

Teacher

BC isn't broke

By Iglia Ivanova

I spend a lot of my time looking at issues of government finance and how they affect the quality of public services and in turn, quality of life for people in our province. I want to share with you two rather disconcerting patterns that I have seen play out in BC over the last decade.

We're increasingly seeing governments, both federally and in BC, who believe that wages need to be kept low for the benefit of economic growth (regardless of whether we're in a period of economic growth, recession or a recovery).

The second pattern I want to talk about is the consistent underfunding of public services in this province, which includes education. We have seen a distinct withdrawal of government support from public services while more and more of the costs have been downloaded to families who need the services.

You've all heard that the budget is in deficit this year, but how many of you know that the budget shortfall for this year is greatly overstated?

The net-zero mandate that public sector unions are facing now is a reflection of both of these patterns. So is the recent provincial budget. Let's start with the budget. This

year's budget falsely claims that the proverbial cupboard is bare and that nothing can be done to meet any of BC's most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. What this really means is that the provincial government is asking us, asking the poor and middle-class families, to tighten our belts, to make sacrifices and wait for the economy to get stronger before our issues can be addressed.

But in reality, the cupboard isn't bare. The constraints the government appears to be facing are neither economic nor fiscal. They are political.

The fact is that the BC economy is in recovery. Growth is not as strong as it was in the mid-2000s, but it is present. The economy is projected to grow by about 4% per year. Government revenues are growing along with the economy, also by about 4%. Government spending, however, is only growing by 2%. This means that effectively, the size of government is shrinking relative to the size of our economy. And this is not new—the size of government spending as a share of the economy has fallen quite dramatically over the last decade. In 2000, government spending was roughly at 22% of our economy, last year it was down to 20% and with this new budget, it is projected to fall further over the next couple of years. This may sound like small changes, but with the BC economy at over \$200 billion per year, a two percentage point decrease (from 22% to 20%) amounts to more than \$4 billion dollars per year.

So does the government have no money because the recovery is slow, or is the crunch caused by government shrinking its size deliberately over the last decade? You tell me.

As it stands, the budget's stated priority is to balance the books in time for the next election. You've all heard that the budget is in deficit



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this year, but how many of you know that the budget shortfall for this year is greatly overstated? The government has deliberately low-balled revenue forecasts and is hiding behind a convenient accounting artifact. Roughly half of the \$2.5 billion projected deficit for 2011 is a product of accounting rules that require government to expense the full \$1.6 billion HST transition funding repayment in the current year. This is despite the fact that BC negotiated a deal with the federal government to pay it over five years with no interest. So we are paying the bill over five years, but the entire amount is added to this year's deficit estimate. The real

budget shortfall is only \$1.2 billion, half of which is fiscal padding in the form of a contingency fund allocation and a forecast allowance.

So we are paying the bill [HST] over five years, but the entire amount is added to this year's deficit estimate.

At \$1.2 billion, our deficit is less than 1% of the provincial economy (it's close to 0.6% to be precise).

The spin on this year's budget is so-called "prudence" but in reality

there is nothing prudent about failing to tackle the global climate crisis, reduce income inequality, adequately fund our schools, invest in community-based supports for seniors, or reduce BC's embarrassingly high poverty rate. For all the talk of preserving core public services, the budget offers only meagre increases to the ministries of health, education, and social assistance that don't keep pace with rising cost pressures and population growth. K-12 education funding, for example, needs to rise by at least 2% to keep up with inflation and maintain the current levels of

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2012–13 Executive Committee



L-R Back row: Members-at-large: David Komljenovic (Kamloops Thompson); Wendy Turner (Cranbrook); Paul Steer (Delta); Denise Moffatt (Surrey); Mike Ball (Nanaimo); Front row: Member-at-large Joanna Larson (Prince Rupert); First Vice-President Jim Iker (Burns Lake); President Susan Lambert (Burnaby); Second Vice-President Glen Hansman (Vancouver Elementary); Member-at-Large Chris Stewart (Vancouver Secondary). Missing from photo: Teri Mooring, member-at-large (Quesnel).

On the inside

The articles submitted each month for inclusion in *Teacher* are a good indication of what is uppermost in the minds of members. Clearly Bill 22, its impact and ramifications, along with an increased questioning of taxation, fiscal policy, and the ideology of the "free market" take top spots this month. In these pages you will read passionate statements from members on these topics, sometimes using humour and sarcasm to drive the point home.

We are reminded that this year marks the 25th anniversary of teachers in this province gaining full free collective bargaining rights, which are now, ironically, under dire threat.

Dominated as it was by a lengthy consideration of how the union can respond to the political onslaught of Bill 22, the BCTF AGM nevertheless had many moments of inspiration that are highlighted in our coverage.

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President's message



Susan Lambert

Rick Moore is an amazing dad, the kind of advocate every child needs. He, like we do, wanted his dyslexic son to access the individualized program he needed in the public system. But the district cancelled the program and he was eventually forced to enrol his son at the Kenneth Gordon private school.

Moore took the district and the ministry to court and won but lost on appeal. He is now fighting in the Supreme Court of Canada and we have intervenors status to support his claim. The case is instructive. Rick Moore is still struggling, not for his son who has long since graduated, but for all children to get the programs they need at their neighbourhood public school. Our government has fought him every inch of the way. They have fought this case because it would set up obligations of government to provide both universality and equity of access to programs that allow every child to learn. This government doesn't believe it can afford universality. So it has systematically and chronically underfunded the system, forced boards to cut programs and encouraged those who are able to purchase private alternatives. Child poverty is not a priority; nor is the growing gap

between the rich and the poor.

That's why our relationship with government is so problematic. Public school teachers in British Columbia are struggling hard to maintain the high quality of the system because of our belief in hope. We work so hard because we see a universal high quality public education system as the way we can insert in history, the power to make our world better, more equitable, more sustainable, and more just.

This government has done nothing to maintain the quality of the system or its universality. Chronic underfunding, open boundaries, the bring-your-own-device policy, and credits for purchased educational opportunities all benefit those with means, at the expense of those without. The Learning Improvement Fund (LIF) sets up an unconscionable competition that exacerbates the gap

between the rich and able and the poor and incapacitated. This is the reason we are in such conflict. Our objectives of a strong profession, class-size and composition criteria that enable us to teach to individual need, support services for those who need them and adequate resources, contradict this government's vision for public education. The situation challenges our courage, our intellect, and the ethical basis of our professional responsibilities.

To address this complex and difficult situation we are employing multiple strategies. Our legal strategies range from challenges to the "mediation" and other aspects of Bill 22, to our continuing effort to achieve justice on the Bills 27/28 case. We also need to mount a political action campaign with both short- and long-term objectives. Using our education platform—*Better Schools for BC*—we'll work

hard to encourage everyone in British Columbia to value and demand proper funding for public education.

We also have to employ a strategic action campaign. Action strategies are critical because they raise our voices and they build the credibility, authenticity, and integrity of our advocacy. Our walk must mirror our talk. We can't rely on legal strategies or political campaigns alone. Our actions have to be congruent with our beliefs. That's our ethical obligation as teachers.

I recently took my grandson to see *The Lorax*, and I was reminded of this great Dr. Seuss line: "...unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." We do care a lot and because we care we act on our beliefs.

Readers write

Support your union

Today, our government is creating uncertainty for our unions as they close down unionized corporations, cut pensions, disallow cost-of-living allowances, and reduce healthcare benefits. There were some very strong messages that I identified with at the Canadian Labour Congress School as our profession of educators are on strike. Strong solidarity in the education labour movement is paramount to maintain the rights that workers have fought for to date. We must realize that our labour movement has benefited our members positively over the years. Bargaining committee members working together in our unions, have acquired many benefits for our membership. In the past we achieved Employment Insurance, workplace safety, public healthcare, and defined benefit pension plans just to name a few benefits.

Specifically to the public education system, the government has increased class size and composition, attempted to eliminate local bargaining, threatened forced teacher transfers, threatened reduced pensions, and disregarded salary and benefit increases due to cost of living allowances. As we continue with our fight in the BCTF union and local unions, we maintain our solidarity as our public education needs are dismissed by our government.

As our unions go through these trying times, we must remember the following:

- everything was done in solidarity
- everything that was achieved was fought for
- everything that was achieved, we still need to fight for to keep it.

In conclusion, as the Canadian Labour Congress states, "what we wish for ourselves we need to desire for all." As members, we need to remain strong to our unions and get the message out there that unions are the foundation to creating healthy workplace environments.

Sandi McCulloch
Nanaimo

Olympic deficit

I am a retired teacher (2005), and have just read the *Teacher* Newsmagazine Vol. 24, No. 5. I appreciate the information in the article titled "What is a fair deal?" and am very proud of the stand being taken by the teachers across our province.

In regard to the government's position of net zero on wages and benefits, I wish there had been more accountability focused on the wanton promises of the Liberal government during the promotion of Vancouver hosting the Winter Olympics in 2010. What has happened to all of the financial benefits of directing over \$6 billion into construction, promotion, and logistics costs of hosting the Olympics? It would seem to me that only those directly involved with the construction and tourism industries would have realized financial benefits to date.

Long before winning the bid to host the 2010 Winter Olympics, the VANOC Committee would have been clearly aware of the need to "rob Peter to pay Paul" (in this case rob the education budget to pay the costs of hosting the Olympics).

As the article "Myths and Realities" written by Tara Ehrcke in our March newsmagazine points out, "there was no deficit when the

Liberals took power in 2001." Perhaps more needs to be made of the spending habits of this government the next time they cry, "Woe is me, there is no money to pay."

In appreciation of the BCTF leadership and hard work on behalf of the students and teachers of British Columbia.

Dennis R Norgard
Kelowna

Teacher appreciated

In the March issue of *Teacher*, I note that paring down the mailing list is planned. I recognize that if people don't bother to read it, it is a waste of money to mail it out (and to print those extra copies).

I retired from Burnaby in 2000. I am still interested in education and what is happening in the education scene in BC and beyond. Since retiring, I have appreciated being able to receive the *Teacher* and I do read it all.

Ken Novakowski's article on page 4, "The Langley Affair" was fascinating. Considering how different society was in those days, this was quite a story of courage and determination. Please keep me on your mailing list.

Margaret Shore
Burnaby

Correction

In the March issue of *Teacher*, the "Social Studies Teachers' Association" article should have been attributed to the BCSSTA newsletter editor, Amber Rainkie.

Greg Neumann
Vice-president, BCSSTA

Correction and addition

In my survey of the K-12 record of this province's governing party over the past decade ("Review of the BC Liberals 10 years in office reveals an appalling K-12 record") in the March issue of *Teacher*, permit me to make this correction: The number of schools closed should read 190 not 90. I also failed to mention the ongoing truncation of the school year forced on a number of boards by chronic underfunding from Victoria.

Noel Herron
Vancouver

In memoriam

Wes Janzen BCTF President 1960-61



A teacher activist and leader, a successful civic politician, and a beloved family man, Wes Janzen, passed away on February 19, 2012. He was 91. The words of James Cairnie, BCTF president, 1962-63, eloquently pay tribute to the person who was Wes Janzen:

"My fondest memories of Wes are those of the young, vibrant, charming man I first met in the early 1960s, a man full of ideas about education, politics and life, gifted with a fine sense of humour and superb debating style, who loved more than anything else (other than Laura, the wife he adored) to talk, to question, to argue, to laugh. For the most part he respected the opinions of others, but on educational issues he was at heart a militant activist, a defender and a promoter of the BCTF, an early and assertive champion of national and international teacher organizations, and, perhaps most of all, an aggressive advocate on behalf of children. He was an admirable representative of teachers in this province and served them as an officer of the Federation with all the skill and flair and mettle he could muster."

Wes Janzen was the president of the BCTF in 1960-61. In a 2005 interview, Wes was asked to recall any significant events during his presidency and he chose instead to talk about his role as "Salary Chairman" for the BCTF in 1957-58 during the presidency of Mollie Cottingham. Some 22 school

boards, primarily in the Okanagan, were resisting arbitration settlements with their teachers so the BCTF "pink-listed" the districts. This meant that no teachers would apply to work in these districts. And the BCTF successfully thwarted a move by the province to recruit teachers in Britain by working with the National Union of Teachers in the UK. So the boards, every one of them, eventually agreed to arbitrated settlements. He chuckled while recalling the overall success of that action. He also spoke fondly of the "mass resignation" strategy employed by teachers during this same time period. One needs to remember that bargaining rights for teachers had not yet been achieved. As Janzen explained, "All the teachers in the district would sign letters of resignation and hand them over to the BCTF to use as a bargaining lever to get boards to move at the table. We didn't have the right to strike but because of the teacher shortage at the time this was a powerful and creative tool."

Janzen's report to the 1961 AGM highlighted the Federation's resistance attempts by government to move to provincial bargaining for teachers. Janzen and his executive took the position that "collective bargaining should be between employers and employees and so long as individual school boards were the employers of teachers, they would have to accept the responsibility of dealing directly with their employees." Local bargaining prevailed.

Janzen was a Surrey teacher who later became a school principal and fostered one of the first "staff committees" in the province. He served as president of his local, and in 1965-66 he served as president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. At the international convention of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession meeting in Seoul, South Korea, Janzen was elected for a one-year term to the executive of the organization. He was granted Honorary Life Membership in the BCTF in 1969 and in 1977 he was awarded the BCTF's highest honour, the G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award.

Janzen was predeceased by Laura, his wife of 58 years, and continued to maintain a robust family life with his adult children and their families. He lived in New Westminster where he served as a school trustee in the 1970s and as an alderman from 1980 to 1989. He was involved in the United Church and was a proud and active member of the New Democratic Party. *Ken Novakowski, retired teacher, former BCTF executive director, and BCTF past president.*

Teacher

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BC from page 1

service; more if the province wants to address the unmet needs in the system. Instead, we're seeing what's essentially a frozen budget, a zero increase, which effectively amounts to funding cuts on the ground.

Practically speaking, it's not real fiscal constraints that stand in our way but a lack of political will. Our debt levels are very reasonable when considered as a share of our economy, and they are among the lowest in the country. We can afford to borrow a bit more at today's record low interest rates to make capital and social investments that will make us all better off in the long run.

Our BC government is by no means broke, and the net-zero mandate for public sector bargaining is a political choice, not a reflection of an economic imperative to cut costs.

Our Finance Minister Kevin Falcon claims we have no choice, but he's wrong. Our government has a choice.

Our BC government is by no means broke, and the net-zero mandate for public sector bargaining is a political choice, not a reflection of an economic imperative to cut costs.

The choice our government is making is to ask us to tighten our belts and keep our wages low for the benefit of economic growth during the recovery. Once growth returns, the government has often argued, the benefits would trickle down to everyone and wages will rise as the economy grows. Our premier made that point quite clearly in her radio appearance on the Bill Good show earlier in February.

But the focus on pursuing jobs and growth without regard to what type of jobs we're getting hasn't paid off for BC families.

The 2008 recession and the current slow recovery are taking place in the context of a 30-year-long stagnation in BC family incomes. We don't hear this often, but median earnings for full time, full-year workers in BC have actually fallen since the late 1970s, once inflation is taken into account. This means that over half of BC full-year full-time workers are earning less in real terms than their parents' generation. That's happened during a time when the provincial economy almost doubled in real terms, and real GDP per capita rose by 23%.

