

Teacher Talk

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

President's Message

Though we have WON at the Supreme Court, the work has only just begun. As many of you know, the BC Government released \$50 million of the \$2.5+ billion they say they socked away in case the Supreme Court ruled against them. This is an interim measure until final decisions are made in regards to the restoration of the stripped language from 2002.

When that will happen? I can't say for sure.

I can tell you that the BCTF is at the table weekly, putting pressure on the Government to move along quickly as schools and districts need to make budgetary and staffing decision starting in April. The 2017 Provincial Budget will be announced in February and then the Provincial Election will occur in May, so our window is very small but our message has to be loud and clear.

That message to Government and the public is the same. Public Education in this Province needs to be adequately and fully funded to restore the ratios of non-enrolling teachers and address class composition for the present and future KIDS of British Columbia.

Fifteen years ago then Education Minister Christy Clark introduced the 'Flexibility' Act. She sold it to the BC Government and media as a means to

improve education and education funding because the Collective Agreements signed by Districts and teachers were restrictive to Management when it came to planning and funding Education in BC. Have we seen improvement in our schools? Is there more choice, more space, more innovation, more improvement of test scores, more money to address the needs of communities, schools and individual children, especially children with special needs or learning challenges?

In reality, in 15 years we have adopted the "take from Peter to pay Paul" corporate funding practice. And we are not a corporation. Not only is there a Peter and Paul but a Mary, Jose, Yuan, Kiera and the list goes on.

Government purse strings for Education have only tightened, giving Districts less money to do what needs done and pay what needs to be paid for. This is downloaded to school budgets and eventually to the children we teach and their parents. I could list the many aspects of the deterioration of the Education system due to the faulty 'Flexibility' Act but that is not what I want to focus on in this message.

Most parents in this province never experienced life in schools before the Flexibility Act was passed. They have no idea what was lost, what schools and classrooms in School Districts were like before language in Collective

Agreements was removed to allow for more FLEXIBILITY.

For example:

Learning Assistance

Teachers that had time to go into classrooms to help specific students or groups, or to pull those children out to give them specific and focused skills needed to succeed in their classroom.

- More Flexibility to provide service not just do paper work!

Libraries open regularly with a trained **Teacher Librarian** who could excite children about reading by just offering them a book that drew them into the desire to experience other worlds, or to cooperatively teach units, giving students the help from another adult in the classroom. *- More Flexibility of when libraries are open and what help can be provided!*

Special Needs Teachers with specific skills and knowledge to focus on the needs and programming for children with different learning styles and needs. *- More people and time equals Flexibility in programs!*

English Language Learner Teachers with specific knowledge and skills to help students, whose first language is not English, be successful in our English dominant schools. *- Flexible time schedules and flexible skills delivery systems!*

Teachers who are able to support individual students because there was a **reasonable distribution** and **limitation** of students with special challenges within classrooms. *- More flexibility for the school and teachers to provide the best classroom*

situation for all students, not just for the school or the budget!

I believe the public, the Province, the parents, the teachers and especially the students would say there is very little 'Flexibility' within the classrooms and schools of this District. And it is not because teachers in Peace River South are not working their butts off or the District is not trying to address areas of need. If we are going to have true 'Flexibility' in our Schools then we need the public to Flex their voice, their vote and their tax money towards a fully Funded, Sustainable Public Education system.

Meeting the Mike Bernier

Elaine secured a meeting through the Minister of Education's local office for early February. It went well and he took notes during a discussion of local issues, including Recruitment and Retention, which is a major problem in the North.



Sub Local Special Meetings

Restoration of Language

Each local has held a meeting to discuss what is happening regarding the discussion on restoration of language based out of the Supreme Court decision. Staff reps will have let their staffs know what is happening in SD59. Postings have come out and we are hoping to find teachers to fill them. We do not know at this point what the Fall will look like, but we will keep you as informed as possible. Please continue to check out the BCTF members Portal.

Teacher Talk

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

BCTF AGM Representatives

All the representatives for the BCTF AGM have been chosen. The AGM is being held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Vancouver March 18th to 21st. If you are around, you are welcome to come and see what is happening.

Chetwynd – Leanne Robinson & Colin Macdonald

Tumbler Ridge – Karen Edwards & Lindsey Norbury

PRSTA – Elaine Fitzpatrick

Local Rep – Jennifer Fox

DCTA Reps – Lisa Bradshaw & Donna Hodgins

Securing a Leave

If you are considering a leave, whether full or partial, you need to put in your request to the Board Office by March 31st. As this date is during our Spring Break be sure to have everything in order early, if possible. Contact Elaine if you have any questions, 782-1284 or efitzpatrick@sd59.bc.ca.

Professional Development

We hope that your Professional Development Day went well. Thank you to the school ProD reps who work hard, on their own time, to organize these days. The next ProD day is May 1st and is a District Day.

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 the following link to register. If you have registered to access your account use that link, if not register with the second box on the page.

http://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/pen_corp_home/tpp_home_page/tpp_tools/tpp_tools_seminars/tpp_making_most_pension_workshop/

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 Pensionable 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

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

PRSTA Committees

There are a number of committees that you can work on through the PRSTA. These are the Support for Growth, and the Foundation committee. We are always looking for members to represent the PRSTA. We need teachers from each community. There are also special committees that are established from time to time. It 's your union! Please consider getting involved.

PRSTA Website

The new PRSTA website is LIVE!

Please visit the [website](#) and set up your personal PRSTA account. Please use a valid personal email address for this account.

Your account will allow you to access private PRSTA event information as well union documentation.

The next time we are bargaining we will then have a private email list to work from!

Thank you!
Carol Sapergia

Walmsley & WHIP

A reminder that

the District has the EFAP program available to support employees. Also, there is the WHIP program on the eservices. Fill in each day and earn points and then treat yourself to a free service or gift certificate.



Karen Edwards with BCTF President at Winter RA.

Peace River South representatives were at the Representative Assembly in Richmond the last weekend of January.