

Shuswap Teachers' Association



AGM to Decide on New Local on May 12

On May 12, members of both the Shuswap Teachers Association and the Armstrong Teachers Association will be voting on the formation of a single new local. It is proposed that the new local be christened the North Okanagan Shuswap Teachers Association or *NOSTA*. All members of both locals are encouraged to attend this important annual general meeting. Not only will the formation of the new local be brought to the floor but also resolutions on how the local is to be run. A resolution handbook will be made available at each school before May 12. Although most resolutions will be in this handbook, it is possible for individual members to bring their own resolutions to the floor.

Of equal importance is the election of an executive for the newly formed local. Those interested in letting their names stand for executive positions should contact either the STA or ATA office.

The STA will meet first separately from the ATA at 4PM at the Salmon Arm Holiday Inn. Then the two locals will meet together at 4:30PM, again at the Holiday Inn. Our usual and fantastic catering service will be there to serve up some great eats. **Ensure your voice is heard by being there to cast your vote.**

STA Makes Presentation to School Board

On April 15, 2003 the board brought in a budget that slashed 2.7 million from the students of our district. Before the school board members voted on their budget the STA made a twenty minute presentation. The presentation pointed out that of the over 2.7 million cut only about 1.5 million was due to declining enrollment. This under funding of our public schools by the Liberal Government will only lead to inadequate and unequal education for our students. As Maureen Morris, former president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation once said, "You can't do more with less. You can't even do the same with less. You can only do less with less."

The STA made a number of recommendations. First, we recommended that the board urge the BC Government to revise the education funding system, so that equal and quality education is available to all students. Second, we recommended that trustees demand that the additional funds raised by the increase in school tax on residential property be distributed to school districts. Third, we recommended that the board prepare and adopt a budget that adequately funds the school system in our district. The STA felt that the board might not be prepared to take up our third recommendation, so an alternate was also presented: if the board was unwilling to prepare a budget that adequately funds the school system, then they may at least prepare a "needs budget" along with their "compliance budget." This alternative budget would clearly demonstrate to the government that the funding provided does not meet the needs of our district's children. It seems that the board sees even a needs budget as rocking the boat. They fear things might be even worse, if they were to do such a thing. Yet what they have been doing so far hasn't worked. For example, the Minister didn't even do the Board the courtesy of replying to their January letter, which expressed concerns regarding under funding. Now is the time for the board to publicly make a stand for the students of the Shuswap.

"History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people."

-- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Pension Reform

The STA has been looking at options for pension reform. Paul Bennett, bargaining chair, has taken the issue up with great vigor. He together with Patricia Clough and Steve Naylor drafted three resolutions regarding details of our pension plan. At this year's BCTF Annual General Meeting, your elected delegates brought the resolutions to the floor. Resolution 119 called on the BCTF to come up with a detailed plan of action that would allow members to retire earlier with larger pensions. This resolution passed and was referred to the pension committee which is to report back to the 2004 AGM. A second resolution, 120, was referred to the bargaining committee as it pertained to getting the government to implement early retirement options.



Caravan Against the Cuts

Teachers, parents, and concerned citizens greeted the yellow school bus on February 6th in front of Salmon Arm Elementary. The bus, one of five touring the province, was part of the Caravan Against the Cuts Campaign developed by the BCTF. The Caravan was developed to respond to Minister Clark's claim that she has not heard of any concern about the impact of her policies.

Our contribution to the Caravan was the hundreds of letters written by STA members on January 28, 2003 to members of the government and the school board. Our very own Steve Naylor traveled with the minibus as it weaved its way through the province. He said it was very satisfying to see the quantity and quality of letters the Shuswap teachers had obtained for the campaign.



UN Finds B.C. in Violation of International Law



A United Nations labour body says the B.C. government should either amend or repeal six of its recent labour laws. UBC Industrial Relations professor Mark Thompson says Canada's reputation is at stake if the B.C. government fails to take a United Nations report seriously. He went on to say if you want international law in one area then you should be prepared to accept it in others.

Canada's reputation has been severely tarnished by the B.C. government's labour practices, said Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour. Yet the government sticks to its lawbreaking ways. Labour Minister Graham Bruce says he makes no apologies for imposing settlements (*read: ripping up contracts*) on public sector workers. Premier Campbell chimed in saying the UN criticism won't lead him to make any changes to the laws.

"This ruling is a complete vindication of our position," said B.C. Teachers' Federation President Neil Worboys. "...education—while vitally important—is *not* an essential service. It has affirmed our right to bargain collectively and, if necessary, to go on strike. These are internationally recognized rights that this government tried to deny us. When the B.C. Liberals intervened in our bargaining last year, they were contravening international law."

This is the second time the UN labour body has dealt with complaints about B.C. legislation. The Social Credit government's wage-controls and a ban on collective bargaining for teachers came under scrutiny in the 1980s. The government of the day complied with the law by ending wage controls and granting teachers bargaining rights in 1987. The B.C. Teachers' Federation is calling on the Liberal government of Campbell, Bruce, and Abbot to also adhere to international law.

Working Hard for You

In this and future issues we will be highlighting a member of the STA that has contributed their time and effort to making our union the best vehicle for representing the interests of the membership. Mike Holoiday stepped forward last year to fill an unexpected vacancy on the executive. He has worked hard to represent the membership and has written the following.