But it's clear that the benefits of prosperity have not trickled down to the bottom half of the population. This raises a moral question about fairness and social justice, one that the Occupy movement brought to the forefront of the public debate just last fall.

But it also has a direct impact on the economic well-being of our province and our country. High inequality can diminish economic growth if it means that we are not fully using the skills and capabilities of all its citizens or if it undermines social cohesion, leading to increased social tensions. We must find a way to share prosperity more fairly.

This all starts with a solid and well-funded public education system. Accessible, high quality education from the early years all the way to post-secondary is the only way to ensure economic mobility in a modern society. Providing access to high quality

education for all children is the greatest equalizer we have.

And this means treating the hard-working women and men who teach our children with the respect they deserve and compensating them fairly.

There is no question that governments everywhere in Canada are facing pressure to balance their budgets. So far, efforts to reduce the deficit have disproportionately focused on cutting public sector jobs, wages, and social programs. But we must remember that there are two sides to every budget—the spending side and the income or revenue side. The only proposals coming from the business sector are to cut government spending, but I think it's only fair and reasonable to look at the other side too and consider government income.

Over the past decade, the BC government has reshaped the provincial tax system. As a result, BC now boasts the lowest personal income taxes for individuals earning up to \$120,000 per year and one of the lowest corporate income tax rates in the country. The savings have been small for all but the highest-earning families and have largely gone unnoticed as user fees have risen, including MSP, which is going up next year for the fourth time since 2009. And a number of public services have been scaled back or suffered from declines in quality due to underfunding.

But these tax cuts have done considerable damage to our collective capacity to care for one another and protect the environment. If we were collecting taxes at the same share of the economy now as we were in 2000, we'd have \$2.5 billion more—every year.

The way the government got people to support tax cuts is by hiding the consequences. Low taxes sounded like a good idea to people. Good idea until such time that you

If we were collecting taxes at the same share of the economy now as we were in 2000, we'd have \$2.5 billion more—every year.

or somebody you love needs the services that the tax cuts have starved. Until you see how big your child's class is and how many kids with special needs are in it who don't receive the supports they need to learn well. Until you have to get rushed into the overcrowded emergency room and treated in the hallway. Until you find out how long the waiting list is for your aging mother to be assessed for supportive housing.

This highlights a need for a public debate on a key question: Do we really want BC to be a low tax society with low wages and frayed public services? Because this is where the government's current budget is leading us.

At a time when BC families are already stretched by record high debt levels and a weak labour market, the way out of this economic slump lies not in lowering the wages and benefits of teachers and other public sector workers, but in having stronger and more accessible public services, starting with education.

Iglika Ivanova is an economist and the public interest researcher, BC office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. The CCPA is an independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with issues of social, economic, and environmental justice. www.policyalternatives.ca

Reprinted with permission: Speech to the Surrey rally, February 27, 2012 and Policy Note blog, March 2.

Rallies: March 6 and 7



JOSH BERSON PHOTOS



Rallies were held on March 6 and 7, 2012, around the province to protest Bill 22. In Victoria, the BCTF led the BC Federation of Labour, CUPE, BCGEU, and several other unions in a large noisy march to the Legislature. Ten thousand teachers, parents, and union supporters jammed onto the legislature grounds in a tremendous demonstration of solidarity. Prince Rupert and Revelstoke teachers also took their message to the streets.

Looking back

70 years ago

Our Western civilization as it has unfolded during the last 2,500 years has maintained as one of its central ideals that of the man of broad understanding, of calm and steady vision and perspective. The man who, nourished by a "Liberal Education," has learned to understand and cherish all that is best in our tradition. However, during the last 40 years or so, particularly on the North American continent, this grand tradition has very nearly died. The reasons for this were many, but chief amongst them was that shallow and unlovely conviction which took possession of us all, that whatever was of no assistance in earning a living or in attaining success was, strictly speaking, useless and unworthy of the attention of grown man.

— April 1942, *The BC Teacher*

50 years ago

In improving education, the teacher is all important. Efforts better to serve the aims of education should be centered around the teacher. (1) Educate and train him more rigorously. Require full degree standing of him before permitting him to influence children. It is incredible to me that people who would throw up their hands in horror at the thought of

entrusting their car to a mechanic who is not fully trained will, with no qualms whatsoever, entrust their children to a youngster just out of high school with little or no training as a teacher. (2) Free him from clerical and other non-teaching trivia. (3) Free him from autocratic direction so that he may practise his profession in his own way. (4) Give him classes of manageable size. Give him time to prepare, to mark, to assess, to think, and to pursue his own further learning. The best educational aims in the world will never be realized unless they are fully appreciated by, accepted by, and implemented through, our teachers.

— April 1962, *The BC Teacher*

30 years ago

Although decision-making in the classroom can be a complex process, at its most simple level it revolves around the keeping, sharing, and giving of power. In this regard, most teachers could place themselves both philosophically and operationally on a continuum somewhere between democratic and authoritarian. Whether we choose to keep, share or give power, we all do so for good reasons. Yet, we must be constantly aware that our perceptions of our style are congruent with actual practice. We want always to be

certain that what we intend is actually what occurs, for it is not which style we chose, but how well we use it and how honest we are in communicating our decision-making style that may make the difference between a happy, productive classroom and the other kind.

— March/April 1982, *The BC Teacher*

10 years ago

Why me? Your layoff notice is a direct result of Christy Clark's opinion that larger class sizes are acceptable. It is also due to the Liberal government's belief that services for students are not as important as tax cuts for the wealthy and the corporations. Your school trustees have agreed with those opinions, and now they don't have enough money to exercise the flexibility they were asking for. The only choice they have is to lay off teachers. They should do it by seniority because that is the system least open to abuse. While your immediate agenda is going to be basic survival for you and your family, remember those who are responsible for your plight—school trustees and the provincial government.

— April 2002, *Teacher* newsmagazine

Compiled by Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

Teachers need the BCTF now more than ever

1987—25 years ago, was the year that BC teachers finally gained full collective bargaining rights.



BCTF ARCHIVE PHOTOS

By Ken Novakowski

Teachers are once again under attack by regressive legislation from the provincial government. So it's important for teachers today to know that attacks by government on teachers, their rights, and their organization have occurred at numerous times in our 95-year history. And each time that has happened, the BCTF has emerged to continue as a strong advocate for public education. And that is because teachers have remained united and strong, together in the BCTF.

"Now More Than Ever" was the slogan used by teachers to rally around the BCTF in 1987 when the teaching profession and their organization faced a serious attempt by government to divide them and to weaken their collective resolve.

"Now More Than Ever" was the slogan used by teachers to rally around the BCTF in 1987 when the teaching profession and their organization faced a serious attempt by government to divide them and to weaken their collective resolve. And all of this against the backdrop of teachers finally being granted full collective bargaining rights.

Yes, 1987—25 years ago, was the year that BC teachers finally gained full collective bargaining rights: the right to bargain all terms and conditions of employment, and the right to strike. And the grantor was a most unlikely politician, Social Credit Premier Bill Vander Zalm.

For someone who did not live through the experience of 1987, it is sometimes difficult to understand all that happened. Bills 19 and 20 were tabled by the Vander Zalm Social Credit government on April 1, 1987. Bill 19, for the first time, included teachers as employees with access to the rights of other unionized workers. At the same time, the same bill amended existing labour legislation to restrict the rights of all organized workers. And, taken together with Bill 20, there was much more to the legislative package and its impact on teachers and their organization than simply granting them full bargaining rights.

The legislation:

1. provided local teacher associations of the BCTF with an option to choose either the "union" model that would allow them to bargain all terms and conditions of employment with their school board with strike/lockout as the resolution mechanism, or the "association" model that provided for a limited scope of items to be bargained and the possibility of an arbitration process to resolve an impasse.
2. removed the statutory requirement that all teachers in the public school system be members of the BC Teachers' Federation.
3. removed principals and vice-principals from the teacher bargaining unit, with a clear management role defined for them.
4. created a College of Teachers charged with the certification of teachers and the assumption of a significant role in the professional aspects of teachers' lives.

The BCTF president in 1987 was Elsie McMurphy, a Saanich school librarian and the first woman to lead the BCTF in over two decades. She and her executive saw the legislative package as an attempt to split the loyalty of teachers, creating a union "BCTF" and a professional organization "College of Teachers." The BCTF since its inception always had been the single provincial organization that represented all of the

economic, social, and professional interests of all of the public school teachers in BC. Having not been consulted prior to the tabling of the legislation, the BCTF now launched a major initiative to influence the government to introduce amendments to the legislation as it worked its way through the House. While achieving some minor improvements in Bill 20 and the scope of the College of Teachers, the legislation essentially remained intact.

...the most important aspect of local bargaining was the experience of member involvement in the decisions of the local that were an integral part of the achievement of successful local agreements.

After a successful membership vote, teachers held a day of protest on April 28, 1987, and used the opportunity to explain to parents and the public the concerns of teachers with the legislation. Rallies were held across the province, and in Vancouver, thousands of teachers and labour supporters jammed into the Agrodome to hear Elsie McMurphy take on the Vander Zalm government for its attack on teachers. A month later, teachers joined the BC Federation of Labour in a one-day general strike on June 1, 1987. Then the BCTF got organized.

1. On the issue of locals choosing the union or association model, the Federation promoted the full bargaining rights union model and all 76 locals of the BCTF voted to opt for it.

2. Locals, supported by the resources and staff of the BCTF, conducted a province-wide voluntary sign-up of teachers into their local and into the BCTF. The result was a resounding (unheard of in the labour movement) 98% sign-up.

3. In the first College of Teachers election, all 15 elected positions were filled by BCTF-endorsed candidates. Their election would help to mitigate the attempts by government to create an alternative teacher organization.

The challenge now for teachers, for locals, and for the BCTF was to successfully negotiate collective agreements in all districts of the province. Elsie McMurphy well remembers the additional challenges the new legislation presented, "Despite years of collective begging, teachers did not have experience in real collective bargaining. So, the BCTF embarked upon an intense and costly training program with the help of knowledgeable and experienced resource people from the labour movement to prepare teams at the local level to organize members and develop bargaining skills."

What emerged in 1988 as we went to the table for the first time with our employers as equals was a system of co-ordinated local bargaining. And yes, we did well in the first and second rounds of local bargaining as we attempted to put into contract language many processes and procedures that had previously existed in government statute or board policy. But we all knew that whatever organizational edge we might have had early in the local bargaining experience would ebb, and might even work in favour of the employer at some future round. But the most important aspect of local bargaining was the experience of member involvement in the decisions of the local that were an integral part of the achievement of successful local agreements. That and the continuing and direct relationship with our employer, the local school board, were fundamental aspects of local bargaining.

McMurphy, who went on to become the executive director of the BCTF when she finished her term as president in 1989, later served as a school trustee in the Saanich School District for three terms. She recounts the 1987 experience: "For me, it was a great privilege to be working in public education on behalf of the teaching profession, and my memories of the struggle and marvelous commitment of teachers remain vividly with me to this day."

The lesson of teacher unity cannot be overlearned. It is critical to advancing the cause of public education and of strengthening the role of the teaching profession.

Ken Novakowski, retired teacher, former BCTF executive director, BCTF past president, currently on the board of the Labour Heritage Centre.

Privatization of what should be public

By Harvey Bradford

As a substitute teacher in the United Kingdom I am still woken up before seven o'clock with a phone call telling me where I need to rush off to for work, just like those cold winter mornings in the East Kootenays. The only difference I really noticed in the beginning was that it wasn't someone from the local school district office calling me in the morning; instead I am called by one of the private teaching agencies I signed up with. The other difference is that I cram onto the London underground train with half the city every morning to get to work, rather than driving my pickup truck like I did in Canada. After finishing my university education, I spent a year substitute teaching in SD 5 before deciding I would like to experience a different part of the world. I applied for a youth mobility work visa and moved to London, UK, to try my luck in the British system. To begin with the job didn't seem much different than back home, but after more time passed I began to look a little deeper, noticing a few differences other than accents, transport, and the curt business-like "hello" my agent wakes me up with in the morning.

One of the first things a foreign teacher working in the UK notices is the abundance

of academies. What I expected when I was called into my first day of substitute teaching at an academy were students with names like William Edward Cavendish the Third, top notch college prep education, and school names like Bushwood or Sandhurst. I pictured myself striding across picturesque manicured grounds, nodding to crisp uniform-clad students, and striding through large oak doors of impressive stone educational establishments. However, I was given a rude awakening to academies shortly after I started working at them. They all seemed to have very high chain-link fences, with solid, imposing gates that lock magnetically from the main office. Visitors have to state their business through the intercom, and then wait until someone decides if your story checks out before allowing you to enter. After spending enough hours inside these academies I began to wonder if the heightened level of security and sealed-off perimeters were a precaution to keep the dangers of the outside world safely locked out, or the students safely removed from the outside world. Now I admit I haven't worked at all of them, but I have worked at enough to become accustomed to fist fights in libraries, football fields, and cafeterias.

Although some of these schools resemble low-security prisons more than any public

school I have ever seen, academies are just public schools that have sought out private funding, mostly because they were struggling to meet academic standards. Tony Blair established the option for schools to become academies in 2000, as an initiative to drive up standards by replacing failing schools in struggling areas. I have worked in some of the districts these schools are located in, and most of them are inner-city or very low-income areas. To become an academy, these struggling public schools have to find a private sponsor to fund the two million pounds that are required to gain academy status. The government has been encouraging schools to convert, and the numbers have been rising since this practice was implemented over 10 years ago.

By 2010, there were already 203 academies established in the UK, and by 2011 there were 629. In the span of only one year, over 400 schools accepted private funding by converting into academies. Considering the United Kingdom's staggering economy lately, it is easy to see how the government would be pushing for private assistance for funding schools more than ever. But the question is how can an individual or a company offer school improvement services without expecting anything in return? There have recently been controversial and heavily publicized allegations made against Sir Peter Varetty, who privately funded an academy in Middlesbrough, UK. Accusations were made

that he was advocating creationism in science classes of the academy he funded. For reasons like this many unions in the UK want to see academies returned to the control of local authorities.

With tough economic times it is easy to see why a government would go down the road of allowing private money to enter the education system like they have in the UK. It may free up some of the budget for other fundamental services like healthcare or infrastructure. But at what cost? The gains that would be made in the short-term will surely be regretted in the long run. Right now there are organizations in the UK, like the Anti-Academies Alliance, fighting to return school authority to local districts. In BC it is a well-known issue that school funding is continually being stretched, staff is being downsized, and classroom sizes are increasing. This is a trend that has been happening continually for many years in the education system. These developments are really no surprise; education costs are always increasing at the same time as more of the provincial budget is needed in other areas. The idea of privatization of public schools has probably crossed the minds of our politicians as well, especially after having seen how private healthcare has developed in Canada. We have not gone this far yet with public education ourselves, but that's not to say it is not a possibility.

