



## Where's the money?

2006 November 23++++

Shirley Bond  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9056 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W9E2

Dear Ms. Bond:

In October 2005 teachers agreed to return to work after an award from Vince Ready. As part of that award Vancouver School Board was given \$1.99 million to address class size and class composition issues.

Vancouver hired 66 FTE teachers from February 2006 to June 2006 to help with students with special needs.

In May 2006 Vancouver School Board cut these positions. The VSB explanation was that this money was not paid by the Government. After some discussion the Vancouver School Board decided they would restore 25 FTE if the government sent the School Board the money.

At a Vancouver School Board meeting of 2006 November 14th it was reported that the government had not sent the money and so none of these positions would be restored.

In elementary schools in Vancouver we have over fifty (50) classes with more than three (3) ministry designated students. Some classes have as many as seven (7), eight (8) and even ten (10) students with ministry designations. If the teaching positions which were awarded to Vancouver by Ready's Recommendations were restored to Vancouver all of these classes could get the support the children in these classes deserve.

The teachers in Vancouver returned to work last October in good faith believing that the Government would honour the Ready Recommendations.

I am appealing to you to investigate how Vancouver School Board is being funded so that they can restore these very vital positions which help our most vulnerable students.

Yours sincerely

**Mary McDermott**  
President

cc Emery Dossall, Deputy Minister of Education  
Ken Denike, Chairperson, Vancouver School Board  
Chris Kelly, Superintendent of Schools, Vancouver

**Did the VSB receive its full share of funding for 2006/2007 to address class size and composition or not?**

**We asked the government last spring, and here are some of the answers we received:**

Yes is the simple answer to your question regarding the continuation of additional funding to address class size / composition for this next school year. . . . School boards have been asked to focus the additional resources provided for 2006/2007 on priority areas such as class size and composition.

- Betty Marshall, on behalf of **BC Minister of Finance Carole Taylor**, 2006 May 11.

Operating funding for school districts will increase next year by \$20 million, and school boards are being asked to focus these additional resources on priority areas such as class size and composition.

- **BC Attorney-General Wally Oppal**, 2006 June 26.

While it is not yet known what the ultimate cost of improved class-size legislation will be, we have added \$20 million to the education budget and asked school boards to direct this funding to priority areas such as class size and composition.

- **BC Premier Gordon Campbell**, 2006 July 4.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE REVIEW IS UNDERWAY**  
**Your participation is needed at [survey.bctf.ca/SJ/2006.htm](http://survey.bctf.ca/SJ/2006.htm)**

The BCTF Executive Committee has called for a review of the federation's social justice programs.

A questionnaire is now available for members to fill out. Please go to <http://survey.bctf.ca/SJ/2006.htm> and submit your feedback before 2006 December 22. (See article on following page.)

# Using a "social justice lens"

As teachers committed to social justice issues in our lives and in our classrooms, we often find ourselves choosing curriculum, resources, presenters, and professional development in an effort to find better ways to implement our values into our teaching. Staying abreast of issues that are constantly changing is difficult, especially when not all areas of social justice may play out, or be visible in our classrooms on a daily basis.

As social justice contacts and individuals often called upon for leadership, we need to be prepared to evaluate educational tools or strategies, and to make good choices for our staff, students and families. This is a difficult task, especially given the multitude of approaches that are arising in response to increasing interest and focus.

There are many resources and tools being offered to teachers who are seeking more equitable school practice. In the face of increasing opportunities to try out or implement new strategies, teachers need accessible information about how to work towards a social justice framework in their classrooms that is practical, led by teachers, and can be readily applied to our daily experiences.

**It is important that we begin to identify how our experience, ideas and beliefs influence our curricular and pedagogical choices.**

One of the projects that the BCTF Social Justice Advisory Committee is undertaking this year is the development of a "social justice lens" that will help teachers to evaluate materials for their classroom, and help guide choices of professional development or staff

processes. This "lens" will be developed in consultation with the social justice action groups and social justice contacts to help teachers to build an awareness of how to ensure their choices of resources do not inadvertently participate in, or promote sexist, racist, homophobic, colonialist, ableist, or non-secular stereotypes or ideology.

Each of us brings our experience, ideas and beliefs to this work, and it is important that we begin to identify how these influence our curricular and pedagogical choices. We envision this "lens" acting as a filter to help us notice the ways that our beliefs and biases affect our pedagogy and practice, and to help teachers be more proactive in their schools around social justice issues. We also hope that it will assist in the fostering of discussion across committees, geographic region and practice.

In our efforts to do better social justice work, we also hope to build together a more comprehensive understanding of how social justice issues play out within and among schools across the province.

We look forward to your input and participation in this project.

**Jody Polukoshko, Learning Services & Dickens Annex**  
*Jody is a member of the BCTF Social Justice Advisory Committee. (See the Social Justice survey information on page 1.)*

## Child protection issues trump the Code of Ethics

**It shall not be considered a breach of the BCTF Code of Ethics for a member to follow legal requirements of official protocols in reporting child protection issues.**

**The intake phone number for MCFD is 604-660-5437.**

**If you call MCFD, always remember to document your call, including who you spoke to, the date, and the time.**

**You are *not* to start your own investigation with the student involved.**

## ESL: Connecting the dots . . . to the future

By 2011 (one year after the 2010 Olympics), there will be more people leaving the workforce in BC than entering it. By 2017, one in three BC residents will be foreign born. That's according to Chris Friesen, Director of Immigration Services Society (ISS) of BC, the largest multicultural immigrant-serving agency in Western Canada, who spoke to teachers, multicultural liaison workers and administrators, at a VESTA ESL Section-sponsored event October 30th.

According to Friesen, BC is sadly lagging way behind in per capita funding for ESL language and settlement services. In BC it's the second most popular destination for immigrants to Canada - English Language support for adult immigrant & refugee learners is funded to Level 3 only.

