

Teacher Talk

A publication of the Peace River South Teachers' Association, Local 59 of the BCTF
December 2016



WE WON!

By now everyone will have heard about the important victory the BCTF had in the Supreme Court of Canada. It was not only a win for teachers but for all unions and their members. Please go to the BCTF members portal to hear a message and up-to-date news on talks with the government.

What restoring the language means to Peace River South Teachers.

Message from Elaine – PRSTA president

At this time we are in the process of figuring out exactly what this will mean for Teachers in BC and specifically Teachers and schools here in Peace River South.

First off, applause needs to be given to the Lawyers and staff at the BCTF for the long hard battle they have fought for Teachers and students across this province. However, the work is not done by any means. The Table Officers and select staff of the BCTF have been gathering information and sitting down with representatives from the Ministry of Education and BCPSEA for the last two weeks. This will only be the beginning of many

hours that will be put into “restoring the stripped language” both on the provincial level and local level.

At first glance this process looks and seems easy. Restore the language that the Liberal Government stripped out of our contracts! Simple!? Give schools Teacher Librarians in the libraries (if there are any left in some schools), give schools more Learning Assistant Teachers, hire more Counselors, employ ELL teachers and reduce the number of students with IEPs in each classroom. However, times, needs, funding formulas and designation of students with special needs have all changed since 2002, just to name the most obvious.

We know the Government will drag its feet and stall as long as they can in making the changes necessary by the Supreme Court ruling. There will be the excuse of “cost to the taxpayers” made at all levels. Locally there will be calls not to disrupt the existing frameworks in place for this school year. Then there will be us teachers saying “when is it going to happen?”.

As teachers you need to know that the BCTF and our local office is working hard to pressure the Government, Ministry and Local School Board to restore the language so that we have a springboard to move forward. One of the greatest challenges, as local president, I see is the loss of history. Much of the intent of the language that was stripped has been lost due to

personnel changes on all sides. In 2002 we were less than 10 years into Provincial Bargaining and many locals retained superior language in their Collective Agreements. For example, our CA had lower ratios and numbers that were better than the minimums set by provincial bargaining at the time. This meant that our local language was superior and we could keep it. Presently there is pressure on and from the Government to restore “blanket language” at the provincial level, which in essence could be less than what we had prior to the stripping of our local language.

Going on the intent of our local language that refers to specific non-enrolling teaching positions and class size and composition, the following are potential benefits of restoring our Local Language.

Libraries with a teacher in them – we have physical libraries but no Teacher Librarians in all but 3 schools in the district.

More dedicated Learning Assistance time for students – The heavy burden of testing, data and paper work does not allow our Learning Assistance Teachers time to spend helping students directly, either in classrooms or in small groups. Many of our rural and smaller schools have to assign Learning Assistance work to the already busy Principal or Vice-principal, limiting the time they can spend focusing on assisting students, especially when they are needed in their Administration role.

More time and focus ELL – as our population diversifies and we see an increase of students with English as a

second language or no English at all, we need to provide them with specific and planned skills and knowledge so that they can be successful in all areas of the English curriculum and school community.

Available Counseling Services - More counselors would mean more services for students, more time for individual counseling and more time with a trained, qualified counselor.

More time for all students in the classroom – limiting the number of students with specific Individual Education needs in a classroom allows more time for the teacher to prep/plan, teach, interact and help all the students in their classroom. It may also mean the need for more classrooms in a school and therefore reduce the total number of students in a classroom, which is another benefit to all students.

Some of the of stripped language, as of 2000, we expect to be restored.

Elementary Schools

Teacher Librarians 1 to 400 students
LA Teacher 1 to 325 students
Class size: K – 20 max; gr. 1-3 22 max

Secondary Schools

Teacher Librarian 1 to 400 students
LA Teacher 1 to 325 students
Counselor 1 to 315 students
Class Size: 1 to 22 tch/student ratio
(this is an average)

No classes should have more than 30 students and 2 SP students (unless a specialty class).

Please check out the BCTF and PRSTA websites for the most recent updates on this issue.

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A Little Background Information:

In the late 90s and up to 2002, there were underemployed teachers in this area and the province. We had a Teacher Training program (ACHOTE) that was viable in both Dawson Creek and Fort St. John, with many local people getting their Teaching Certificates and TTOCing or starting Teaching careers in the area. Since 2002 we have lost potential and trained teachers to the "oil and gas" boom because of high wages for little training and to other provinces due to low teacher wages across BC. Times have changed and so has our Collective Agreement in the years since Christy Clark, then Minister of Education, stripped bargained language from our contracts. We have new provisions for TTOCs and underemployed teachers, ACHOTE is struggling to attract students who want to get into teaching and we have a different economic climate at this time. We are struggling to attract teachers to BC and specifically to our Northern regions.