Harvey Bradford, substitute teacher, London, UK

Bill 22

Constitutional and International law at risk under Bill 22

By Joel Bakan

The BC Liberal government is poised, once again, to violate the legal rights of workers, this time with Bill 22, which, if it becomes law, will prohibit teachers from striking and limit their collective bargaining rights.

In 2007, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the government had violated the Canadian Charter by imposing legislative restrictions on the rights of health workers to bargain collectively. In April 2011, the British Columbia Supreme Court followed that decision to rule that legislation concerning teachers was unconstitutional, and thereby invalid, because it prohibited bargaining on class size, class composition, and the ratios of teachers to students.

It is those very same restrictions that the government now seeks to reinstate with Bill 22, a disturbing disregard for such a recent judicial declaration that they are constitutionally invalid.

As a fundamental democratic principle, the rule of law is seriously jeopardized when governments play fast and loose with constitutional and international laws, as this government is now doing with Bill 22.

Bill 22 also flies in the face of Canada's international treaty obligations. On no fewer than 10 occasions—half of which concerned teachers—the Freedom of Association Committee of the United Nations International Labour Organization has found the BC Liberal government to be in breach of labour treaties. In a recent report, concerning legislation similar to Bill 22, the committee noted as particularly problematic the tendency of this government to legislatively prohibit strikes, impose rates and working conditions, circumscribe the scope of collective bargaining, and restructure the bargaining process.

The proposed Bill 22 does all of those things and more. As such, it almost certainly violates international law as well as constitutional law.

Governments are obliged to govern according to law. That is what distinguishes democracies from tyrannies. As a fundamental democratic principle, the rule of law is seriously jeopardized when governments play fast and loose with constitutional and international laws, as this government is now doing with Bill 22.

If Bill 22 becomes law, the government will demand that teachers respect its provisions (including those making strikes illegal). It will condemn those who defy the act as law-breakers and punish them with severe fines (\$475 per day for a teacher; \$2,500 per day for a union officer; \$1.3 million per day for the BCTF).

In short, the government will demand that the rule of its law be respected, while, at the same time, its actions dangerously encroach upon the rule of law.

Joel Bakan teaches in the Faculty of Law, University of British Columbia.

Reprinted with permission, Joel Bakan, *Vancouver Sun*, March 6, 2012

What the ministry isn't saying about wage settlements in the public sector

Have you noticed that BC Ministry of Education statements imply that the "net-zero" mandate imposed by the provincial government applies to all public sector employees? George Abbott recently stated in *The Vancouver Sun* (March 20, 2012), in reference to BCTF wage proposals:

Virtually every other public-sector union negotiated net-zero agreements that respected the government's challenging financial circumstances.

Why say all public-sector unions when the legislation applies only to provincial public-sector employees? The ministry remains silent on wage settlements for municipal and federal employees in BC. Municipal and federal public-sector unions continue to negotiate wage increases on behalf of BC workers, as do private-sector unions.

Recent reports shows wage settlements in provincial public sector fall behind

The most recent BC Bargaining Database—Settlement Summaries (November 2011 and January 2012) show a settlement of 3% for each of two years negotiated for federal employees between NAV Canada and the Canadian Auto Workers. CUPE locals, representing 11 different municipal employee groups on Vancouver Island, achieved wage settlements of 2% per year for each of three years. The Victoria City Police Union settled for 8.45% over three years.

Some private-sector wage settlements are well above the municipal and federal public sector. United Steelworkers (local 7619) settled with Teck Resources Limited for 4% for each year of a five-year agreement plus a \$10,000 signing bonus. Brinks Canada and the Canadian Auto Workers (local 114) settled for 11.5% over three years (4.5%/3.5%/3.5%).

Teachers are in line with the rest of Canada in asking for a cost-of-living increase

BC teachers are asking for a cost-of-living salary increase for year one of their contract. Ministry communications present teacher salary demands as completely unreasonable. Yet the most recent *Canada Labour Workplace Bulletin* shows other unionized employees in the public and private sector in Canada are negotiating wage increases, many which are at or above the rate of inflation.

Major collective bargaining settlements reached in January 2012 provided wage adjustments averaging 2.5% annually over the contract term with an average duration of 52.2 months.

Wage increases are expected to be even higher in 2012 for non-unionized employees. The results of a Conference Board of Canada compensation survey of Canadian employers, conducted in December 2011, project a 3% salary increase, on average, for non-unionized employees, up significantly from increases in 2009 (2.4%) and 2010 (2.7%).

BC teachers and other provincial public-sector employees left out in the cold

The "net-zero" mandate imposed by the provincial government is effectively a wage freeze that constitutes a form of wage discrimination. This article provides evidence to show that, on average, employees in the private sector and the public sector, unionized or non-unionized, will receive salary increases to help maintain their current standard of living. It is only BC provincial public-sector employees who are left out in the cold.

For further information

- BC Bargaining Database—Settlement Summaries (Nov. 2011 to Jan. 2012) Vol. 5, No. 1 – Jan. 2012: <http://tinyurl.com/cpc2bln>
- HRSD Canada. (2012). "Canadian labour profile, January 2012," *Workplace Bulletin*, Labour Program, March 15, 2012, page 1: <http://tinyurl.com/bt5dq4z>
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– BCTF Research Department

Struggle of all working people

By Vagner Castilho

The struggle of BC teachers is the struggle of all working people around the world. There is no shortage of documentation on the assault workers and unions have faced since their inception, but what is disturbing is how often other working people turn against one another and vote in governments that consistently erode the hard-won rights of working class people. In Europe, a history of social struggle brings millions to the streets to resist the austerity measures of governments, but here in Canada and BC, it continues to be a source of great agitation for organizers as to why people remain passive and divided. To those who clearly see the direction Canadian society is moving, it is of grave concern. Where do we begin to unfold this mystery?

"Individuals must obtain for themselves the information needed for the intelligent discharge of their political responsibilities...the press performs a crucial function in affecting the societal purpose of the first amendment." – US Supreme Court Justice

We are told a healthy democracy must have a healthy media with a diversity of views expressed. However, it seems our "free" media has been struggling to find another side to the "tax cuts are good for the economy" point of view. A simple game of connect the dots brings us to another point of view, sorely missing from our corporate media. Massive corporate tax cuts over recent decades have brought unprecedented economic times for some. Who has this boom benefited, if not Canadians? A simple search shows us Canada's top 100 CEOs make the average Canadian salary of \$45,000 in three hours of work. Under successive Liberal and now Conservative governments, the corporate income tax rate has dropped from 28% in 2000 to the current rate of 15% and, "According to Statistics Canada, total corporate reserves of private, non-financial corporations grew from \$157 billion in the second quarter of 2001, to \$477 billion in the second quarter of 2011." Wasn't the inevitable outcome of corporate tax cuts reinvestment and job creation, all leading to further economic growth benefiting us all?

At the same time, we see within our society, growing inequality. According to Statistics Canada, there has been significant

growth in income inequality in both BC and Canada over the last 15 years. We also see increased homelessness (a new report states that more people are checking into Vancouver homeless shelters; and the 397 homeless youth is an increase of 34% since 2005. Volunteers also counted 56 families with children, living on the streets). Another blight on our booming economy are BC's child-poverty rates, which continue to be the worst in the country, with over 100,000 children living below the poverty line. Along with this, we see cuts to programs that matter to Canadians such as healthcare, the environment, and education. Here is a snippet of some of the results in BC and Canada during a time of unprecedented wealth accumulation:

- \$20 million and 200 jobs cut from the Canada Food Inspection Agency.
- talk of raising old-age pension age to 67.
- increase of MSP fees in BC.
- 60 scientists fired from Environment Canada, at a time when climate change and environmental issues are a threat to the survival of the planet.

Many of these stories we do indeed find in our corporate media, but all in isolation, none connected to the other. We hear two stories over and over coming from our politicians and echoed by our media—these are tough times, we must all tighten our belts—(especially those greedy union folks) and "tax cuts will keep the economy afloat." Shocking to believe a press owned by billionaire corporations could miss this story! This somehow passes as "balanced" media reporting.

The biggest story of all, and one organizers and activists seem handcuffed by, is that the control of information in our world and in Canada is in the hands of a very few large multinational corporations. One can only imagine the harsh criticism a major newspaper owned by unions would receive, but for some reason very few seem to think media owned by a bunch of billionaires

We hear two stories over and over coming from our politicians and echoed by our media—these are tough times, we must all tighten our belts—(especially those greedy union folks) and "tax cuts will keep the economy afloat."

deserves to be exposed for what it is, a pro-capitalist/ elite/establishment platform. The majority of Canadians have a vague sense of uneasiness about the direction society is moving and the impacts we are having on the planet, but until we tackle the problem of access to information things are only going to deteriorate further. This is not an easy task, but we must find a way to get our message out and unite people instead of allowing our corporate media to divide them.

Vagner Castilho, Vancouver secondary school teacher

References available with online version.

Bargaining slideshow presentation to the 2012 AGM

How we got here

12 months of bargaining
7 months of phase one job action
Countless local bargaining sessions
78 provincial bargaining sessions
Significant reduction in demands tabled
BCPSEA's position unchanged

net zero and concessions

ZERO + ZERO

Class size/composition and bargaining rights

13 fruitless meetings with government regarding resolution to Bill 27/28 court decision

We tried!

Phase 1
Full withdrawal of services
Call for independent mediation/arbitration
Application for appointment of an LRB mediator

Dear Christy

I feel that I can call you Christy, because of the folksy, down-home appeal you exude on TV and radio. You're like our very own Sarah Palin, dropping your g's and just being one of the great unwashed; just goin' out there and gettin' it done! Of course I've also heard you talk like a real adult, mostly when you're annoyed or talking with your fellow politicians, or both.

Whichever version of the premier you are, I just want to thank you so much, because as a teacher, I'm delighted every time I see one of your BC Education Plan commercials on TV; and no, as I taxpayer, I don't mind paying for them in the least. I get particularly excited about the ones that assure me that professional development days will now really be for professional development. Halleluiah say I! Finally. My colleagues and I have been wasting so much time in this regard. Recently we have been using ProDs to support our main school goal, which is writing. We helped one teacher develop a writing continuum, which ensured that we were all on the same page as a staff, and it also helped us bring parents on board with the writing process. We used ProDs to attend workshops with experts in this and many other fields, and we brought in presenters ourselves, to help us in areas such as adapting technology for learning disabled students. We also used the days to collaborate and share our own expertise with each other. Lately a lot of this collaboration has been about ways to incorporate the new smart boards and scanners you bought us into our 21st century teaching. Oh wait, you didn't buy those for the school, the parents did! My bad.

So unfulfilled am I with this huge void in my professional development, I frequently enrol in courses during the summer and after school. They include computer technology

and French, and I pay for them myself, or use the vouchers I earn for mentoring student teachers. Some of us at school even gather together in pedagogical book clubs, and we meet to share ideas at lunch or after 3:01 p.m. I'm in two clubs right now. I just feel so dirty.

You can see why I'm so delighted to have you take over our ProD. I know this is an especially hot-button topic for you, after all the notoriety that one secondary school garnered last year with their team-building day, and all that wasteful foosball playing. I have to admit that our school engaged in a similar team-building morning several years ago, but it was just in the neighbourhood park and there was no foosball. We also didn't find it that useful, and probably wouldn't do it again. But obviously you can't take that chance. If there's one thing government hates, it's waste! (Quick question: how much is the HST payback to your buddy Stephen Harper going to cost taxpayers?)

So rein us in like naughty children Christy, and bring on your professional development! You and your government have such a wealth of knowledge to draw from and impart to us. Here is just a sample of the subjects you could provide:

1. *Ethics.* I know that my own MLA, Kash Heed, has had a lot of time on his hands since he had to step down as solicitor general for election "irregularities." He could teach us about the history of robo-calling! If not, I also know that Harry Bloy is very recently available, and could help us find that delicate distinction between "not illegal, but wrong."

2. *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.* You could come yourself, Christy, and explain how it doesn't apply to teachers, and how we are not entitled to a truly independent mediated process with our contract "negotiations."

3. *The Free Enterprise System.* I know this one is really dear to you Christy, as you try and consolidate the far-right vote in this province (just remind them that the only thing liberal about you is your party name), and I personally don't mind being used as your whipping boy to get you re-elected. After all, that's your number one job. You could help me find ways to explain to my students that this just isn't a good economic time for them to be expecting more financial investment in public schools. This is a tough one, because back in 2002, during a financial boom in the province, you still found it necessary to impose Bills 27/28, which effectively raised the number of students in classrooms and lowered the amount of support for ESL students and students with special needs. Help me find ways to tell them that there is never a good time to properly invest in public education. Maybe we could tell them that if their parents really cared about them, they would enrol them in a private school, like you did. The bonus there is that they'll score better in the all-important FSA tests, because there will be no pesky ESL students and students with special needs to pull their scores down. (I asked my principal last year if we could limit access at our school to only the "best and the brightest," to get our scores up, but she said no, we had to take everyone. So unfair.) But I digress. Basically I need you to come to my school and remind me that there needs to be lots of money available to promote corporate investment in BC, and that public education needs to stop getting in the way of this. I saw you on the news a few months ago saying that our classrooms were stuck in the 1950s, which surprised me a bit. Now I see that you are way ahead of that, firmly entrenched in the Reagan-era trickle-down economics of the 1980s. Remind me again how that worked out.

4. *Spin.* This could be really beneficial, because you and George Abbott could come in and conduct a real spin class for teachers, you know, with the stationary bikes, to promote health (think of the photo-op Christy), at the same time you explain to us how to decipher the political spin you're using to promote the benefits of Bill 22.

My personal favourite is the \$165 million investment you're currently touting. It sounds so awesome, and as long as you don't talk about how many years that's spread over, or how little money it really means for individual districts, schools, classrooms, or students, you score major points. Better still if you never let it be known how many hundreds of millions you've already saved off the backs of BC students by decreasing support since 2002. Keep on spinnin' Christy!

Now that I don't have to bother thinking about my own professional development, I will certainly be able to have more students in my class! I understand that George himself has said that it's just as easy to have 60 students in the class. And with your generous offer to give me bonus pay for every extra child over 30, I could pay off my mortgage a lot faster. Even though my spoilsport union says that it's unethical to make a financial gain for offering an inferior learning environment. Hopefully they'll change their minds after they attend your Ethics ProD!

Do you know what would really help me to teach a huge class, Christy? Someone like your new media handler, Sara MacIntyre, another gift from your buddy Harper, along with the HST (have I mentioned the HST already?). She could stand by my desk and screen students, to keep them from asking me annoying questions; maybe she could reserve access for only the best and the brightest? The only problem is, who would I bill for her services? Who are you billing Christy?

There's so much I can learn from you Christy. I can't wait to get back to my classroom on Monday, to start that cooling-off period that Bill 22 so thoughtfully supplies to us naughty teachers, along with our fake-mediated process. Not that I need to cool off. We've got a ProD coming up soon, and our school needs to set goals for next year. I can't wait to find out what you've got in store for us Christy! You and me are just gonna' git 'er done!