In Ontario, by comparison, the same immigrant group is funded, through the same federally transferred funds, up to Level 6, with current discussions underway to increase it to Level 8. Parents who have the opportunity to develop a higher level of English themselves are clearly better equipped to actively participate in their new community and to support their children's education.

Friesen went on to explain the tremendous challenges faced by 800-900 GARS (government assisted refugees) who settle in BC annually.

"We invite them to come, and then we don't look after them particularly well," says Friesen. For instance,

many people don't realize that government assisted refugees arrive with a transportation loan - from \$6,000 - \$10,000, depending on family size, which helped them get here; then they are initially placed on income support that matches provincial welfare rates and are expected to start making loan payments as soon as possible.

As a result, many of the refugee communities are living in poverty, with few support networks, are accessing food banks to augment their basic necessities, and are spending an increasing amount of their income support on rent. In spite of all this, 93% are happier to be here than where they came from. Why? Because they are hopeful for their children's future.

The big question for Friesen and his organization is how to build a foundation for this future that is steamrolling towards BC's Lower Mainland.

Currently the federal government's annual transfer payments (\$37 million) to support immigrant populations are put into general revenue funds, and are only partially targeted towards the population that they are meant to serve.

With a possible 70,000 additional immigrants annually coming into our province within the next five years alone, a crucial dialogue needs to begin involving such key players as the Attorney General and Ministry responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the universities, schools boards and their respective associations and unions.

"There are serious future challenges," said Friesen.

How can we as educators move forward to best support our immigrant and refugee populations in becoming active, healthy and thriving citizens? The VESTA ESL Section will continue this discussion at their upcoming meetings, which everyone is welcome to attend. For more information contact: vfoxx@vsb.bc.ca (604.713.5233) or myross@vsb.bc.ca (604.713.5507).

**Verena Foxx, Learning Services**  
**Myrne Ross, Hastings**  
**VESTA ESL Section Co-chairs**

**Currently the federal government's annual transfer payments (\$37 million) to support immigrant populations are put into general revenue funds, and are only partially targeted towards the population that they are meant to serve.**

## VESTA news

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VESTA  
2915 Commercial Drive  
Vancouver, B.C. V5N 4C8  
Phone: 604-873-8378  
Fax: 604-873-2652

www.vesta.ca

**Editing, Layout**  
Glen Hansman

**Proofreaders**  
Karin Bernauer  
Barbara Kay  
Lorna MacDonald  
Barb Parrott

**Editorial Advisory Committee**

Mary McDermott  
Barb Parrott  
Barbara Kay

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# Report from the Fall Rep Assembly

**B**CTF Representative Assemblies (RAs) are two days of reports, presentations, questions, motions, debate and decisions. The recent fall RA, November 3-4, had a jam-packed double page agenda. Each day, Friday and Saturday, began at 9:00 am and finished at 5:30 pm.

## Preliminaries

VESTA members were active from the very opening of the RA. Barb Parrott (VESTA 1st VP) is a co-chairperson of the Assembly. Patricia Gudlaugson (Fleming) was elected as scrutineer. Bill Hood (Maquinna) and Jane MacEwan (Roberts Annex) moved an important agenda amendment adding a discussion of the premier's Teachers' Congress.

Then BCTF President, Jinny Sims, reported on the work of the BCTF since the Spring RA. She invited questions but her report had been so detailed that the body of the Assembly thanked her without additional questions and moved to New Business.

Through their LRs, teachers in the Nicola Valley and Princeton raised the issue of coal-fired power generation plants. After debate and amendment the following motion passed without dissent: *That the BCTF oppose the construction of coal-fired power generation plants.*

Next there was review of the minutes of every Executive Committee meeting since the Spring RA. Since this is the time to account for the actions of the EC in the months between RA meetings, VESTA LRs had prepared questions seeking additional information and increased understanding of actions taken. EC members responded to clarify issues.

## The poverty crisis in BC†

What followed was the first of several presentations spaced out over the two meeting days. Seth Klein, Director, BC Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, addressed the assembly. He focused on the dichotomy between the fact that BC is a rich province with strong economic growth and low unemployment and the reality that province-wide income to workers is going down and homelessness, doubling from 2002 to 2005, is increasing at an alarming rate. LRs then overwhelmingly carried a motion that in part states *That the BCTF endorse the goals of the Raise the Rates campaign and call upon the provincial government to raise welfare rates by 50% and index them to inflation.*

## Local resolutions†

The agenda section called Local Resolutions was next. Here is the place where the concerns of teachers in their locals are reflected. Greater Victoria teachers raised issues of safety for BCTF members working in provincial correctional centres across the province. Burnaby teachers zeroed in on the 1) increasing work load of teachers across the province as we are asked to take on the work normally done by secretaries, clerks, maintenance staff, and 2) on the assignment of teacher work to these other groups. VESTA LR Jane MacEwan seconded the Coquitlam resolution to ensure that BCTF members take a lead role in the September 2007 implementation of the Social Justice 12 course. Coquitlam and Surrey

put forward the motion *That the BCTF lobby the provincial government to increase basic funding for adult students.*

## Other business on first day

When Rob McLaren, BCTF treasurer, finished reviewing the unaudited financial statements to June 30, 2006, the RA approved two charges against the Contingency Fund. One was a donation to Section 22, Oaxacan Teachers, of \$10,000.00 to assist in supporting victims of repression and the restoration of their teachers' union offices. The second donation of \$10,000.00 was to Education International to support Lebanese teachers and their families.

The RA was updated on the impact of the World Peace Forum which brought together over 5,000 people from around the world.

Before the first break in proceedings, Dale Townsend, chairperson of the BC College of Teachers, reported on affairs at the College.