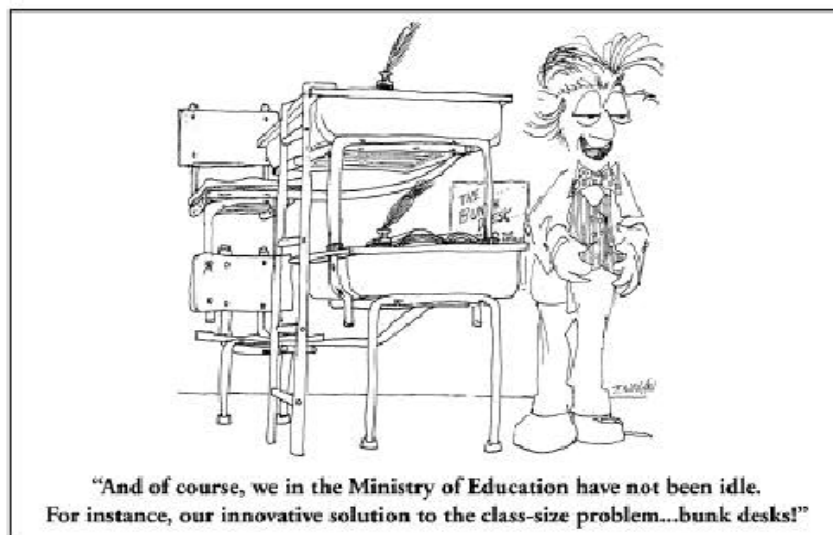
The position of first vice-president in most organizations requires the individual to stand in for the president in situations in which the president is unable to attend meetings or presentations because of circumstances beyond their control. This position in the Shuswap Teachers Association is that plus much, much more.

My name is Mike *Holoiday* and I am a teacher at AL Fortune Secondary School in Enderby and have been in the district since 1977. Previous to assuming the role of vice-president of the STA, I was on the executive in various capacities of the EDTA (Enderby and District Teachers Association) until it amalgamated with the STA.



This has been an extraordinary year for the STA and its entire executive. One of the major tasks in which I have been involved has been the upcoming amalgamation of the ATA (Armstrong Teachers Association) with the STA and the formation of a new association. Other duties includes participation on the district policy committee, which meets two afternoons every month, executive meetings, LRA's, special meetings, and zone meetings.

The position of first vice-president requires the individual to be articulate and to be a team member. I have enjoyed the challenges of the position and urge all members to become active in the association.



Liberals Hire New Information Minister



Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf, former Iraqi Minister of Information, was recently hired by the Liberal Government of British Columbia. The Premier said the choice was obvious as Saeed's speech delivery method and mannerism in stating a lie so defiantly that the listener begins to question whether it is himself or the speaker who is crazy. Education Minister Christy Clarke was initially upset as she thought she would be the best person for such a job. Ms. Clarke had indeed become well known as the education spinmeister with her cagey use of code words like *choice*, *flexibility* and *accountability* to disguise the massive

cuts to the public schools of the province. She has come around and now realizes that with the mess she and her colleagues have created they really need Saeed. (*Sources are unconfirmed therefore story may be suspect* ☺)

A Message from Your President

As we focus on the changes within the public education system over the last year and cope with our increasingly challenging classroom situations, it is often difficult to see the bigger picture and how all the pieces we've seen as unrelated are now starting to fall into place. The picture that is emerging is disturbing, as it represents a philosophical change away from student-centred learning to a results-based system of accountability that focuses on the financial bottom-line.



The BC Government's decision to strip class size and non-enrolling ratios from our contract and to freeze funding for Public Education has made it more difficult for teachers to meet the needs of their students. Next year won't be any better.

Aside from the savings accrued from the elimination of maximum class-size limits and the erosion of support for special-needs students, the Board continues to look for ways to squeeze money from the system. At their Tuesday, April 15/03 meeting they eliminated a further \$2.7 million from the system and passed a balanced budget. Board Chair, Maureen Kalynchuk, stated that while the Board knew the cuts would impact both students and staff she went on to say they had no choice.

The immediate impact for teachers will be:

- 13.62 FTE teacher jobs lost to declining enrolment
- Gr. 4-12 class sizes will increase by 0.5 (4.25 FTE teacher-jobs lost)
- Closure of South Canoe and Salmon Arm Elementary (14.8 FTE teachers displaced)
- A switch to full-day Kindergarten
- A move to JL Jackson Annex for SA Storefront
- Instructional time increased by approximately 9 minutes per day

The increase in the length of the instructional day will mean 5 fewer days in session for students and teachers. Where these days will be placed in the school calendar has yet to be determined. Changes to the School Act last year removed the requirement of the Board to get teacher approval for the school calendar but it is our understanding that the employer intends to create a process for input. We'll keep you posted.

These changes are being driven by a lack of funding not a desire to do what is best for students. None of these changes are supported by research. As teachers we have long advocated for Public Education and we must find ways to continue to do so. As Maureen Morris former president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation once said, "You can't do more with less. You can't even do the same with less. You can only do less with less." The students who are in our system today should not have fewer opportunities just because this is a district with declining enrolment.

Lynda Nicholson, STA President

What's Up Doc?

World Wide Web

<http://www.canadians.org/>

The Council of Canadians.

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca>

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

<http://www.handsoffhydro.com/>

Site dedicated to keeping BC Hydro in the hands of those who paid for it.

<http://www.strategicthoughts.com/>

Analysis of BC political events.

<http://www.bctf.ca>

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation.

<http://www.madd.ca/>

Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada

Cuts Hurt