Yours truly

Rand

Rand Webber
Vancouver teacher

Bill 22 violates the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

By Susan Ruzic

BC Peace and Global Educators (PAGE) Provincial Specialist Association (PSA) is lamenting the fact that the minister of education will once again be violating children's basic rights with the legislation of Bill 22. PAGE PSA advocates for peace and global education including human rights education for all. *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* is a human rights treaty setting out the civil, economic, political, cultural, health, and social rights of children. It has declared 54 Rights of the Child that have been ratified by 194 nations, including Canada. It is therefore bound by international law. Out of 54 rights, Bill 22 violates 7 (3, 4, 23, 26, 27, 28, and 29). This is not the first time that the current government has violated children's rights in this province. This occurred with legislation allowing children as young as 12 years old to hold a job. I believe that it is time to hold this government accountable to our children. Let me give you a more detailed explanation of how these seven rights are being violated with this new legislation.

Number 3

All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

Bill 22 takes class-size and composition language out of the collective agreement,

which is definitely not in the best interest of children. There has been a lot said about how this affects children with special needs but what about those with average ability in a classroom that is filled with 10 to 18 children with special needs? How will this affect all of our children's ability to learn in an environment that supports their learning?

Number 4

The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family to protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.

What is our government doing to protect our children? When there are no class-size and composition limits, how can our children learn in overcrowded classrooms? Without proper funding for classroom materials and textbooks, how can children learn properly? When elementary libraries are open one day a week, where do students go?

Number 23

You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability.

With many special education specialist positions gone from the current school system because of previous legislation, special education teachers today are struggling with huge caseloads. Teachers have more children with special needs in their classrooms and cannot attend to all children in a safe and timely manner.

Number 26

You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need.

For the past 10 years, child poverty in this province has sky-rocketed. Although BC is considered a wealthy province, every year child poverty has increased to the point of being the one province with the most child poverty. Homelessness has increased, welfare rates remain low and the supply of social housing has dwindled.

Number 27

You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live, and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

With 176 neighbourhood schools closed across this province, what can parents do if they do not have a vehicle to take their children to a school of their choice? As bus fare eats into their budgets, how can they make sure their students are not disadvantaged in comparison to those students' families who can afford better neighbourhoods, clothing, and healthy food?

Number 28

You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.

With tuition for post-secondary education at unaffordable levels, how can students

afford to go to school? How can they survive after graduation with huge student loans and \$10-an-hour jobs in an overheated housing market?

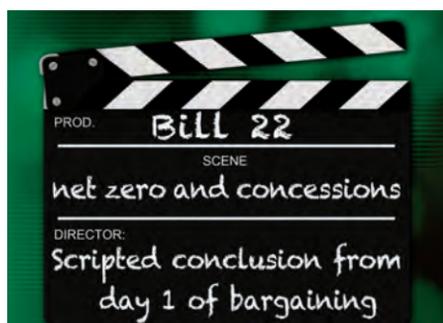
Number 29

Your education should help you use/develop your talents and abilities and help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

How can we live peacefully and protect our environment when the government believes in logging old-growth forests and putting animals and humans at risk without respecting First Nations' rights to govern their own lands. How can we live respectfully when bullying and disrespect toward teachers is shown by legislating a contract rather than negotiating fairly.

It took 10 long years for the Supreme Court of Canada to deem the government's stripping of class size and composition as a violation of basic human rights. Our children can't wait another 10 years to get the education they deserve and that is enshrined as their basic right. We need to stand up to bullying legislation that violates international law.

Susan Ruzic, Peace and Global Education PSA president



Dear CHEKpoint

By Greg Murray

I just viewed your intermittent newscast of Susan Lambert's press conference, after the BCTF Annual General Meeting, and I feel compelled to send an e-mail.

With 35 years of teaching experience, having been an administrator and receiving the Prime Minister's Award for teaching, I am considered as one of the best teachers in Canada (so I am told).

With this experience comes a certain skill in recognizing learning needs in students. Having an honours degree in psychology has also been a tremendous benefit when dealing with the huge emotional demands being made by the students I teach.

Every day I face a group of kids who are hungry (our school feeds 120 kids and parents every morning with our breakfast program), inappropriately dressed for the weather (no coats or water resistant shoes), lack of sleep (I have had kids go to the medical room and sleep because they were falling asleep in class), and who come with no supplies and homework incomplete because there is little support at home. There are also four (identified) children in my class with severe behaviour problems and several I am trying to get identified.

The teachers are trying their hardest to make it work but the government is now pointing the finger at the teachers as being responsible for the "learning deficits" and the lack of "technological expertise."

This year, we have a part-time counsellor at our school who has been fully booked since day one in September and has a demanding need to service more kids but does not have the time. We are trying to get an additional counsellor. Good luck with that.

Our local medical group VIHA (Vancouver Island Health Authority) states that "one in three" kids on the North Island have been molested by the time they get to Grade 5. Our local liquor store has the highest per capita liquor sales in the province of British Columbia.

I no longer send homework home but deal with it at the school, at recess and lunch times, because the kids want to complete the work but can't because difficulties exist between the school and home.

At the present time, I have one special education worker who is assigned to my room, but not to one of the kids with special needs. You see, in our educational system, the kids with special needs generate some special needs funding but that funding does not necessarily go to the student who generated the funds. It can be arbitrarily designated to any student who the "managers" feel needs the help. I have had to deal with students with severe behaviour problems throughout my career as a teacher, who have been designated but have had no assistance in the classroom.

As school begins each year, I have to line up with the other teachers and fight to get some assistance for the needs in my classroom. Sometimes I am successful, other times I have to deal with it on my own. Fortunately, as my experience grows and my psychology background provides additional skills, I have been able to deal with many of these kids to some degree of success.

The problem here is that new teachers, fresh from university, do not possess the skills that are necessary to survive in the classroom today. Many of them do not survive. They quit within the first five years and seek alternate employment.

Each year that I teach, I become more tired of having to fight for the kids that I teach. I am tired of asking for funding. I am tired of asking for supplies. I am tired of providing my own funds (over \$1,000 last year alone) to support the needs of my classroom and give the kids a positive and meaningful learning experience.

Even faced with these problems, I love my job. How many people in our world really enjoy going to work each day? When I face those kids every morning, they know that I am there for them. I see many of them more than their parents do.

During our recent job action, I have seen more parents than I would normally see at the school. Lack of report cards has meant that the parents need to contact the teacher and find out how their kids are doing. I have the marks ready and have shared them with all who wanted to know. Our job action means no formal report cards. It never meant that we would not share results with the parents who wanted to know how their kids were doing.

I have lost all confidence in our government "leaders." I put "leaders" in parentheses because they are not leading. There is no honour in what they are doing. A contract is a document that is agreed upon by the parties concerned, is signed, and forms a framework from which to work. The present government has, literally, ripped portions of our contract out and has stated that it is now "the law" and that we must follow it.

Never before has this profession faced such a diabolical plan. Never before has this profession been put, with its back against a wall, and had to face such an adversary. The government does NOT have the kids at its heart.

The BCTF fought this, in Supreme Court, and won the argument. The government was given a timeline to replace it but has thumbed its nose at the courts and inserted the same clause into Bill 22. This infuriates teachers, who are law-abiding citizens, but cannot abide a heavy-handed government who then says "it is a fair and equitable bill." Does the general public not see what is happening here?

The huge cuts to education over the last 10 years have resulted in a system that is just holding together. The teachers are trying their hardest to make it work but the government is now pointing the finger at the teachers as being responsible for the "learning deficits" and the lack of "technological expertise."

The government has an agenda that is aimed at privatizing the public schools. Wait. Before you negate this idea just listen. It has happened in the States. Look at the five Eastern States (starting with Florida) where the same votes and legislation were enacted. Charter schools (private schools run by a corporation) have actually "cohabitated" with public schools in the same building. The problem with charter schools is that they can ask problem kids to leave. The kids who leave go back to the public school system. Charter schools then look pretty good. I fully believe that this is the government's plan. This is not far-fetched. It is happening in Wisconsin, New York, and other areas. Please check it out.

After 35 years, I can retire tomorrow. I am waiting, however, until this fight is over. I am waiting until my profession can, once again, hold its head high. Never before has this profession faced such a diabolical plan. Never before has this profession been put, with its back against a wall, and had to face such an adversary. The government does NOT have the kids at its heart. The government is business-based and has only the money at heart. (I wish I had shares in the smart board company.) The slick ads that they are now airing (I wonder where that money came from?) talk about an education plan. It puts a spin on those greedy teachers who want more money. It is just spin.

If this government had offered the teachers a zero increase and no contract stripping for a period of several years, the teachers would have, probably, gone for it. The offer was never made. The offer was never entertained. The offer was never real. This is not their plan.

This government is dishonourable and deceitful. Why should we negotiate with a government that cannot be trusted?

Greg Murray, Eagle View Elementary School, Port Hardy

Open letter to parents, administrators, and school trustees

By Bo Curtis

You got everything you wanted. You win. With a stroke of legislation, teachers in this province are no longer permitted to discuss class size or composition in any future contract negotiations. Class sizes in Grades 4-12 will be increased to average 30 per class, district-wide. Children with special needs will be offered no special help, nor will their teachers. Counsellors, librarians, and learning assistance teachers will work only if "flexibility" allows.

For over a decade, teachers have given a higher priority to working and learning conditions than to salary increases, and as a result we have not kept up with inflation. It was a reasonable trade-off, and teachers have been proud of negotiating a collective agreement that protected the needs of students.

With the support your associations have given the BC Public School Employers' Association, that collective agreement no longer applies. There will be fewer of us, working under more difficult conditions, and for a lower salary in real dollars. When schools deteriorate, I only ask that you remember who "won."

Parents

When you complain that your child is not receiving the individual attention that she or he deserves, please remember that you have advocated for larger classes through the support the provincial Parent Advisory Council has given BCPSEA.

Administrators

When you assign untenable classrooms, loaded with children with special needs and no support staff, please don't claim you had no choice; you have chosen this "flexibility" through the support the BC Principals' and Vice Principals' Association has given BCPSEA.

School trustees

When you send the layoff notices to teachers who have given years of their lives to your district, please don't blame it on funding formulas and staffing ratios; you have chosen such restrictions through the support the BC School Trustees Association has given BCPSEA.

You have advocated for larger classes, no support, and lower salaries. You have won.

I ask you to remember because I fear you will forget. I fear that teachers, bludgeoned by an imposed "contract" and spat on by an angry public, will become weary of trying to rise above the public perception of a self-serving, underworked and overpaid profession, and will instead sink to meet that expectation. Then, once again, the teachers will be blamed. Please remember that the teachers were advocating for reasonable class sizes, support for students' needs, and a salary that reflects the level of professionalism that you expect.

You have advocated for larger classes, no support, and lower salaries. You have won.

Bo Curtis, proud to be a teacher, Gulf Islands Secondary School.



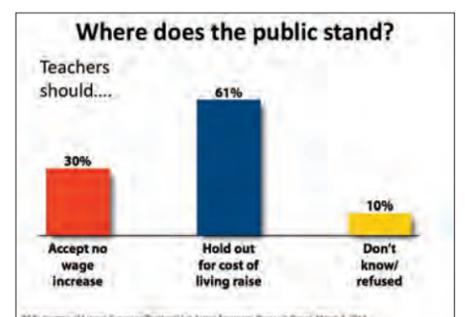
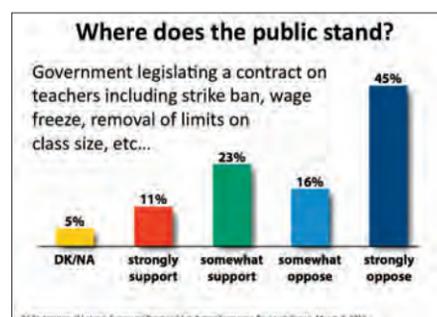
Concessions:

- Suitability replaces seniority and qualifications
- Performance review replaces due process in evaluation and termination
- Principal directs professional development

Where do the principals stand?

"The widening scope of teacher collective agreements inhibits our ability to work with our teachers to best meet the needs of our students"

BCPVPA president's report 2001



Misleading advertising blitz used to bolster Bill 22

By Noel Herron

Like most special education and special needs teachers I'm deeply troubled by the Ministry of Education's recent claim, in its blanket advertising blitz on Bill 22, that it is focusing exclusively "on what matters most in education—BC's students" with its accompanying and parallel statement of "fact" that it has hired 2,100 additional teaching assistants since 2001.

As a 30-year school principal, working with many special education teachers and teaching assistants, and having served on both board and ministry advisory committees in two provinces, I have witnessed the positive evolution of collaborative teaming of special education teachers and regular classroom teachers with teaching assistants over four decades.

...while equating these two positions as stand alone and equal components is intentionally mischievous and misleading on the part of Victoria.

Students with varying and challenging degrees of learning difficulties benefited greatly from this type of close collaboration. Students with special needs, using the broadest and most inclusive definition of the term, with added support and resources (helped by the four categories listed below and excluded from the current controversy by Victoria), flourished in in-class, one-to-one, and small-group settings and, on occasion, in out-of-class instructional settings. Flexibility and varied approaches greatly benefited students with diverse and varied learning styles.

The successful integration of many special education students into regular classrooms was achieved over the years through skilled transitional support of teaching assistants working collaboratively with both special education and regular classroom teachers. Experienced teaching assistants were and are greatly valued in our public school system.

To juxtapose the loss of 735 skilled special needs teachers with a side-by-side claim that "2,100 new teaching assistants have been hired since 2001," while equating these two positions as stand alone and equal components, is intentionally mischievous and misleading on the part of Victoria. Both are essential and complementary parts of our special education infrastructure and this makes the ministry's dichotomy a shameless and bogus public relations ploy in its defence of Bill 22.

Also, the issue of the additional hiring of 2,100 teaching assistants (long overdue) was not fully achieved until the current school year as this was an incremental process, leaving hundreds of special education teachers and their students stranded with only partial, or no support, for most of the last decade. Up until the recent contract negotiations settlement with CUPE, inadequate pay, restricted school hours, lack

of security and inadequate professional development, led to an enormous turnover of teaching assistants in schools (sometimes in mid-year), further destabilizing instructional programs for our most vulnerable students.

The glowing impression that Victoria wished to leave with members of the general public can be summarized as follows: Look, we may have lost 700 special education teachers, "as the union claims" but, hey, we have added 2,100 teacher assistants to make up for this loss.

This is a studied distortion that must be nailed once and for all.

The attempt by the ministry to airbrush the 800 positions of teacher-librarians, school counsellors, ESL, and Aboriginal teachers, not to mention regular classrooms teachers, out of the Bill 22 equation flatly undermines its brazen claim that it is focused solely on "what matters most in education—BC students." Consider the following thumbnail sketches of the five positions that Victoria has attempted to unceremoniously dump from its Bill 22 ads:

Teacher-librarians: loss of 277 positions; negative impact on daily access to guided research and study, a skill set made even more vital as electronic media flood students' senses with unsubstantiated information; many school libraries were often closed; team teaching with classroom teachers and enriched reading programs and special projects for gifted students dropped; school-wide impact on literacy programs (confirmed by several research studies) greatly diminished.