## Contract implementation†

When the RA reconvened, it moved into committee-of-the-whole for a thorough report on the concluding days of negotiating our new provincial agreement. The Bargaining Team, including VESTA member Suzie Mah (GVDES -Van Horne), was acknowledged by everyone for the work the team undertook on behalf of all of us. From bargaining, The RA moved directly into contract implementation. VESTA LRs MacEwan (Roberts) and Donna Brack, (Adult Educator, Gathering Place) presented a VESTA motion that passed without dissent: *That the BCTF support the resolution of the VESTA Adult Educators' contract and pay dispute with the Vancouver School Board which has denied these members the same general increases to which all members of the Vancouver Teachers' Federation are entitled.*

## Bill 33

The RA then began to discuss Bill 33/Working and Learning Conditions. LRs expressed a lot of concern and frustration with the limits of Bill 33 and the lack of commitment school boards are showing to the bill. The need for restoration of class size/class composition language remains clear. Over the two days of debate, a comprehensive series of resolutions was passed.

## Other business on day two

The RA elected Kim Meyer (Kitimat) and Yvonne Wai (Central Coast) to the Judicial Council and Susan Crowley (Prince Rupert) was elected as Judicial Council Chairperson.

The report on the state of the Teachers' Pension Plan centred around the ability to continue dental benefits for retired teachers in the future and the role of

ethical investments in the TTP portfolio. The issue of dental benefits for retired teachers will need direction from BCTF members at the AGM but the following motion was passed: *That the TPP advise the Winter RA (in January) of the plan, including timelines and criteria, for increasing the amount of our pension funds committed to ethical investments.*

The RA went on to deal with the issues of School Planning Councils, school fees, and staff bargaining.

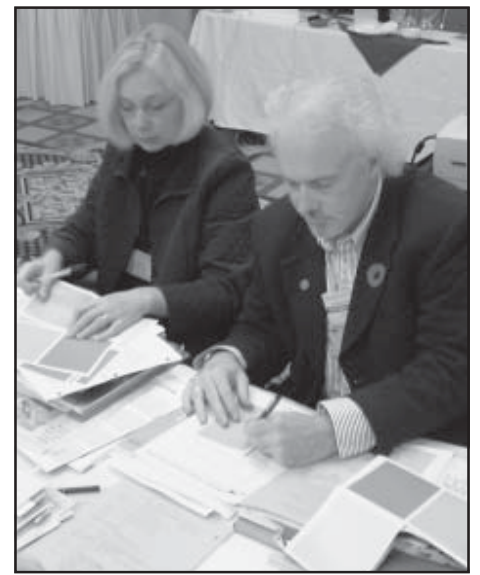
The expected federal election campaign was one of the last topics of the RA. A panel of UBC professor Michael Byers, child advocate Sheila Davidson, the BC chair of the Canadian Federation of Students Dave Scott and Jean Swanson of the Carnegie Community Action Project presented on the topic *The Changing Face of Canada.* This led to a number of motions beginning with: *That the BCTF participate in the next federal election campaign and that the objectives of that participation be to: 1. provide information to members about issues that have an impact on teachers and students and the quality of Canadian life including, but not limited to, the issues of health care, the environment, gender equity, peace, child care, poverty, and education. 2. encourage members individually and through locals to take an active role in the election campaign.*

†Continuing with federal issues, the recent funding cuts by Mr. Harper's government were also addressed through a resolution stating: *That the Federation protest the Harper government cuts to Status of Women Canada, Skills and Literacy programs, the Court Challenges program, and other programs designed to engage and support Canadians.*

Several other educational issues were addressed. While Grad Portfolios are a secondary issue, VESTA members should know that their secondary colleagues are advocating the elimination of the grad portfolio. The discussions about Distributed Learning resulted in the motion of interest to all teachers: *That the BCTF prepare advice to locals on the development and implementation of technology plans, specifically addressing online communications between teachers and students and parents.*

† Finally, late Saturday afternoon, the session closed off by passing a Hood/Hawkins resolution on Canada's role in Afghanistan that had been introduced on Friday morning. This rounded out a busy but productive Fall RA for the VESTA delegation!

†  
**Patricia Guglaugson**  
Alternate LR / Fleming School



## MAKING DECISIONS IN THE BCTF

† Three times a year, in the fall, winter and spring terms, the BCTF brings together the elected Local Representatives (LRs), alternates and the presidents for a Representative Assembly (RA). The RA is charged with governing the BCTF in the months between Annual General Meetings (AGM).

The RA is usually a lively gathering with knowledgeable, articulate teachers from around the province debating the most pressing issues facing teachers. RA decisions are made democratically with each local holding a number of votes proportional to the membership of the local within the total BCTF membership. VESTA, the only all elementary local in the province, has 4 Local Representatives and holds 34 voting cards. VESTA members elect their LRs at the VESTA AGM in May.

The VESTA delegation takes very seriously its responsibility to VESTA members and to the BCTF. They actively seek advice from VESTA members at the VESTA General Meeting and/or the Staff Rep Assembly before the RA. The LRs also meet for a full day prior to the RA to read closely the BCTF Executive Committee (EC) minutes, prepare questions for the EC, develop resolutions and supporting statements around issues critical to VESTA members and examine the BCTF budget materials.

† After the RA, LRs report directly to the VESTA Executive Committee and then to the next VESTA General Meeting or Staff Representative Assembly. They prepare written reports for the VESTA news to inform the full membership. All this is done in order to keep VESTA members involved in and informed about decision making in the BCTF.

**HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT DECISIONS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE?**

**PARTICIPATE AT VESTA GENERAL MEETINGS AND STAFF REP ASSEMBLIES.**



# How to read your paystub

ADVICE NO.	PAY PERIOD	GROSS PAY	TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	NET PAY
1	31/10/06	3351.67	1102.95	2248.72

TYPE OF EARNINGS	HOURS/DAYS	CURRENT	DEDUCTIONS	CURRENT	YEAR-TO-DATE
REG TIME		3285.95	EHBD	.40	6.40
SIP ALL		65.72	GR/LIFE	.23	3.68
			LTD	40.22	774.14
			MSP	28.80	460.80
			SHORTDIS	16.76	220.61
			TAX	638.80	11019.27
			SUPN TCH	303.33	4053.32
			BCTF	48.60	723.83
			DUES	25.81	398.60

With the recent increases in the salary grid and daily rate and on-scale provisions for TOC's, all members are advised to regularly check their pay stubs each pay period to ensure the correct amount is being deposited. The pay grids resulting from the 2006 ñ 2010 Agreement are available on the VESTA website [www.vesta.ca](http://www.vesta.ca)

Your pay stub has two halves. Important information on the bottom of the left half includes your salary pay grade or category such as 5BP, 6PA, etc., your salary step and your FTE. Check these, especially if you have recently upgraded your salary category, moved up a step or changed your FTE.

Also on the left side is your sick leave balance shown in hours where five (5) hours equals one day for Payroll purposes of calculating sick leave bank.

The top of the right side shows the pay period, your gross pay, total deductions for the pay period and net pay. Your gross pay is the total of your regular pay plus any allowances such as SIP, department head, etc.

Below that are two columns. The first lists your earnings which include:

**REG TIME** - your regular salary for the pay period. It should equal one-twentieth (1/20) of the annual salary for your category and step.

**SIP ALL** - your Salary Indemnity Plan allowance equal to 2% of your regular salary plus any other allowances.

The second column lists your deductions of the pay period and for the year to date. They are:

**CPP** - Canada Pension Plan. 4.95% of gross pay is deducted until you earn over \$42,100 in the calendar year. In January 2007 this limit will increase to \$43,700. Most teachers reach this limit in June or September, after which the deduction disappears until January (which is why it's not shown in the scan above).

**EI** - Employment Insurance. 1.87% of gross pay is deducted until you earn over \$39,000 in the calendar year. Most teachers reach this limit in May or June (which, again, is why it's not shown above).

**EHBD** - Extended Health Benefits. Although the employer pays 100% of the Extended Health premiums, there is an additional charge of \$0.25 (single) or \$0.75 (family) per pay period which is equally shared by the Board and employees. Extended Health Benefits (EHB) are linked to MSP coverage. Employees covered by a spouse's MSP (see below) cannot enroll in this EHB.

**MSP** - Medical Services Plan. Employees pay one-half of the premium for basic medical insurance operated by the provincial medical plan. If your spouse has MSP/EHB coverage with another employer, select the plan with the better coverage and list the other spouse as a dependent for that plan. MSP/EHB plans cannot be piggybacked, so paying two sets of premiums will not provide additional coverage.

**GR/LIFE** - Group Life Insurance. Employees pay one-half of the premium for this is a mandatory life insurance policy. There are two plan options.

**LTD** - BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan - Long Term. 1.2% of salary to fund the long term portion of our salary indemnity plan. This cost is now offset by a portion of the SIP allowance that shows as earnings.

**SHORTDIS** - BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan - Short Term. 0.5% of salary to fund the short term portion of our salary indemnity plan. This cost is now offset by a portion the SIP allowance that shows as earnings.

**TAX** - Income Tax.

**SUPN TCH** - Teachers' Pension Plan. 7.55% of pensionable salary up to and including the CPP limit of \$42,100 (\$43,700 in Jan. 07) and 9.05% of salary in excess of that amount.

**BCTF** - BCTF fee. 1.45% of salary. The fee is set by the BCTF Annual General Meeting.

**DUES** - VESTA fee. 0.77% of salary. Set by the VESTA Annual General Meeting.

**Thank you to Bill Bargeman and Anne Guthrie Warman, VSTA In-house, for permission to adapt and publish their article!**

## LGBT TEACHERS AND ALLIES

Get involved in VESTA's Pride Committee



It is always energizing to meet with fellow LGBTQ teachers and allies at VESTA Pride Committee meetings. If you have never come to one of our meetings, please feel free to drop in for some tasty samosas and good conversations and support!

Our meetings range from discussing day-to-day issues around undertaking anti-homophobia education in our schools, to improving BCTF policy to support queer issues and sexual health, as well as organizing events for the future to bring people together for learning and fun!

Right now we are planning a gathering/ forum/ wine and cheese to share city-wide resources and ideas for anti-homophobia education. We would love your ideas and input on this event.

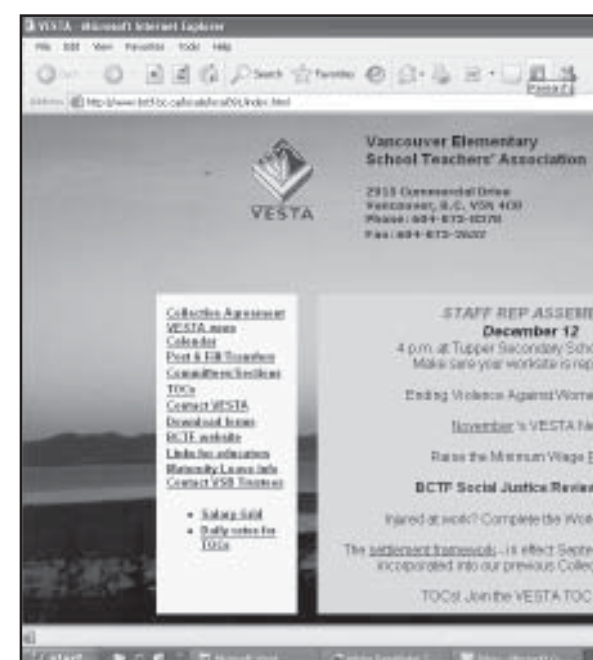
If anyone is looking for good books on family diversity, inspiring movies on dealing with name-calling, free posters or other resources that support anti-homophobia/anti-transphobia education in elementary schools, please contact me at [jessica@vesta.ca](mailto:jessica@vesta.ca), or come to one of our meetings!

