what does this mean for Vancouver Public Schools?

- 934** oversized classes with more than 3 special needs students in Vancouver Secondary Schools
- 12** neighbourhood schools in Vancouver slated for potential closure by 2017

This is what ADVOCACY looks like!

If nothing else this spring has ushered in a significant shift on the ground in the public's perception of the provincial government's funding of Public Education. Multiple parent advocacy groups (PAN- Parent Action Network and FACE- Families Against Cuts to Education) have formed to voice their opposition to the government's cuts agenda. The District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) and their provincial group BCCPAC have taken clear stands in opposition to further cuts to education in Vancouver and across the province. Many School Districts throughout BC faced significant budgetary shortfalls and employed a variety of strategies to have the provincial government intervene and restore sorely needed funding. Vancouver teachers have joined with our fellow education workers in protesting the cuts in weekly rallies at the VSB Offices. And out of this mounting tide of opposition two significant things have happened:

- The VSB Trustees rejected the 2016/17 preliminary budget proposals on April 28.
- The provincial government has begun a series of funding announcements.

Recent Government Announcements

- April an additional \$52 in per student funding
Translates into an additional \$2.63 million for the VSB
- May a return of the \$25 million in administrative savings (low-hanging fruit) districts were required to implement in last year's budget cycle
Vancouver portion is approximately \$2.25 million
- June \$6 million in additional funding province wide to implement the new Coding curriculum

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RETIRING CLASS OF 2015-16!



Marta Adamovich, Nancy Archbould, Constance Bentley, William Best, Leo Boissy, Kelly Bosello, Betsy Brown, Flora Chen, David Chevreau, Donna Choo, Lana Chow, George-Ann Collins, Denise Cormier, Muriel Densford, Marty Dolan, Gerald Ehrmantraut, John Fister, Bob Fitzpatrick, Diane Gibney, Hari Gopaul, Kim Greskiw, Patty Holmes, Cameron Hood, Grant Hulme, Susan Inman, Peter Katsionis, Brian Kerr, Katannya Kwon, Susan Leslie, James Mace, Virginia MacKinnon, John Martin, Ian Morris, Christine Nordli, Sharee Proudfoot, Kim Rebane, Caleb Reppenhagen, Alicia Richards, Sally Ringdahl, Josiane Ruggeri, Robert Rymer, Shelley Saltzman, Janice Smith, June Tsuyuki, Dorothy Ullman, Sharon Vincent.

Finding a constructive approach to yearly renewal

For many teachers, June is the month where we hang on trying to make it to that goal line, the last day of school. It's a recurring pattern and we rely on the down-time of the summer to passively restore us to full capacity to face the challenges of the new school year in September. Two months to recharge, what could go wrong? The reality is that real life continues to happen during those months. We teach summer school, take additional qualification courses, have family obligations, and so on... The passive approach to readying ourselves for the coming school year may not be the best option. According to Dr. Andrew Miki, a registered psychologist who has worked closely with the BCTF Health and Wellness Program, we need to recognize where we are on the continuum of mental health and resiliency. In a recent article in the May/June issue of Teacher Magazine he describes a three part sequence for consideration:

1. How stressed are you?
2. How well are you regulating your emotions and thinking?
3. How can particular stressor situation be resolved?

For the full article, go to <http://www.bctf.ca/publications/TeacherArticle.aspx?id=41125>

For an accompanying list of resources for refueling, go to <http://www.bctf.ca/publications/TeacherArticle.aspx?id=41129>

In addition the BCTF Health and Wellness Program can be accessed on-line at <https://bctf.ca/SalaryAndBenefits.aspx?id=4788>

And all teachers and their families can access supports at no cost through the Employee and Family Assistance Plan offered through Shepell-fgi. Call 1-800-387-4765 or go to www.workhealthlife.com.

Come celebrate Labour Day 2016

September 5 at Swangard Stadium in Burnaby
Organized by the BCFED and the Vancouver and District and New Westminster Labour Councils

54-40

LABOUR DAY Sponsored by CUPE BC, USW & BCGEU



HOSTED BY THE B.C. FEDERATION OF LABOUR & AFFILIATES, VANCOUVER AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL, and the NEW WESTMINSTER AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL

MONDAY SEPT 5

FREE FUN!
KIDS' GAMES & PRIZES
GREAT FOOD!
BEER GARDEN!



11:00AM-3PM
SWANGARD
STADIUM IN BURNABY