English as a second language: loss of 320 positions; negative impact on early and intermediate, intensive language instruction programs for immigrant and refugee students, with introductory and intermediate ESL classes disappearing almost entirely in both elementary and secondary schools. Huge negative impact on school districts with large and growing ESL populations such as Burnaby, Surrey, Richmond, and Vancouver.

School counsellors: loss of 106 positions; negative impact on the ability of schools to advise and assist students (and their parents) with learning difficulties; also working with the diverse personnel who serve on school-based teams: learning assistance teachers and specialized staff such as school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, and community medical personnel; in 2002 the ratio of counsellors to students was 1 counsellor to 320 students, currently it is as high as 1 counsellor to 1,200 students.

Aboriginal teachers: loss of 10 positions; the smallest cut, but perhaps given the sad state of Aboriginal education and the stated goal to ameliorate this situation, the unkindest cut of all. Aboriginal education, despite some claims to the contrary, is still on the ropes in many of our public schools.

Regular classroom teachers: the combined and cumulative loss of all of the above four specialist teaching positions, plus the unavailability of classroom support from teaching assistants for most of the past decade in many classrooms, placed the issue of class size and particularly class

composition in the forefront of the Bill 22 controversy. The enormous spill-over impact in 12,529 classes, with three or more students with special needs, according to recently released ministry statistics, at both the elementary and secondary levels goes to the heart of this entire controversy.

Look, we may have lost 700 special education teachers, "as the union claims" but, hey, we have added 2,100 teacher assistants to make up for this loss.

When George Abbott was asked by interviewer Mark Forsythe on *CBC Radio* if he was aware of the impact of the loss of 800 specialized positions, as outlined in a letter to the editor of *The Vancouver Sun*, he claimed that he was not aware of specific numbers. So much for truth in advertising from a government that has decimated special needs.

You can't lift an estimated \$3 billion (based on the superior court's estimate of \$275 each year) out of public school funding for 11 years and replace it annually with \$30 million to \$70 million grants, strung out over a four- or five-year period (ultimately, one-tenth of the amount originally withdrawn) without continuing to leave enormous funding gaps in our educational infrastructure.

Let's hope the provincially appointed mediator recognizes Victoria's public presentations and statements on special needs teachers and class size and composition for what they truly are: selective and misleading narratives of support for Bill 22.

This segment of the current impasse will test the mediator's claim to independence. Many teachers doubt the latter claim, hence the fact that there is no diminution in their disillusionment and anger directed at the provincial government. In fact, if anything, it is increasing.

However this plays out, it seems almost certain that Bill 22, despite the BC Liberals' so called "court-proofing" shenanigans in the House and endless spinning in the media, is once again headed back to court.

Noel Herron is a former school principal and school trustee.

Support from Mexico

Translation of a message that some Mexican teachers carrying banners in support of the BCTF took to the Canadian Embassy on March 6, 2012.

Why do we support the BCTF?

We have sent letters of solidarity, we have educated our members about the struggle of the teachers of the BCTF, and we are demonstrating in their support outside the Canadian embassy in Mexico City, because our common work in the Tri-national Coalition to Defend Public Education and the IDEA Network has made us sister organizations.

We feel this attack on the teachers of BC as if it were an attack on ourselves. These are not measures being imposed upon abstract entities or people, they are measures applied against colleagues who have names and whom we know—perhaps not all 40,000 BCTF members, but yes many hundreds of them with whom, over almost 20 years of collaboration, we have seen, conversed, laughed, and marched together.

We also respond to the call for solidarity, because the BCTF is a union that not only has shown its solidarity on numerous occasions with the struggles of the teachers and students of Mexico, but it is also a union that builds links and generates processes that surpass borders. It is a union that strengthens and advances the international struggle for the right to education and for just societies.

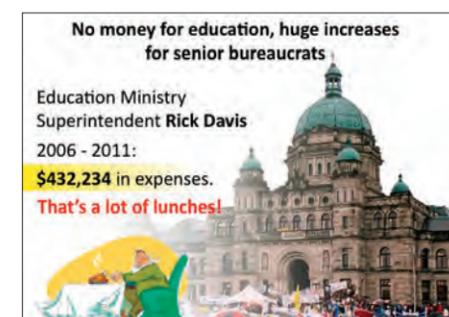
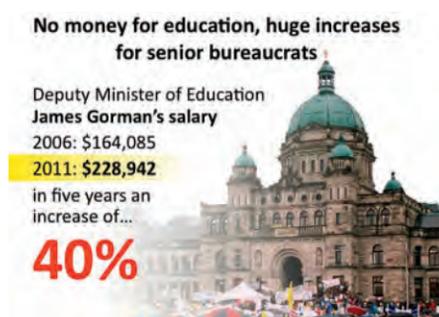
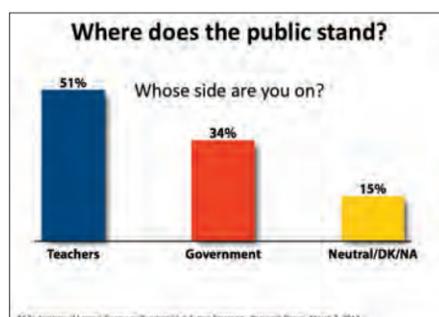
We come to Canada's embassy in Mexico to draw the Canadian government's attention to the backward step the government of the province of British Columbia is taking in a country that has traditionally enjoyed an international image of respecting the human, social, and labour rights of its own workers. Today, with the law the government of BC has introduced against teachers, it takes a huge step backward to a reactionary and primitive regime with conditions for labour, social, and democratic rights that are reminiscent of the 19th century.

We have come as well, to express our outrage at this new round of attacks against democratic unions, this new offensive against social and labour rights. We wish to publicize this criminalization of the BC teachers' struggle, in the guise of economic punishment. The criminalization of protest and the use of decrees as a way to impose the second wave of structural reforms aimed at privatizing education, has become a perverse new tactic in the arsenal of neoliberal governments to silence all legitimate forms of dissent.

We are here to demonstrate our support and we will continue to do so, because we believe that the strike the BC Teachers' Federation began yesterday, (March 5) is a strike for the dignity of the teaching profession. It's not just about salaries, nor the sanctity of the collective contract, nor the right to strike. It is resistance to an attempt by the BC government to crush teachers' rights.

Finally, if you were to ask us why we take on these actions in solidarity with the teachers of BC, we would respond that it is out of love. Love for the fraternity, solidarity, and affection that we have cultivated together since 1993 as part of a growing international movement in defense of public education as a social right, as teachers committed to our children and youth, because we believe that only that way will we build societies that are not only more just, but also more happy.

Maria de la Luz Arriaga, organizer, Mexican Section of the Tri-national Coalition in Defense of Public Education



Confronting the injustices of Bill 22

By Louise Gonsalvez

On February 7, 2012, Saskatchewan's Court of Queen's Bench confirmed that the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Section 2d: The Freedom to Associate) includes the right to strike. In the past, the courts denied such a claim, but in similar fashion to a number of other Canadian cases lately, Justice Dennis Ball based his analysis on United Nations treaties, the United Nations Declaration, and "jurisprudence emanating out of the International Labour Organization" (Youth and Work, n.p.). The Charter challenge was based upon two provincial laws instituted by a labour-bashing Saskatchewan government: The *Trade Union Amendment Act* and the *Public Services Essential Services Act*. The Charter challenge was launched by the National Union of Public Employees and the Canadian Labour Congress.

We, as BC teachers, face a similar situation as the public sector workers faced in Saskatchewan. The Liberals have passed Bill 22, which denies our right to strike, implements a "scorched-earth" shredding of our labour rights, and implements an "education" plan premised more upon a techno-apps-business strategy rather than a democratic educational model that advances "vigorous and engaged opportunities for dialogue, debate, reasoned exchange and discriminating judgements" (Giroux, 2012). Bill 22 demonstrates a blatant disregard for the Charter; International Treaties, Covenants and Declarations; and the mandates of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Justice Ball's decision will have to be reviewed by two higher appellate courts. It is unclear how this ruling will affect our situation.

British Columbia has a history of ignoring and/or violating international treaties, covenants, conventions, and declarations it has ratified. In the last decade the ILO, a tripartite body composed of representatives from unions, governments, and business, whose purpose is to uphold and monitor international labour standards and safeguard "workers' human rights," found the BC government "guilty of rights abuses" when it put into effect the following six laws:

- *Health Care Services Continuation Act* (Bill 2, June 2001)
- *Health Care Services Collective Agreements Act* (Bill 15, August 2001)
- *Skills Development and Labour Statutes Amendment Act* (Bill 18, August 2001)
- *Education Service Collective Agreement Act* (Bill 27, January 2002)
- *Public Education Flexibility and Choice Act* (Bill 28, January 2002)
- *Health and Social Services Delivery Improvement Act* (Bill 29, January 2002).

All of these decisions violated ILO Convention No. 87 (Freedom to Associate). In 2005, the National Union of Public General Employees determined, "This is the ninth time in two years the ILO has condemned the BC government for trampling on the basic rights of workers, the worst record of any government in North America." NUPGE (2005) National President James Clancy stated, "In fact, BC is now at the bottom of the class in North America in terms of respecting workers' rights. This has to be viewed as a major embarrassment for the province." In my estimation, the proposed Bill 22 is far worse than any previous legislation, but there is light at the end of the tunnel given current political and legal trends to make Canada uphold its international obligations. On February 27, 2012, in an historic moment, the House of Commons passed a bill that endorsed equal funding for Aboriginal education. I'm familiar with some

of the arguments put forward to support this decision and they were based on Canada's international responsibilities (e.g., The UN Rights of the Indigenous Peoples ratified by Canada in 2010).

When we use a social justice lens and human rights instruments to take a look at Bill 22 it is obvious that there are a number of serious concerns. First and foremost, the Charter: Section 2d (Freedom to Associate), according to its newest interpretation, grants us the right to strike, and there are no provisions for any cooling-off periods. Bill 22 repeals and reintroduces parts of Bills 27 and 28 (class-size and composition) that were ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada and thus show contempt for Canada's highest court (e.g., failure to restore minimum service levels for ESL, teacher-librarians, learning specialist teachers). Bill 22 eliminates and/or diminishes the fundamental right to engage in collective bargaining since it imposes a zero mandate; "appoints" and binds a "government-appointed" mediator to a net-zero mandate; and "imposes" labour concessions (e.g., post and fill, evaluation, seniority, layoff and recall, dismissal, and professional development autonomy). It imposes such severe fines to BCTF members and the union should they "illegally" strike that one can challenge whether the province has overstepped its boundaries and entered federal criminal jurisdiction. To date the BC government runs as though it has the right to operate above established state rules of law and ratified international agreements.

The *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (Article 21/22) notes that no restrictions can be

To date the BC government runs as though it has the right to operate above established state rules of law and ratified international agreements.

placed on the right to peaceful assembly) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) (Preamble) notes that we have the right to enjoy our civil and political rights. The *UN Declaration of Human Rights* (Article 23) notes that everyone has the right to "just and favourable conditions of work." The ILO not only grants our freedom to assembly but also advocates that "the fundamental values of freedom, human dignity, social justice, security, and non-discrimination are essential for sustainable economic and social development and efficiency." Justice Ball referred to all of these international instruments in his judgment. I believe international commitments will continue to change the Canadian landscape (legally, morally, and ethically). Labour law is being challenged and in a similar manner, I'm personally hoping that the UN Right to Water resolution, UNRIP and the UN ICESCR will lead to a second and final reading of the Bill-S11: *The Safe Drinking Water Bill* for First Nations and that a submission to United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (UNCEDAW) by international lawyers Sheilagh Day and Sharon McIvor will lead to a UN Inquiry of the murdered and missing women on the Highway of Tears. Hopefully more Canadian judges and courts will bring Canadian law up to international standards, after decades of externalizing them from state and provincial judgments.

We need to use a bricolage approach (any combination of methods possible) to address a bill that is far worse than those challenged in Saskatchewan. This government brazenly seeks to "void existing provisions of collective

agreements, including obligations to negotiate and/or refer matters to arbitration" (Palmer, 2007). It entitles boards to shuffle employees around (for some districts that could be hundreds of miles); employ non-certified individuals; and it offers compensation (e.g., pay) to teachers willing to accept more than 30 students in their classrooms. The government then goes for the gusto and declares a 10-year retroactive clause that states: "Despite any decision of a court to the contrary made before or after the coming into force of this section, words, phrases, provisions and parts of provisions deleted from a collective agreement...must not for any purpose, including any suit or arbitration commenced or continued before or after the coming into force of this section, be considered part of that collective agreement on or after July 1, 2002." It declares itself above the law and makes provisions to protect itself from any recourse! I'm not a lawyer, but this to me sounds like a blatant in-your-face contempt for the rule of law, and our courts of law.

One of the four pillars of the BCTF is social justice. As a union we support praxis (e.g., critical analysis and solidarity action) that is intended to: affirm human rights, democratic practices, and civil society (e.g., peace, global education); overcome systemic oppressions (e.g., poverty, discrimination, homophobia, patriarchy); and endorse sustainability (e.g., social, economic and environmental). As we confront Bill 22 we are standing strong in solidarity to not only affirm our collective rights and support student needs, but to also demand that this government legally abide by fundamental human rights as outlined in our Charter and international agreements that Canada and the provinces ratified. We must work with our allies to confront Bill 22 on "all" fronts (e.g., moral, legal, professional). Louise Gonsalvez teaches at Sparwood Secondary School, Sparwood.

1990s-level tax rates could pay for improved public education

By Krishna Pendakur

The province says we are broke. We cannot afford to spend more money on K-12 education, we cannot afford to increase teachers' wages or hire more teachers to make classes smaller. Over the past decade, teachers' wages in British Columbia have fallen farther and farther behind those of their colleagues in other provinces, and classes in BC have become larger. I know—I'm married to a teacher who has worked in BC for nearly two decades. And I work at a university, where you see the same trends.

It is hard to look at BC schools nowadays and come to the conclusion that we are overspending on either too much quality or quantity; rather, we see big classes, poor infrastructure, and teachers who feel vilified and underappreciated. Private schools advertise their small classes, computerized classrooms, and effective teachers. And parents have responded by voting with their feet: enrolment in private schools has risen steadily over the past two decades. But, rich parents who can afford private schooling are not the only ones who value these attributes in schools—everyone does.

However, the claim that we cannot afford to offer good K-12 education in our public schools is misleading. What we really mean is that we don't value our children enough to

spend what it takes to have a really good public education system. The fact is, governments choose how much revenue to raise on the basis of how much publicly provided goods and services we want to have. The two choices—tax rates and public spending—are one and the same. When we choose low taxes, this is the same as choosing less, or lower-quality, public goods and services.

For the past 15 years, the trend in provincial and federal tax rates has been downward. In 1995, the highest tax rate in BC on personal income was about 56%; now, it is about 46%. In the mid-1990s, income from investments was taxed at three-quarters the rate of income from work; now investment income is taxed at half the rate of labour income. These changes have dramatically

Of the \$40 billion the government of BC spends every year, less than one-fifth is spent on K-12 and post-secondary education. In the mid-1990s, the government allocated nearly one-third of its total spending on education.

reduced the tax burden on upper-income people (who get more of their income from investments) relative to middle-income people. These changes have also reduced the revenue coming to government coffers, and consequently reduced the quality and quantity of healthcare, education, and other public services.