Jessica Campbell, Pride Committee Chair

WATCH THE FLYER LISTING 2007 MEETING DATES

## Salary Grid

The new salary grid and the settlement framework are both available on [www.vesta.ca](http://www.vesta.ca) for your use.



# REACT AND KEEP TRACK OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

The image shows a form titled 'Vancouver School Board Violent Incident Report - Part 1'. It includes sections for 'Background Information', 'Description of Incident', 'Witnesses', 'Medical Attention', and 'Signatures'. The form is designed to be filled out by the worker involved in the incident.

The Violent Incident Form - Part 1 is to be used when there is workplace violence by **students, parents or other non-employees of the VSB.**

Workplace violence means the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statements or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury. (WCB OH&S Reg. 4.27 has the full definition).

**This definition includes situations where a student lashes out without intending harm.**

The form is entitled 'Violent Incident Report - Part 1'. The front page is to be filled out by the worker involved in the violent incident. The back page is for the school-based H&S committee to do the investigation. When the form is complete, it is forwarded to the VSB Health, Safety and Employee Support department.

The form tracks the student involved. The student is given an ID number and that stays with the student during the length of their schooling. Every month the District H&S committee reviews the summary of the forms. The forms do not identify the worker involved nor the school where the incident took place. The summary tracks the student involved only. After three incidents have been reported, Learning Services is made aware of the student. Therefore, it is important to fill out a form for each violent incident. There are of course instances where keeping a log book of incidents is more useful, but it is important to record **all** incidents of violence by any student - designated or not.

React and keep track of workplace violence! It does not reflect negatively in any way on the worker filling out the form.

**Karin Bernauer**  
Health & Safety Chairperson, VESTA

## ILO rules against BC government . . . . again!

The International Labour Organization (ILO) of the United Nations has again found the BC government in contravention of international labour law by interfering in collective bargaining and undermining the province's collective bargaining system. The ruling specifically addresses the government's imposition of Bill 12, which sparked the teacher strike in October 2005. This is the fourth in a series of ILO rulings that condemn the BC government's treatment of teacher bargaining rights.

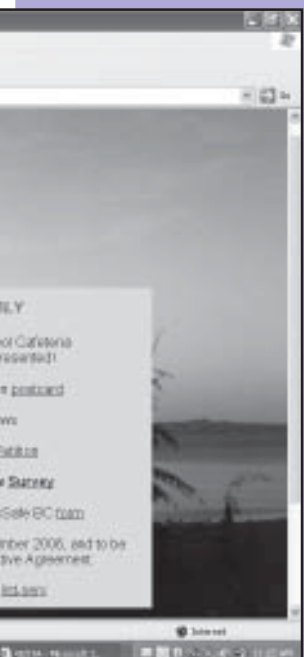
## BCTF wins freedom of speech appeal against Translink

A victory for working people is how the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) describes November 28th's BC Court of Appeal ruling that declares Translink's advertising policies unconstitutional. BCTF President Jinny Sims says, 'while this decision upholds our right in Canada to free speech, it especially upholds our right to free political speech. It's a big day for freedom of expression and for public debate. This is a win for all British Columbians because the court has upheld a basic democratic right.'

Citing its long-standing policy that it decline advertisements deemed too political, Translink refused BCTF ads in 2004 that contained factual information about the number of schools closed and the number of teachers lost in the public education system.

'The BC Court of Appeal has made the right decision,' says Sims. 'If we allow corporations that are controlled by government to silence our voices, we lose our democracy. Many attempts have been made over the years to silence the voices of teachers, but we will not be silenced. This is the right ruling because it upholds the rights of citizens to participate in an open debate in a fair and reasonable manner.'

The BCTF took on the legal challenge in partnership with the Canadian Federation of Students. Its ads that encouraged people to register to vote were also rejected as too controversial by Translink.



## Will your worksite be represented?

**Make sure your worksite has a voice and vote at our upcoming Staff Rep Assemblies and General Meetings. Here are the future dates:**

- Dec 12** - General Meeting / Staff Rep Assembly
- Jan 23** - General Meeting / Staff Rep Assembly
- Feb 20** - Staff Rep Assembly
- Mar 12** - General Meeting / Staff Rep Assembly
- April 24** - Staff Rep Assembly
- May 15** - Staff Rep Assembly / VESTA AGM
- June 19** - Staff Rep Assembly

Congratulations to the BC Federation of Labour on its 50th Anniversary



Vancouver public school teachers are proud members of the BC Fed and stand in solidarity with other workers in this province.

A MESSAGE FROM  
VANCOUVER SECONDARY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION [www.vstaweb.ca](http://www.vstaweb.ca)  
VANCOUVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ASSOCIATION [www.vesta.ca](http://www.vesta.ca)

## THE FAMOUS ACCOUNTABILITY GOALS STANDARDIZED DISTRICT-WIDE PLANNING COUNCIL GROWTH QUIZ

A satirical look at the accountability agenda by Jack MacDermot, WLC/B Chair

### 1. B.C. teachers oppose FSA tests because:

- professional educators can't possibly be trusted to provide accurate assessments of student learning.
- it's just a fluke that B.C. students score among the highest in the world in international comparisons.
- the tests do not help students learn, and can actually discourage them.
- they can never remember what FSA stands for.

### 2. Private schools typically do well on Fraser Institute school rankings because:

- there is a very strong correlation to socioeconomic status of student population.
- the model used has interesting criteria like bonus points for same-sex classes.
- the Institute is a registered charity supported with millions of dollars by corporations and pro-privatization foundations.
- several Fraser Institute fellows and their children attend(ed) private schools, and it would be a shame if all that money were wasted.
- all of the above.