So, what does this mean? It means that the problem of retention and recruitment remain. We need to fill positions with teachers, we need to address specific issues for teachers working and living in the north and we need a greater means to attract teachers and specialists to the area. Our accolades, stories and encouragements are not enough. Our northern retention allowance and

Northern Tax credit are not enough. The security of Continuing contracts, mentorship and a moving allowance is not enough. We need to put our collective minds, words and advocacy behind a plan to recruit the classroom and specialty teachers that we have been lacking due to the times and our stripped language. BUT, most of all we need the BC Government to properly fund Education in this province. Not take from one hand to give to the other but rather invest the citizens' tax money, oil and gas revenue and foreign tax and revenue money into the education of our future citizens.

We can have a new curriculum, promote coding, and streamline reporting, but if we can't transport the students to warm, safe schools, to be taught by appreciated teachers and administration, then the problem is not solved! Fifteen years ago the bargained language that was stripped was good for the times, but it needs to be freshened up to meet the needs of the present times. Restoring the stripped language is an important beginning step towards improving today's issues in education.

Together we are stronger.



Black Friday

Here are some pictures from a joint rally held at the George Dawson Inn, during those few short days between January 25th (Black Friday) and January 28th when Teachers walked out in protest for the day. Bill 28 and Bill 29 affected both teachers and healthcare workers. It eliminated 10 collective agreements and amalgamated various school districts across the province.. Protesting the contract stripping by the BC Liberal government, Linda Burkeholder, then PRSTA president, spoke to the gathered group of Health services workers, BCGEU, teachers, other supporting unions and members of the general



Sub Local Special Meetings

In conjunction with the BCTF discussions with the government, the PRSTA has been asked to hold local General Meetings to inform members about Restored Language and to elect BCTF AGM delegates. Watch for the date in your local!

Chetwynd – Jan 11
Dawson Creek – Jan 25

Professional Development

December 5th saw another successful ProD day. Congratulations to everyone who participated and presented. Our next one is on January 30th. Please check in the new year to see what is being offered.

January day is a school-based day, so participate in your school/staff plans.

Please remember to hand in self-directed proD forms at least 2 weeks in advance of school-based ProD days.

Just a friendly reminder that ProD days are not for marking, cleaning, ordering supplies, scheduling, planning, etc. Answers as to what constitutes a good ProD activity can be found in the ProD Lens (BCTF) and the Appendix A – Declaration of Professional Development in our Collective Agreement. Please take a look at these before submitting your Self-Directed plan to your school PD rep. We are accountable as professionals and to the Collective Agreement on these days. We don't want to police our members but we do want to ensure that everyone understands what our ProD

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responsibilities are and that our choices **reflect** on all teachers.

Professional Growth Plans (PGP)

Thank you to everyone for submitting your growth plans and reviews. Hopefully you will find the year professionally fulfilling and be able to pursue your goals.

Thinking about Retiring - Now, Soon, or in 25 years!?

We would like to suggest that if you are planning to retire or wondering what financial planning should be taking place in preparation for retirement, that you should consider attending a Pension Seminar.

A seminar is being held in Fort St. John Tuesday, April 25th at the Northern Grand Hotel, 4:30 – 6:30. Go to BCTF to register.

https://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/client_education_registration_system/tpp_public_registration

- **Note: Teacher Pension Plan:** For useful information all active members (teachers, P/ VP,

Superintendents) should be opening their "My Account" on the TPP website. It tracks your years of pensionable service and contributory service. All active members should be confirming that their records of employment are accurate so the transition to Pension years goes as smoothly as possible. At this point only 36% of active BCTF members have accessed "My Account". It is your responsibility to check your pension statement for accuracy.

Thank you
Leanne Robertson
Teacher Pension Plan Advisory
Committee Member

President Election Year

This is an election year for the position of PRSTA president. There will be a call for nominations in the new year. If you are interested and/or have questions, please contact a

Foundation Committee

Do you and a few colleagues have an idea or study that you would like to explore? Maybe you have a joint Professional Growth Plan that could use some funding. Check into a Foundation proposal!! We have funding we want to give to teachers.

Gather three or more teachers and put in a proposal to the Foundation Committee. Foundations must be two years in length,(there is a possible extension to a third year). LSAs (Local Specialist Associations) are also accepted. (These are connected to Provincial Associations. For more information check out <http://bctf.ca/PSAs.aspx>.)

To put in a Foundation proposal, contact **Jennifer Fox** for more information or assistance.

PRSTA Website

Our new website has been launched. Please check it out . Carol Sapergia will be adding information as it comes in these next few weeks. Check it out and create an account to access ProD forms, a members' area, the latest news, etc.

**Have a happy
and restful holiday.
We will all meet again
in the New Year!**