Not only have tax rates fallen, driving down total government revenue so that it seems harder to fund education, but among the things governments spend money on, healthcare has crowded out education. For three decades provincial governments have prioritized publicly funded healthcare over publicly funded education. Whereas 25 years ago, health and education absorbed about the same fraction of provincial budgets, nowadays we spend nearly twice as much on health as we do on education. This has caused intergenerational inequity as we spend madly on the elderly and are miserly with the young.

Schooling is the best investment that we can make as a society. Most rich countries have ramped up spending on education over the past three decades. Investments in a skilled and learning-engaged workforce pay off for many decades into the future. Of the \$40 billion the government of BC spends every year, less than one-fifth is spent on K-12 and post-secondary education. In the mid-1990s, the government allocated nearly one-third of its total spending on education.

The fact is that we choose how much to tax ourselves and therefore we choose what kind of public schooling we can offer. If we want good schooling, we have to pay for it. If we want small classes with well-paid professional teachers and up-to-date infrastructure, all we have to do is pony up the cash. Indeed, this is the choice that richer parents increasingly make when they send their children to private schools. Simply switching back to the tax rates we all paid in the late 1990s would be more than sufficient to improve public schools.

Krishna Pendakur, professor of economics, Simon Fraser University

Reprinted with permission.

No money for education, huge increases for senior bureaucrats

Paul Straszak, CEO of PSEC and Net-Zero Czar
2007 - 2009
in three years
\$59,760 raise
an increase of...
42%

Is Bill 22 legal?

The BC Liberal government is poised, once again, to violate the legal rights of workers, this time with Bill 22, which, if it becomes law, will prohibit teachers from striking and limit their collective bargaining rights.

Joel Bakan, UBC Faculty of Law

Next round of bargaining?

More of the same...

- Co-operative gains mandate same as net zero
- Sham bargaining
- Further concessions?

What can we do?

- Passive resistance
- Civil disobedience
- Collective action
- Public sector solidarity
- Public education advocacy campaign
- Return to court

Annual General Meeting 2012

G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award



David Chudnovsky was awarded the G.A. Fergusson Memorial Award.

BCTF Honourary Life Memberships



President Susan Lambert presented three Honourary Life Memberships posthumously: (l-r) Kitty O'Callaghan (accepted by her brother, David O'Callaghan); Charlene Watts (accepted by her daughter, Samantha Watts-Davidson); and Lorie Boychuk (accepted by her sister Marilyn Coombes); (below) Honourary Life Membership was awarded to Jill McCaffrey (Arrow Lakes) ALISTAIR EAGLE, DAVID DENYER, AND GEOFF PETERS PHOTOS



Dan Kenning (r) accepted the Stewart Schon Health and Safety Award; pictured here with 2nd Vice-President Glen Hansman and Tia Towne-Schon, Stewart's daughter.



Noel Herron and Steve Stewart received Honourary BCTF Memberships.

Working toward a different narrative of accountability



The keynote speaker at the AGM was Dr. Sandra Mathison, professor of education at UBC. Mathison started her address, entitled "Working toward a different narrative of accountability," by

providing an analysis of the neoliberal refrains and values that underpin their notion of accountability in education:

- Declares adequate resources
- Emphasizes a few outcomes measures to determine quality
- Suggests that schooling is a commodity in the free market
- Distrusts the professionalism of teachers
- Blames teachers but especially the BCTF for pretty much any problem in education.

The main thrust of her remarks was in developing a narrative of authentic accountability.

"A narrative of accountability:

- emphasizes and expects adequate and fair educational funding.
- assumes that accountability is reciprocal and multidirectional.
- sees students, parents, and local communities as the primary clients of schooling.
- makes decisions about the means and ends of schooling at the local community level.
- Assumes schools are accountable for:
 - physical and emotional well-being of students
 - student learning and assessment
 - teacher learning and evaluation
 - equity and access
 - improvement and renewal.

"This narrative is not based on neo-liberalism. It is a narrative that assumes

that public schools ought to be about promoting democracy through the preparation of students to be knowledgeable, engaged citizens and that being educated should mean a better life for all, individually and collectively. This is not an idealistic narrative, and indeed it is the narrative of accountability in a few places in the world, especially the Scandinavian countries."

"Creating alternative narratives relies, as you already know, on finding allies and creating coalitions."

"Alliances between teachers and parents are critically important, and I would never suggest they are easily created. Both teachers and parents are diverse groups, each reflecting a wide range of perspectives and interests, so it is critically important that alliances between parents and teachers not be cast as an all or nothing venture. And if teachers don't make allies of parents, those more wed to the neo-liberal narrative of accountability will."

"The narrative must be changed school by school, where each school takes responsibility to develop strong relationships among all its constituents—teachers, parents, students, and other community members. And, teachers will likely have to start the ball rolling, to model the ways in which the school community can work together for the benefit of all. It may be that Bill 22 provides the impetus to begin thinking about how to resist the neoliberal narrative of accountability. I know you have had thoughtful discussions about strategies for resisting this legislation, but in that context let me illustrate what I mean with just one strategic idea—teach-ins."

"It is likely that both slow, steady building of coalitions at the local community level and large-scale direct actions will be needed to shift the narrative of accountability to one that promotes schooling for the democracy we want."



A memorable AGM

It was a measure of the seriousness with which the imposition of Bill 22 is viewed that the agenda was largely devoted to developing a plan of resistance. The debate on the action plan was extensive and considered many points of view and strategic options.

In addition to the required decisions on fees and the election of the Executive Committee, there were a number of speakers invited to address the assembly and bring messages of support.

Jagrup Brar, MLA for Surrey-Fleetwood, gave a detailed account of his experience when he took the challenge presented to MLAs by the "Raise the Rates" group, to try and live on current welfare rates. Brar was the only MLA to accept the challenge to live on the basic rate of \$610 per month. He extended his remarks to include the

deplorable prevalence of poverty in BC and the struggle endured by so many just to survive. Brar gave many insights into the daily experience of those living in poverty and the impact on children.

Both Jim Sinclair, president of the BC Federation of Labour, and Barry O'Neil president of CUPE BC brought their perspectives on the actions of the provincial government and spoke of the threats being faced provincially and nationally by the union movement.

Delegates to the AGM took to the streets during one of the lunch breaks bringing the message of funding cuts to the busy intersections of downtown Vancouver. Undaunted by the persistent rain and wind they waved their signs and handed out leaflets to passers by.

– David Denyer



Ten-year-old activist opens the AGM

The AGM was privileged to have 10-year-old Ta'Kaiya Blaney from the Sliam6mon First Nation open the meeting. Ta'Kaiya sang the song, *Shallow Waters*, which was written to raise awareness about the Enbridge pipeline proposal. If you missed her at the AGM, you can hear her at www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkjkuC_eWM.



Jagrup Brar, MLA, Surrey Fleetwood



Thank you for your letter Minister Abbott, it arrived three-and-a-half years late!

Thank you for your letter, expressing respect and appreciation for my work as a teacher, even though it arrived three-and-a-half years after my retirement.

However, there is a disconnect between your letter and the lack of respect currently shown for the teaching profession, as shown in Bill 22 and the disregard for teachers' right to strike along with threats of huge penalties. I don't think that the Honourable Minister is aware of the hardships, brought about by cutbacks, which students and teachers have experienced during the last many years.

Here are some of my personal experiences as an English-as-a-second-language teacher, (ESL), and learning assistance teacher, (LA, LAC), for the Surrey School Board for more than 25 years:

- Severe cutbacks to ESL programs to the point of near extinction. Today LA and ESL teaching positions are combined, contributing to students not developing proper language skills. Later this will affect the performance of students at university.
- Cutbacks to speech therapists and their positions frozen for many years. As a result students get tested but few receive therapy.
- Cutbacks to teacher-librarian positions and libraries, library time allotments, and book budgets. Studies have shown that this reduces student performance.
- Teacher salaries frozen for many years. When a small increase was awarded the BC government did not provide the additional funding for school boards.

- Continuous cutbacks to the janitorial staff. This led to schools getting increasingly dirty.
- Lack of capital funding to growing districts. This forced schools to use numerous portable classrooms.
- Unco-operative and disrespectful ministers of education. Christy Clark will always be remembered for her confrontative role as minister of education.

Why is it now necessary to top all this off by antagonizing parents, students, and teachers and creating an unhealthy work climate? Hasn't the Liberal government created enough hardships to education? Bill 22 is divisive and disrespectful.

What worries me even more is that it will provide less protection and resources for our students with special needs.

Canada spends a fairly small percentage of its GDP on education compared to many other countries. We spend 5.7% of the GDP and rank 37th in education spending. Compare this to Denmark which spends 8.5% of its GDP and ranks 8th. Alberta's top-level teacher salaries are \$17,450 higher than BC's; Ontario's are \$13,161 higher (per year).

BC gets really good value for the money spent in public education. The teachers are hardworking and dedicated, so at least treat them well. The students will benefit.

In spite of all these points, my years in teaching have been rewarding and fulfilling due to many wonderful students and supportive colleagues.

Dorothe Leggott, retired Surrey teacher



BC's Ed Plan: Free the kids and control the teachers

By Larry Kuehn

Each time the provincial government issues a budget, along with it comes a "service plan" for each of the ministries. The structure of the plans for the education ministry has varied over the years. The current one is structured around the five elements of "BC's Education Plan."

The service plan talks of how we will "modernize how education is delivered" and how the ministry will support "the education transformation in all stages of the system." The need for transformation is restated: rapid change, new occupations, other education systems overtaking ours, designed for an earlier century.

So what is the source of these restrictions that have to be removed? It seems that teachers are.

What will this new system look like? Student-centred learning. Flexibility and choice for students with respect to how, when, and where learning takes place. More open and accountable to students, families, communities, and the public. Remove obstacles so our students will become responsible, well-educated citizens. Allow learners more freedom to pursue their individual interests and passions.

Free the kids from the restrictions of the old system that is stopping them from becoming responsible, well-educated citizens prepared for the future.

So what is the source of these restrictions that have to be removed? It seems that teachers are.

Teachers need better support "as they continue to adjust their roles to match what students need." This will be facilitated by boards of education having "more flexibility to organize classes and other learning experiences so they can better direct resources to support student learning." Implicitly, the collective agreement gets in the way of unilateral power of administrators to determine the organization of classes and other learning experiences.

Further, "the teaching profession needs to be administered in a way that respects teachers by ensuring

high standards put student success and the public interest first." Forget about a manageable workload as a factor in administering the profession. And someone—unspecified whom—is going to engage with teachers "to learn what they need to improve classroom practice."

Of course all of these ideas can be made to sound good—until you see them in the context of the contract strips that are on the bargaining table to remove all the provisions that give teachers some guarantee that there will be fair methods of assigning teaching loads, being considered for positions on some objective criteria, and fair processes for evaluation by administrators.

These provisions for fair processes will be replaced through the strategy of "Improving oversight for the teaching profession, including performance management and incentives."

What other highlights are on offer in the service plan?

Implementation of BC's Education Plan, including "Learning Empowered by Technology," "will be accomplished within the ministry's existing budget."

Forget about school libraries. Public libraries are part of the Ministry of Education and they have what students need: "public libraries offer a range of services specifically to K-12 students, including study space, group study/meeting spaces, wireless network access, homework help, and exam proctoring services." Check with the librarian the next time you visit a public library.

More distributed learning: "Over 40 percent of all graduating students have participated in at least one distributed learning course, taking advantage of a high-quality and engaging environment." However, when the BCTF put in a Freedom of Information request asking for the completion rate for DL courses, the ministry said they did not have that information.

With the minister's speculations on doing away with class composition regulations, one might have expected some mention of how we are to address the needs of students with special needs. In fact, the only mention of special needs is in a list of who is to be included in an inclusive education system. Clearly "personalized learning" solves all problems.

The completion rate for the system (Dogwood certificate within

six years of entering Grade 8) is identified as a key performance measure. However, "the Ministry is reviewing the completion rate and exploring the creation of a more comprehensive measure of student success." The ministry does not now recognize the school completion certificate that some students receive after completing secondary school, but who do not qualify for a Dogwood.

BC is to be promoted "in key target markets to increase the number of international students in our schools." To meet the needs of international students, "the Ministry is also working to create an inclusive, safe and globalized environment for international students through personalized learning and anti-bullying programs."

"School readiness" is one of the performance measures identified. The ministry uses the HELP "developmentally ready" measure and says that the baseline is 69.1% who this year entered ready to learn. They project that readiness will increase each year by 1% or 2%. However, the factors that would contribute to more students being ready when they enter school are factors outside the school. As the HELP project has said, this requires

...all of these ideas can be made to sound good—until you see them in the context of the contract strips that are on the bargaining table...

lower child-poverty rates and more social supports for families, such as subsidized childcare. None of these are reflected in the other elements of the provincial budget.

Perhaps the most discouraging element of the plan in the long term is that we have abandoned any idea of controlling global warming. Instead, teachers are to "work on climate change lesson plans to engage students in thinking about provincial and local strategies that might be required due to climate change."

The Ministry of Education Service Plan can be found on the web at <http://tinyurl.com/6vrbkap>.

Larry Kuehn, Director of BCTF Research and Technology Division

appreciation to the facilitators for their time, their expertise, and professionalism, the resources, and the hands-on activities during the workshops. As one participant wrote "he walked the talk."

Best moment of the conference? When a young lady stood in front of the registration table, lifted her hands above her head and said: I love my job!
See you next year!

Ah si les murs de l'hôtel Radisson de Richmond pouvaient parler ! Pendant 2 jours au début mars, plus de 400 nouveaux enseignants et étudiants-maîtres ont créé de nouvelles amitiés, partagé idées, ressources et adresses électroniques, discuté de la réalité dans leurs salles de classe, posé mille questions et ri des aventures de leurs élèves et de leurs collègues.

Ils ont grandement apprécié la diversité des ateliers offerts dans les 2 langues et surtout le dévouement des facilitateurs. Maintes fois en lisant les évaluations, j'ai vu : Merci pour les ressources; le facilitateur a

Message for retired BCTF members

In an effort to cut down on the number of copies we print of *Teacher*, we will be paring our mailing list. If you retired between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2001 we will discontinue sending the newsmagazine to you.

We are happy to provide a copy to you if you want to receive it. Contact us at news@bctf.ca if you retired between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2001 and wish to continue receiving the newsmagazine. Of course the newsmagazine is available online at bctf.ca/news.

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Educating for the future

By Marie-Claude Tremblay

Sharing, laughing, discussing, those were the real themes of this year's conference for new teachers, student teachers, and new TTOCs on March 2-3, 2012. More than 400 participants from all over the province descended upon the Radisson Hotel in Richmond at the beginning of March. For many it was their first ProD conference. The energy and the enthusiasm were palpable.