### 3. B.C.'s public schools should follow the lead of \_\_\_\_\_ where widespread standardized testing of students is \_\_\_\_\_ and the result is \_\_\_\_\_.

- Finland / non-existent / the best public education system in the world.
- the United States / an epidemic / many students left behind and a poor international ranking.
- the Fraser Institute / gospel / statistically invalid school-by-school comparisons.
- anywhere / done / winners and losers.

### 4. School and district accountability contracts are important because:

- they have lots of impenetrable educational jargon.
- otherwise teachers will be hopelessly confused about how to do their jobs.
- Social Responsibility scores that go up 0.538% are wonderful for the self-esteem of students.
- powerful interests who don't believe in public education can use a fictional crisis in our schools to further their aims.

### 5. Accountability in Education is:

- a British alternative rock band from the 1980s.
- a new course in financial planning for kindergarten students.
- another way of saying we don't trust teachers to do their jobs properly.
- what a popular Sesame Street character could do with numbers.

*Fear not -- your results will not be ranked by any institute, and will not be published in any newspaper. Not yet, anyway.*

# ONWARDS WITH LOCAL BARGAINING

Local bargaining between the VTF and the VSB resumes in December. Our bargaining objectives were ratified by the 2006 June 13 VTF General Meeting and are to:

- eliminate supervision
- improve leave provisions
- incorporate any grievance, arbitration or lay-off committee decisions into the collective agreement
- clearly define active service for the purposes of ERIP
- improve post and fill provisions
- clearly define issues around Kindergarten hours and FTE (*note: this has now been resolved at a joint committee*)
- improve harassment and discrimination language
- improve technological change language in relation to teacher workload
- address health and safety concerns relating to renovations, maintenance, and construction
- improve provisions for summer school employees
- improve provisions for the recognition of teaching experience
- clarify language relating to the contents of files kept on employees
- limit the frequency and duration of administrator-called staff meetings
- develop a process for integrating low incidence students
- provide support for curriculum implementation
- increase mileage allowance, and the vandalism and loss of property insurance
- improve access to the EOC list
- improve funding provisions for professional development

Both parties last met at the local bargaining table in June, where all of the VTF's objectives and some language were tabled. The VSB bargaining team's complete list of proposals consisted of five items.

The VTF bargaining team consists of: **Bill Bargeman** (VSTA) & **Patricia Gudlaugson** (VESTA) as co-chairs, **June Arnett** (VSTA), **Glen Hansman** (VESTA), **Barbara Kay** (VESTA), **Gerry Kent** (VESTA), **Gena Kolson** (VSTA), **Barb Parrott** (VESTA), **Jody Polukoshko** (VESTA), and **Shelley Sullivan** (VSTA).

## RECENT HEALTH & SAFETY QUESTIONS

### Should teachers be moving desks, computers, and other heavy classroom items?

It is not teachers' responsibility to move desks, computers, or other heavy classroom items because of painting, asbestos removal, seismic upgrading, or other work being done to the school site. Not only is it another union's work, but it is also a safety issue. The VSB has trained employees who are to do this work. Complete the WorkSafe BC form if you have already sustained a related injury.

### Should I be given release time / moving allowance when there are renovations at the school?

It is the union's expectation that teachers be provided with sufficient release time to pack *and* unpack when school renovations or construction take place. Please refer to the 1996 December 12 grievance settlement in your worksite's augmented collective agreement on Article 9.I.10. in which the VSB agrees with the VTF on this matter.

### What if my school is too cold (or too hot)?

Under the WorkSafe BC Occupational Health & Safety regulation 4.80, the employer must ensure that temperature and humidity levels within the indoor work environment are maintained within acceptable comfort ranges, as far as is practicable. If teachers at your worksite are concerned about the temperature in classrooms, gymnasium, library or other areas, these concerns should be brought to the principal and the school-based Health & Safety Committee. Minutes from your Health & Safety Committee on this matter should be sent to VESTA, along with recorded temperatures and times. As well, the minutes are to be forwarded to the District H&S Committee.

### If I slip and fall on ice in the school parking lot, what should I do?

If you have injured yourself at work or during any work-related activity, you should complete and submit a WorkSafe BC 6A form as soon as possible. Documenting workplace injuries is very important. Fax a copy to VESTA as well as to the VSB so that way we can make sure your situation is addressed at the district Health & Safety Committee.

**Glen Hansman, Barbara Kay, & Karin Bernauer**  
VESTA Office

**FILL OUT THE WORKSAFE BC 6A FORM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF YOU ARE INJURED ON THE JOB**

The image shows a WorkSafe BC 6A form titled 'WORKER'S REPORT OF INJURY OR OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE TO EMPLOYER'. The form is divided into several sections for data entry, including:
 

- Worker Information:** Name, Address, Telephone, Fax, Email, and Social Insurance Number.
- Employer Information:** Name, Address, Telephone, Fax, and Email.
- Injury Details:** Date and Time of Injury, Location, Description of Injury, and Date and Time of Reporting.
- Witnesses:** Name, Address, Telephone, and Email.
- Medical Information:** Name of Doctor, Date of First Medical Attention, and Date of Last Medical Attention.
- Employer's Response:** Date and Time of Reporting to Employer, Date and Time of Reporting to WorkSafe BC, and Date and Time of Reporting to VESTA.

 The form also includes a section for 'Additional Information' and a footer with the WorkSafe BC logo and contact information.

# Continuing to fight for Adult Educators



The big public power sell-off started over three years ago with the privatization of one-third of BC Hydro's services.

When the 10-year contract with foreign-based Accenture expires, they are free to ship jobs off-shore to the outsourcing meccas in India and the Philippines. The contract was signed with a promise of saving British Columbians hundreds of millions of dollars.

Of course we don't know if that claim is true because the information we need to verify the statement is secret, as is the contract terms and everything else about this deal.

If that isn't enough to make you jump up and spring into action, try these facts on for size:

> Private deals like the one between BC's public utility and Accenture are not subject to the inspection of the Auditor General or the usual scrutiny of the Opposition MLAs or other public bodies. The government claims that they have to keep the contracts secret to protect the private companies.

> And yet BC's Privacy Commissioner has stated that nothing is stopping the government from demanding that private companies who want to do business here live up to the same standards and rigor of public corporations. The BC government doesn't respect our right to know and that's no secret!

> The foreign outsourcing company Accenture, who is now in charge of Hydro records, lost the personal payroll information of all 5,000 BC Hydro employees. In addition, Accenture was caught sending publicly owned records outside of Canada.

> A month after this record scandal, the BC government came to the private company's rescue by making it legal for our private information to freely cross the border. Accenture is now allowed to temporarily store our records (i.e. your household's financial records) outside of Canada.

> To do this, the BC Government roll-backed landmark 2004 legislation that was designed to counter the US Patriot Act.

> The term 'temporary' is not defined in the government's legislation. There is no return date or mechanism in place to make sure the data ever returns to BC. And there are no stipulations about how secure the storage needs to be!

These facts lead one to wonder:

How safe are your household financial records at BC Hydro? Will your data be shared with unauthorized sources? But then again, how will we ever know? The BC government doesn't respect our privacy any more than they respect our great natural resources and that's no secret!

Stay enlightened at:

[www.publicpowerbc.ca](http://www.publicpowerbc.ca)

## PERFORMANCE STANDARDS VS. PERFORMANCE SCALES

Some primary teachers are being told they are required by the new reporting policy to use the performance standards. This is not true.

Teachers must use the performance scales in the reporting policy. That scale has headings that are somewhat different from the ones used in the performance standards, and there are no descriptive standards attached to them. The reporting policy leaves what constitutes approaching expectations, meeting expectations, etc. to the professional judgment of teachers.

There are no BC Performance Standards for some of the subject areas that teachers must report on using a performance scale, e.g., speaking/listening, social studies, and science.

Use of the Performance Standards that do exist is **always** optional.

**As you are aware, your union local has been fighting for equity this fall on behalf of its adult educators.**

The Adult Educators' sublocal of VESTA has its own separate local collective agreement with the VSB; in fact, we are the only BC teachers independent of provincial bargaining. We still do local bargaining, having negotiated our last agreement in 2004.

Our current dispute stems from language in our collective agreement that is commonly referred to as a 'time too' clause. This clause explains how increases to our pay will be increased over the life of the contract in the same percentage as VSB/VTF (K to 12) general increases.

Since the time of our unionization in 1994, we have always been stymied by the VSB at any time we tried to separately negotiate questions related to our pay. Thus, precedent is firmly established that we receive whatever VESTA members receive.

What has happened is that we are being denied the pay increases from the June 2006 provincial collective agreement related to Vince Ready's harmonization of grids, and the BCTF salary indemnity plan amount that we pay as members. We clearly believe that these actions by the VSB violate our collective agreement, and are unfair discrimination towards us when we work for the same employer as our K-12 colleagues. VESTA has launched a grievance on this matter.

However, at the end of October, the VSB asked us to consider opening up our Collective Agreement early (current expiration June 30, 2008) to address these and a couple of other issues. This is a serious question that we debated thoroughly at an Adult Educators General Meeting held on Sunday, Nov. 5th. Members became better informed, and after much discussion voted in favour of taking this decision for our union. VESTA asked the VSB to respond by Nov. 14.

Well, we waited.

The VSB did not respond before the deadline, despite having initiated these discussions about opening our contract.

Finally, three days later on Nov. 17 we received a letter from Chris Kelly, Superintendent stating that the VSB will only be prepared to address our issues once it knows the Ministry's actual funding.

That is where we as adult educators are today. We are still waiting.

Consequently, VESTA Executive passed motions at its Nov. 21 meeting to establish an action plan.

We will need again the solidarity and support of our VESTA colleagues. We deeply appreciate all the cards and letters sent to our centres by many schools; our members have been truly touched by your thoughts and support.

**Janek Kuchmistrz**

**VESTA Adult Educators' Sublocal President**

BC's lowest paid workers deserve a raise



Minimum wage earners working full-time should earn enough to stay above the poverty line. That can only be achieved by immediately raising the minimum wage to at least \$10.00 per hour.

The provincial government likes to crow about a booming economy, but it's only booming for a few. BC's lowest paid workers have been left behind as BC's minimum wage has been frozen since 2001.

It's time to scrap the training wage and raise BC's minimum wage to \$10 per hour.

That's why the B.C. Fed has joined with the Canadian Federation of Students to launch a campaign to raise BC's minimum wage. Sign the petition at [www.vesta.ca](http://www.vesta.ca) calling for an immediate increase of BC's minimum wage to \$10.00 per hour.

## BILL HOOD: ON THE VALUE OF HOMEWORK

I was very excited to attend the recent presentation by Alfie Kohn, sponsored by VESTA. His topics – standardized testing and homework – are germane to all teachers. On the topic of standardized testing, I agree that concerned teachers must do all within their power to resist the agenda of so-called tougher standards and supposed accountability.

For me a more contentious topic in his presentation was homework. I teach Grade 6 and give a fairly solid amount of homework. I would like to offer my practice and rationale for discussion. I feel that the time we have in class is very precious, and that the work a student is asked to do to complete the demands of the curriculum falls into two main categories.

These are work that requires social interaction, discussion, and exchange of ideas, and work developed from this of a more individual nature. The former must be done in a social setting to be successful, whereas the latter can generally be safely attempted/completed outside of the classroom. As a result, I choose to maximize the time in class for discussion, exchange and interaction. This forces a certain amount of the individual work into time outside of class.