There were 60 workshops presented over the two days on such varied subjects as surviving as a teacher-librarian, tips for home ec teachers, poverty and LBGTQ issues, employment insurance and collective agreements, enhancing critical thinking, using music to teach the social studies curriculum, and the list goes on. Over and over, the participants showed their

pris le temps d'écouter et de bien répondre à toutes nos questions; Wow, le meilleur atelier de ma journée/du weekend; je peux utiliser ces activités dans ma classe en arrivant lundi matin; pendant l'atelier, la facilitatrice a mis en pratique les techniques qu'elle nous montrait; c'était du pratique-pratique.

Pour certains, c'était leur première conférence et il était facile de lire l'inquiétude et le soulagement sur le visage lorsque les participants se présentaient à la table des inscriptions. Pour d'autres, c'était leur dernière car ils sont maintenant des vétérans de notre profession avec 5 ans d'expérience.

Qu'est-ce que je garde de ces 2 jours parmi cette nouvelle génération d'enseignants? La joie, l'amour, le désir de travailler avec les enfants et les ados en dépit du fait que nos députés parlaient du projet de loi 22 à Victoria.

Marie-Claude Tremblay, Co-ordinatrice, Conférence for new teachers and student teachers, and new TTOCs

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Faculty of Education: Classroom support for high ability

The Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education has worked with External Programs and Learning Technology in Education to develop and offer online two courses that focus on identification and support for students with high ability. The courses have been developed to support teachers from throughout the province who wish to increase their expertise and upgrade their qualifications, but prefer the flexibility of an online learning environment.

These courses can help teachers achieve their TQS 5+, build their expertise in supporting high ability learners in the inclusive classroom, and contribute to the coursework needed to meet BC Ministry of Education guidelines for competencies for gifted resource teachers. Two 3-credit courses are delivered online: EPSE 303 Teaching Highly Able Learners and EPSE 408 Educational Programming for Highly Able Learners. The courses provide opportunities to identify and examine the profiles of diverse learners and to design optimal supports for their academic, social-emotional, and behavioural needs. They are suitable for:

- classroom teachers wishing to strengthen their expertise in meeting the needs of students with exceptional learning needs.
- classroom teachers who wish to assume the role of a gifted learning support teacher.

- learning support teachers who wish to extend and deepen their expertise.
- teachers who wish to transfer credits to a Masters program (maximum 6 credits).
- teachers who wish to combine these courses with courses to upgrade their certification.

Students may also wish to take one or both of the courses in a face-to-face format on campus or through district-based offerings.

Visit <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/courses/online-courses> for more information.

Dr. Marion Porath, professor, ECPS, UBC and Lynn Chartres, district gifted learning resource teacher, West Vancouver School District, Sessional Instructor, UBC

La vague des EdCamps

par Steve Roy

La vague des EdCamps (camp pédagogique en français) prend de plus en plus d'ampleur cette année au Canada. En 2011 il y en a eu à Vancouver, à Toronto et à Montréal. Depuis janvier 2012 deux EdCamps ont eu lieu dans le Vancouver métropolitain et plusieurs sont en préparation, dont un en français au mois de mai. Cet enthousiasme envers ce nouveau type de conférence est beaucoup dû au fait que c'est très facile et très peu cher des les organiser et que les enseignants discutent des sujets qui les intéressent.

Petite histoire des EdCampsCampEd

Les CampEd sont appelés en anglais des «un-Conferences», des conférences qui n'en sont pas vraiment, dans le sens qu'il n'y a pas d'atelier organisé à l'avance ni de conférencier vedette (keynote). Les seules choses qui sont planifiées à l'avance sont les grilles horaires et le déroulement de la journée. Le contenu des ateliers est décidé par les participants. Ces ateliers sont plus sur le format d'une conversation ou d'un partage autour d'un sujet que d'une présentation proprement dite car tout le monde est invité à partager et à collaborer. Ce modèle permet de faire en sorte que le vrai développement professionnel se produise non pas dans les couloirs entre les ateliers mais pendant les ateliers. Le site de EdCampMtl (ou CampEd ou camp pédagogique comme ils ont traduit) (<http://edcamp.wikispaces.com/edcamp+Montréal>) donne cette définition:

- Un CampEd, c'est une journée pédagogique "off Broadway". Les participants du préscolaire, du primaire, du secondaire et des écoles spécialisées s'y présentent le matin, prennent quelques minutes pour discuter, prendre un café et entendre un court mot de bienvenue. Ensuite, chacun est invité à s'inscrire librement à l'un des ateliers proposés. Jusque là, vous savez tous à quoi ça ressemble. La particularité d'un CampEd, c'est que n'importe qui peut proposer un atelier. Sur le champ. Sans avertir.

- Vous voulez un exemple? Disons que l'atelier sur le continuum en lecture vous intéresse, vous y allez. Point. Pendant l'atelier, vous pensez que vous aimeriez beaucoup avoir la chance de discuter avec des collègues à propos des jeux de société en mathématique. Eh ben en sortant de l'atelier sur le continuum, vous vous rendez à l'accueil pour faire inscrire un nouvel atelier sur le grand babillard. "Jeux de société en mathématique" est maintenant offert à tous à la prochaine plage horaire disponible. Vos collègues ne cherchent pas des Grands Spécialistes mais plutôt des passionnés, curieux, généreux, ouverts et sympathiques. Comme vous.

Un CampEd en français en Colombie-Britannique, pourquoi pas!

Au congrès de l'ACPI à Victoria en novembre 2011 plusieurs éducateurs ont manifesté le désir d'organiser un CampEd pour les éducateurs francophones et francophiles de la province. En janvier dernier, la première rencontre de planification s'est

déroulée avec un petit comité lors de l'EdCamp de Port-Coquitlam. La date du camp est le samedi, 12 mai 2012 à l'école secondaire Jules-Verne du CSF à Vancouver. Pour plus d'information, consultez le site internet du CampEdFr à l'adresse suivante: <http://campedfr.edublogs.org>. Vous pouvez aussi

écrire un courriel à l'adresse suivante: campedfr@gmail.com. Pour en savoir plus sur les EdCamps, allez au site suivant: <http://edcamp.wikispaces.com>

Steve Roy, tangomanfromqc@yahoo.ca, Enseignant au secondaire à l'école Jules-Verne du CSF (SD 93) à Vancouver

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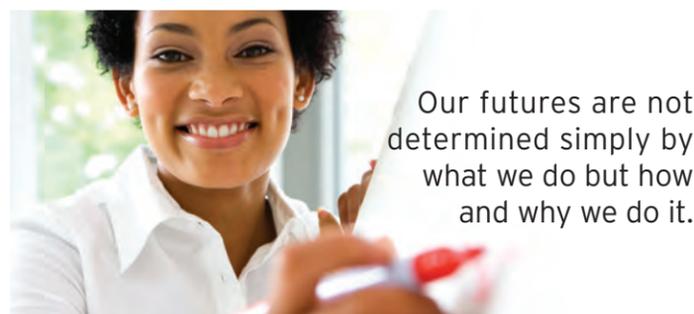
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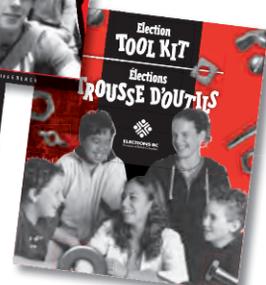
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Why our public-sector pension plans are better

By Bruce Kennedy

Two million British public sector workers went on strike last November to defend their pensions. Prime Minister David Cameron labelled the pension strike as the "height of irresponsibility."

How should BCTF members and other British Columbians regard this drama?

The surest starting point is to understand that the UK's public sector pension plans and BC's public sector pension plans are completely different types of financial institutions. The UK uses pay-as-you-go pension plans for its public sector workers, while BC uses pre-funded pension plans.

Providing pension coverage to public sector workers through BC's public sector pension plans is definitely much fairer to future taxpayers than the alternative of not providing pension coverage.

Pay-as-you-go pension plans (such as Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement in Canada) are entirely unfunded. These plans pay the pensions of current seniors out of revenues collected from current taxpayers. Because these plans have no invested funds, they are not exposed to investment market performance. Their main risk exposure is demographic rather than financial. It is the ratio between the number of pensioners and the number of taxpayers that largely drives the cost of these plans.

In contrast, prefunded pension plans, which all BCTF members belong to, invest contributions collected from the current working generation in order to pay, much later, for that generation's own pensions. Managed well, there is no intergenerational subsidization in these arrangements because each generation pays its own way. Another huge advantage of pre-funding a pension plan is that the investment returns received over a very long investment period help to pay for the pension benefits. Indeed, most of the benefits come from accumulated investment returns, rather than from the original contributions. Prefunded pension plans are not highly exposed to demographic risks, such as the shifting ratio of pensioners to contributors, because each generation is self-funding. The main risk exposure of prefunded plans concerns financial market returns.

The prefunding of BC's public sector pension plans, including the Teachers' Pension Plan, make them more sustainable, more cost-effective, and fairer between generations, than their UK counterparts.

BC's public sector pension plans also strive for fairness between the plan members, the plan employers, and the taxpayers. The pension

benefits themselves are much more modest than many people believe. (Table 1)

You'll see that the average for the Teachers' Pension Plan is higher than that of the other plans. There are two reasons for this. Teachers tend to stay in teaching throughout their careers, and consequently have longer service in their plan by retirement. In addition, the membership of the Teachers' Pension Plan is a homogeneous professional group, whereas the membership of some of the other plans is more diverse, and includes occupations that could have lower salaries, therefore contributing less to their plans during their careers.

The large scale and professional management of these plans helps keep costs down. The total cost of investment management and pension administration for these plans is 0.25%, or about one-tenth of what individual investors pay for investment management.

Cost-sharing and risk-sharing also contribute to the fairness of these plans. Teachers pay close to 50% of the cost of their pension benefit. In addition, the plan members bear more than 50% of the financial risk in these plans.

Sustainability is another important aspect of keeping BC's public sector pension plans fair and affordable. Sustainability is monitored and maintained by conducting an actuarial valuation of each plan at least once every three years. If an actuarial valuation reports an unfunded liability, plan member contribution rates and employer contribution rates are increased equally, and temporarily, so as to pay off the unfunded liability over 15 years, as we saw in July of 2010 when contribution rates increased by 1.04% for both employer and employee. As well, teachers increased contributions by another 1.0% toward future inflation indexing.

The intent of this process is to keep the plan at or near a funding ratio of 100%. Over the past decade, which has been a very challenging one financially, this funding strategy has been holding up remarkably well. (Table 2)

Providing pension coverage to public sector workers through BC's public sector pension plans is definitely much fairer to future

taxpayers than the alternative of not providing pension coverage.

One-third of Canadian seniors rely primarily on OAS and GIS for their retirement income. This is what tends to happen to lower- and middle-income workers whose employers do not provide an adequate pension benefit. Future taxpayers will bear the cost of

The surest starting point is to understand that the UK's public sector pension plans and BC's public sector pension plans are completely different types of financial institutions.

supporting those retirees, and they will do so without the assistance of plan member contributions, or accumulated investment returns.

BC's public sector pension plans are important financial institutions that serve some half-million members and about a thousand employers very well. They are better designed and better managed than most of their foreign counterparts.

The natural stress-testing of the past decade has revealed them to be superior performers. The plans have undergone many prudent reforms over the past decade. They deliver great value to members, employers, and taxpayers, and make significant contributions to the BC economy.

An appropriate reaction for Teachers' Pension Plan members and other British Columbians to the UK public sector pension turmoil would be to be thankful that we are not in a similar mess, and to appreciate the prudent arrangements and management that characterize BC's public sector pension plans.

Bruce Kennedy, executive director, Pension Board Secretariat, which oversees three public pension plan boards in BC.

Table 1
BC Public Sector Pension Payment Amounts for 2010
Dollars per Year

| | Pension Plans | | | |
|---------|---------------|----------------|-----------|----------|
| | Municipal | Public Service | Teachers' | College |
| Median | \$11,241 | \$14,440 | \$28,432 | \$17,597 |
| Average | \$15,498 | \$18,197 | \$28,698 | \$19,746 |

Table 2
Funding Ratio as at Valuation Date—percent funded

| Valuation Date | Pension Plans | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|---------|
| | Municipal | Public Service | Teachers' | College |
| December 31 | | | | |
| 2002 | | 105% | 97% | |
| 2003 | 96% | | | 97% |
| 2005 | | 94% | 94% | |
| 2006 | 102% | | | 98% |
| 2008 | | 103% | 98% | |
| 2009 | 97% | | | 99% |
| 2011 | | 98% | | |

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THE ADVENTURE TRAVEL COMPANY Tour, cycle, trek, walk, volunteer, and more! As an individual, family or group — we have the perfect adventure for you! Call Laura at 604-659-2887, e-mail: broadway@atcadventure.com, www.atcadventure.com

POSITANO, ITALY. Private home for 2 overlooking spectacular Amalfi Coast. \$2900 Can/mo. Contact: jbmoir@telus.net

OCEANSIDE vacation suite in Victoria, BC. Weekly rental, visit <http://judyak.shawwebpace.ca>, 250-380-6682.

SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, Mexico. Furnished 2 bdrm. apartment, large roof terrace with views. Walk to La Paroquia or Parque Juarez. Available from June. <http://musicplanet.com/SMA>. \$650 US/mo. 250-757-9604 or jwells@shaw.ca.

Classified

SUNSHINE COAST Pender Harbour, oceanfront cottage, 1 bdrm, beach and dock. \$400/wk. spring, \$500/wk. summer. 604-467-3978. susanwalker@telus.net, www.penderharbourcottage.ca

CULTUS LAKE 3 bdrm. cottage, 100 ft. to lake, N/P, N/S, avail. June 1-July 22, \$800/wk. Phone 604-464-2890 or delia_cooper@telus.net

KELOWNA Vacation home for rent, located 1/2 block off Abbott St. on Beach Ave. Fully furnished house, 4 bdrms, sleeps 9. Less than a 3 min. walk to beach, 10 min. walk to downtown. \$1500/wk. E-mail enquiries to: traceynoble@shaw.ca

SALT SPRING ISLAND, BC vacation rental for June 2012. 3 bdrm. home. \$1500/in advance. 1 cat. References required. 250-537-1122.

GABIOLA ISLAND GETAWAY, 2 bdrm. 1,000 sq.ft. private suite in waterfront home, south facing, sandy beach. Gas BBQ, hot tub. \$630-\$900/wk. Ideal for families. Photos at: www.staygabriola.com, email: info@staygabriola.com

GOLFING/CYCLING at Whistler! Retired? Rent 2-3 weeknights on a regular basis through the golf season or reg (wkend/mo). Price to negotiate. 3 bdrm, 2 1/2 baths, cable, internet, barbecue, in-house bike storage. Private outdoor space. Ref. req. Summer weeks \$1000/wk. (604-228-4432)

LAKE COWICHAN Our lovely 4 bdrm, 4 bath, waterfront family home on Cowichan Lake is available for July rentals. Contact lmcdaniel@shaw.ca

MAYNE ISLAND Cozy cottage for rent. Two doors from beach, \$150/nt, \$750/wk. 604-820-8198, krbisset@hotmail.com.