I provide a regular amount of choice time in class over the course of each week. In this choice time, students are encouraged to reflect on their class responsibilities, set priorities, and then work on their individual assignments.

I regularly remind them to begin the most personally challenging (or confusing to them) activities at school, so they can receive help or support from me. Another key component of most of my homework assignments is that they are not just over one night. A student who begins an activity and finds they encounter problems will be able to obtain assistance with this at school the next day.

**It seems that Mr. Kohn clearly feels that people (usually teachers) have drifted way over the top in terms of the value they attribute to any homework.**

Another principle of homework in Division 3 is that students should be governed by the decisions of their parents. If there is an important family activity that makes completion difficult, then a note in the planner/agenda from the parent leads to an automatic extension. Also a decision by a parent that their child has worked for a reasonable amount

of time is also a ticket to some sort of compromise that will be worked out at school the next day.

What this approach does demand, is responsibility by the student, and an open and honest approach to what was and was not done. The underlying lesson is really about personal planning, setting goals, adjusting your options in the face of the changes of life, and discussing these in a straightforward manner.

Mr. Kohn correctly noted that kids learn by making decisions, and by making sense of ideas. I feel that completing a variety of assignments offers them the chance to do this in a safe, flexible, but structured environment. Mr. Kohn tried to juxtapose making decisions with following instructions. While it is possible for this to happen, I do feel a reasonable place exists in much of the curriculum for applied reading and critical thinking involved in following directions, decoding information, and making an appropriate set of choices.

He also suggested that giving homework is a product of iBUT (better get used to it) thinking by teachers: iPeople will do bad stuff to you in the future, so you better get used to it now.

I believe that it is possible to survive the ravages of society with your soul intact, but this will not just happen. A person needs to prepare, they need to practice, and they need to understand that the attitude that sees us only as either consumers to be sold to or social units to be manipulated is not reasonable and can be resisted. My job as a teacher is to help make sure that all the kids who pass through my class can survive in the future, and to help them believe that they can learn to do this while protecting their right to imagine a better life.

**We may both agree that the issue is really one of balance, purpose, and intentionality.**

Homework must also be seen in the context of the lives of our children. The average kid in 2006 in most North American cities, when outside of school, is more likely to connect with a variety of electronic media or devices

than they are to go out playing with their friends in a local park or vacant field. Too many people seem to believe that the computer, Internet, video games, television, etc. are mostly benign influences on their children. Most teachers believe that these are each potential tools, which a person can learn to use more effectively with care, support, and critical thinking.

As teachers we have a responsibility to the process of the development of citizens. Carefully structured homework can encourage a student to seek out activities that use purposeful, connected, and diverse tools while simultaneously stimulating thinking, investigation, and forming opinions. A side benefit program may also be to see the other forces in their life a little clearer.

It seems that Mr. Kohn clearly feels that people (usually teachers) have drifted way over the top in terms of the value they attribute to any homework. We may both agree that the issue is really one of balance, purpose, and intentionality.

Bill Hood  
Chief Maquinna School

## MEREDYTH KEZAR: AN INTERVIEW ON LITERACY & ASSESSMENT

One of the major goals of the literacy projects is to give schools and teachers time to collaborate and to examine their practices, says **Meredyth Kezar**, Later Literacy Consultant at **Learning Services**. iOften in schools there isn't that opportunity to discuss fundamental questions – how can we ensure success for all learners, and how can we become more knowledgeable as teachers to better meet the needs of students. Part of the literacy project's central beliefs and understandings is that through systematic and diagnostic assessment, teachers will gain additional insight into their students needs and insight into their own practice.

iThe main reason to use a 3-Step Write is to get a snapshot of what your students are doing and to guide your practice, says Meredyth. iThe RAD is another test that is widely used across the district in elementary schools. It looks at how students use reading strategies. By looking at this data, teachers can use this information to guide practice.

As the later literacy consultant, she hopes that teachers will do other assessments in between. We realize that the 3-Step Write and RAD are just snapshots – only part of the total picture. Use of these two assessments, says Meredyth, is part of belonging to the district's literacy project. The expectation is that the majority of the staff members will agree to participate and commit to the project for a number of years. Meredyth encourages the literacy project schools to plan their professional development around what has emerged through their assessment and teaching.

One of the things she enjoys the most as a literacy consultant is providing in-service with the school-based project co-ordinators to keep people up to date on the latest research. iLike everything else, she says, iwe want people to stay current, and for people to feel ownership.

iWhen people are thinking about the FSA, they shouldn't mix it up with the sort of assessment that can actually help guide practice, she continues. That being said, she concludes, if you're only doing the 3-Step Write and RAD to give a mark or for the School Growth Plan, then it is a waste of everyone's time.

**iWhen people are thinking about the FSA, they shouldn't mix it up with the sort of assessment that can actually help guide practice.**

*In conversation with Glen Hansman*

Thank you to  
Marlene Wilson  
for her **34** years  
of service as a  
Staff Rep



### STEVE LABEL: ON THE 1983 SOLIDARITY STRIKE

Thank you for the two full-page articles in the November issue of *VESTA News* about the Solidarity actions of 1983. Reading them brought back vivid memories for me, although I taught in Kamloops in 1983. More important, however, is the passing on of a history to the next generation of teaching professionals.

The two pieces by Susan Davis and Maureen MacDonald gave enough detail and context to inform current teachers (most of whom were not teaching in 1983) about a significant piece in the history of public education and labour history in this province.

Let us not forget that the gains we have made in our profession have never been handed to us; we had to work hard together, and with others in the labour movement.

Steve LeBel, member on leave

**Are you a TOC in Vancouver?**  
Join **TOC Talk:**  
**VESTA's** Yahoo Group for members  
employed as teachers-on-call  
Visit [www.vesta.ca](http://www.vesta.ca) to join