RENT/EXCHANGE

VANCOUVER Clean, bright, quiet, centrally located condos at Robson & Bute. 1 bdrm. \$95. Daily/wkly/mthly rates. 604-608-4268, dbemc@hotmail.com

VANCOUVER-VERNON EXCHANGE Recently retired Vernon couple wish to exchange 4 bdrm, 2.5 bath family view home for Vancouver house or condo. Fenced yard; 10 min. to beaches, 40 min. to Silver Star; will consider exchange options. bdharris52@yahoo.com

TAKING SUMMER COURSES? Modern furnished accomodation close to SFU and BCIT. On major bus route. Available May 1st-August 31st. Includes wireless internet, flat screen TV and bar fridge in room, all utilities, laundry, fully equipped kitchen. Contact Teresa at 1-778-987-4554.

OCEAN PARK S. Surrey. 1 bdrm. suite for rent in residential area. Utilities incl. Contact 604-535-9315. Avail. Spring 2012.

VICTORIA. Cadboro Bay, self-contained, bachelor suite in private home near UVic. Separate kitchen and bathroom (not shared). Avail. May. \$725/mo. 250-477-1185. BoHansen@shaw.ca

WANTED: 2 bdrm. furnished accommodation, July or August, centrally located in Vancouver, preferably close to downtown. 2 adults, 2 children. Contact: Joan 604-266-9959.

SQUAMISH. Clean, bright, colourful, furnished 3 bdrm townhouse available June, July, Aug. for nightly, weekly, monthly rentals. Whistler and Vancouver each 45 min. drive. Contact 604-848-4321 or scargo@hotmail.com.

MISCELLANEOUS FOR SALE

VARIETY – THE CHILDREN'S CHARITY Working with children is your passion. Leaving a legacy to Variety in your Will for BC's kids is your gift of a lifetime. There are estate planning benefits too. Contact Peter Chipman or Paul Spelliscy for information. Toll free 310-KIDS (5437) or 604-320-0505 or e-mail peter.chipman@variety.bc.ca

FIELD TRIPS. K-12 curriculum based. Burns Bog Conservation Society, 604-572-0373.

RETIRED? Join the BC Retired Teachers' Association. The BCRTA Insurance Plans offer: Travel, Home, Life and Legacy Planning, Long Term Care, Scholarship for Member Dependent, Competitive, Affordable, Comprehensive. For more information, go to www.bcrta.ca or call 604-871-2260, 1-877-683-2243.

PENSION QUESTIONS? Ask Arnie – now retired and available for expert, personal, one-to-one consultation including pension estimates, options, bridge, CPP/OAS, and pension splitting. Reasonable rates. Call Arnie Lambert at 604-354-5624 or e-mail arnielambert@shaw.ca

FRENCH FIELD TRIPS. Contact Sandy, Burns Bog Conservation Society, 604-572-0373.

FOR PEAT'S SAKE. A classroom study on Burns Bog and other peatlands. K-7 curriculum based. 206 pages, \$59.95 plus HST. Special rate for multiple copies. Burns Bog Conservation Society, 604-572-0373.

SCHOOL TATTOOS 1,000 tattoos with your school's logo \$149. Visit www.schooltattoos.ca, E-mail info@schooltattoos.ca or call 613-567-2636.

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DO YOU NEED ADDITIONAL INCOME? Are you a qualified teacher, or do you have a university degree? Could you provide a single room, 3 meals per day and teach English to a foreign student in your own home in the Vancouver region? Rates from US\$600-US\$825 per student per week. Please reply to: Paul Tagney, hlicanada@yahoo.ca

TEACH WITH TIANJIAO English (and see China for free). Teach for 10, 20 or 40 weeks (20 and 40 week assignments will have priority) in Xiamen, Fujian. The package includes return airfare, accomodation and a stipend. For further information, contact jim@canadatj.ca

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FOR SALE. Excellent Rental Investment Property in Vernon/Silverstar. This property is located in the heart of Silverstar Village Ski Resort. Sleeps up to 10 and comes fully furnished. For more info. contact Mandy at mandydhilton@yahoo.com

PRICE REDUCED. 2 bd. suite in 55+ RiverBend Seniors Community, Kamloops, \$1950/mo. Spacious. Welcoming. Wheelchair friendly. Avail. immediately. catherine_steele@hotmail.com, 604-408-1023 (Vancouver)

PRIVATE PENTHOUSE-STYLE CONDO White Rock. Oceanview from every room in this spacious condo. Top floor (3rd), S/W corner. Approx. 1700 sq.ft., 3 bdrms. Crowns. Lead doors off full kitchen. Grande master bdrm, walk-in closet, powder room, full ensuite, electric F/P, and balcony. One full guest bath. Ensuite laundry. Neutral decor. Large, glassed-in, main balcony. All appliances. Two car park. 8x10 storage. Steps to shopping, transportation, and beach. Classic Tudor exterior. 55+ No pets. By owner \$429,000, 604-536-6749 or email: comrad@shaw.ca

NANAIMO panoramic oceanview, 3500 sq ft custom home with legal suite. \$724,900. Set atop a stunning hillside with million dollar homes in sunny Departure Bay. With 3 bdrm & 4 bath, hardwood floors, heat pump, rv parking & gas range stove. So many features to mention, call Jay Deleskie or Jim Johnson at 1-866-664-3444 to get more info or go online at www.nanaimojim.com, Coldwell Banker Vancouver Island Realty

HOME BUILT TO PERFECTION by a custom home builder, 2010, on park-like acreage. Main living area floor 1100 sq.ft. with full bath. Second floor 800 sq.ft.: 3 bdrms, reading room, south facing veranda off master and full bath with claw-foot soaker tub. Walk-out basement: serviced mortgage helper suite. Three bay storage shed. Corral with covered area. Two car garage. Near schools. Recreation paradise: minutes to lakes, hiking, golf; snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. See www.shuswap.tourism.ca. 75 min. to Kelowna International Airport. Priced under appraised: \$439,000. Please call Wendy and Gary at 250-833-4312.

PD calendar

MAY 2012

5 Vancouver. "Investigating Our Practices 2012," 15th annual conference. Co-sponsored by the UBC Faculty of Education and the BCTF. Teachers from different educational contexts share their investigations, understandings and questions. Registration fee \$25 (\$15 students). Lunch and refreshments included. Scarfe Education Building, 2125 Main Mall, UBC. For more info about IOP 2012, visit www.eplt.educ.ubc.ca/iop or contact Judy Paley at 604-822-2733 judy.paley@ubc.ca.

6-8 Vancouver, BC. Child and Youth Mental Health Matters. Conference brings together an interdisciplinary group of professionals working in the field of mental health to share knowledge and experiences related to child and youth mental health. Three themes: Parental mental health, children of parents with mental illness and young carers. A forum for focusing on the needs of families as they struggle with issues related to mental health concerns across the generations. The overall goal is help us develop a common language and understanding of the needs of young people and families. We hope to enrich our collective knowledge of mental health strategies, best practices and the latest research in order to improve outcomes for young people and families. For information visit our website www.interprofessional.ubc.ca, or contact us at ipcde2@interchange.ubc.ca or 604-827-3112.

11 Alert Bay. BCRSSTA (British Columbia Rural and Small Schools Teachers' Association) Annual conference "Learning from Each Other" featuring innovative school organization from Zeballos Elementary, as well as presentations on teaching practices from other North Island rural communities. Host school: Alert Bay Elementary. Contact information: cmacdonald@sd85.bc.ca or vcivey@explornet.com.

JULY 2012

2-20 Quebec City. Institut de Français, UBC à Québec, French Bursary Program for Teachers. This French immersion program is intended for all teachers and administrators interested in learning or improving their French language skills. Visit www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/quebec or call toll-free 1-866-528-7485.

3-4 Vancouver. Interactive Whiteboards: Teaching & Learning. A two-day summer institute designed for beginning through advanced users of Interactive Whiteboards (SMART Boards). Participants will work on developing literacies, lessons, and learning strategies that can be used in the classroom, focusing teaching lessons that engage students in active learning in many curriculum areas. <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/WhiteBoards2012>. Repeats August 27-28.

9-13 Castlegar, BC. Restorative Justice: Transforming education through peace and reconciliation. This summer program will deepen your understanding of restorative justice and how its theory and practice relates to education and socialization of our children. This course will take restorative justice (most recently called transformative justice) far beyond the realm of victim and offender, to provide a framework for not only responding to conflict but also to building cultures of peace in our education system. <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/tfp2012>.

9-13 Vancouver. Recurring Questions of Technology. A five-day UBC/SFU summer institute with

leading scholars exploring how technology, as a particular regard for tools and techniques, reflects a state of consciousness that bears on our ideas of learning. These questions involve educational issues of culture and history, language and knowledge, identity and difference. <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/rqt2012>.

9-14 Toronto. Historical Thinking Project. This exciting institute will take you on an exploration of historical thinking, while examining the themes of immigration and aboriginality. As well, we will look at the broader substantive theme of cultural exchange across borders. <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/htp2012>.

AUGUST 2012

13-15 Parksville. Achieving Excellence in Writing Annual Summer Seminar, presented by Susan Augustyn, provides an exceptionally effective method of teaching writing to children. Covering various stylistic techniques as well as structures, both expository and fictional writing are addressed. The material is structured and easy to teach. Provides a powerful tool for teaching students to write effectively. Meeting the requirements of both criteria-based assessment and ministry performance standards, ideal for teachers eager for their students to achieve excellence in writing. For teachers with classes from Grades 2-11. Contact Susan Augustyn at saugustyn@shaw.ca or phone 250-248-6434.

21-23 Mill Bay, Vancouver Island. AIM Summer Institute West. Location: Brentwood College School (2735 Mount Baker Road, Mill Bay). Learn about the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM) and experience language education that really works. AIM blends the best of language acquisition theory and brain-based research with interactive, systematized and engaging classroom practice, creating astounding results. You will learn how AIM gives students a working fluency in the target language in less than 100 instructional hours. Keynote John De Mado. AIM Summer Institute participants can apply for two Seattle University credits. For more information go to: <http://www.aimlanguagelearning.com/index.php/browse/category/id/Summer%20West2012> or call toll free 1-800-668-6288.

29 Vancouver, BC. Interactive Whiteboards: Kindergarten teachers. For Kindergarten teachers focusing on designing and creating interactive teaching and learning experiences for young children. Learn how to use Interactive Whiteboards in motivational and engaging ways throughout the school day and in various curriculum areas. Teachers will work on developing literacies and learning strategies that can be used with five- and six-year old students. <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/KindergartenWB2012>.

Future October PSA days BCTF procedure statements: 30.A. 14 That for the purposes of a province-wide PSA day, the BCTF supports the third Friday in October as the day on which all districts hold a professional day, except in years in which Thanksgiving Monday falls in the same week, in which case the fourth Friday would be the designated day. 36.30.10: That the BCTF's PD Calendar not publish PD events by outside agencies scheduled for the provincial PD day.

2012-13: October 19, 2012
2013-14: October 25, 2013
2014-15: October 24, 2014
2015-16: October 23, 2015

PD Calendar website: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProDIPD-Calendar.cfm
Additions/changes—contact Betty Goto at bgoto@bctf.ca

Remembrance Day in March

By Karen Larsen

A very special remembrance was enacted during the March 2012 R.E. Mountain Secondary School trip to France. The ceremony was held at the *Bény-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery* in Normandy.

The 2,049 headstones in this cemetery commemorate Canadian WW 2 soldiers killed on D-Day 1944 as well as subsequent military lives lost during the early stages of the Battle of Normandy.

REMSS teacher Paul Milette designed a simple ceremony complete with student readings, the singing of our national anthem, candle-lighting, presenting red and white roses, and the laying of student notes of thanks (written by students from Horizon Secondary Catholic School on cards adorned with red poppies). The observance was bilingual, with the French portion executed by students from the Val Caron, Ontario school (this group, who eagerly participated in the event, was paired with us by the educational tour company) and the English portion by students from R.E. Mountain Secondary School.

An extremely compelling activity followed the formal service. Each of the 25 BC and Ontario students were given the name of a Canadian soldier and the location of his headstone. Earlier that morning, the students had written notes of remembrance on paper flags. The students sought out "their" soldier, placed a flag at his headstone, and spent time in thoughtful reflection at his marker.



When asked to share the most memorable moment of her entire European adventure, REMSS teacher Lynn Gibson said, "Watching our students approach the graves with so much respect and the way they spent time with each soldier. It was very powerful."

Magdalena Koseos, a Grade 10 student, will always remember her soldier, S.H. Cole. She refers to him as "mine" because, after spending time pensively at his headstone she feels a special connection. Magdalena cited Private Cole as one of her most memorable trip moments.

Later in the afternoon, when we stood on Juno Beach looking out at the ocean...trying to imagine what it would have been like on the 6th of June, 1944, all of us thought about "our" soldier. We remembered that

they were sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers who never went home. Paul Milette asked us to think of our soldier every time we touched the card upon which his name was written. We did.

The cemetery grounds are impeccably landscaped, free of charge, by the French government. France granted Canada a perpetual concession to the cemetery land; there are no taxes levied. It was Canadian soil we stood on during our service.

While the graves are predominantly Canadian, the cemetery includes four British and one French grave. The French grave belongs to a French resistance soldier (with no known relatives) who fought and died alongside the Canadians. Bény-sur-Mer contains the remains of nine sets of brothers, a record for a



Second World War cemetery. All of us acknowledged the grave of Reverend (H/Capt.) Walter Brown, the only chaplain executed in World War 2.

This experience has given each one of us a new perspective on the meaning of Remembrance Day.

I know that I will continue to think of my 21-year-old soldier, Private Sigurd Huser (from Fort Lake, Alberta), when November rolls around.

Karen Larsen teaches at R.E. Mountain Secondary School, Langley

BCTF solidarity workshop

Teachers make a difference globally

By Janet Nicol

Sometimes you have to travel outside the country to see your own society, Larry Kuehn, the director of British Columbia Teacher's Federation's International Solidarity Program, told 60 teachers at the "BC Teachers Making a Difference Globally" workshop this February.

And what do you see?

"We have common experiences as educators," Kuehn says. "We all deal with problems such as class size, regardless of the society."

The workshop, held in Vancouver and broadcast live online, gave teachers attending an opportunity to learn more about the committee's programs, consider volunteering for overseas projects, and discuss global issues.

BC teachers have worked with educators from other countries since the 1920s, Kuehn points out. When the Federation set up the International Solidarity Committee in 1981, sustainable links with colleagues, primarily in Africa and Latin America, were established. Funding has been made possible with an ongoing reserve, built up over time, of 1.86% of the BCTF fee.

"This work reflects the values of BC teachers," Kuehn says, stressing the intent is one of solidarity, not charity. "We are recognizing people as equals. We want the development of humanity at the highest level."

Latin American projects

The BCTF began working with teachers in Peru in 1986, setting up gender-equity training programs in collaboration with the Peruvian teacher union, Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores en la Educación del Perú (SUTEP) and CoDevelopment

Canada, a non-profit group in Vancouver.

More than 40 BC teachers have gone to Cuba over the past 12 years, teaching English language pedagogy workshops. Kuehn says this program is ending as the political climate of Cuba changes, but the Federation hopes to continue a program in English language lessons for Cuban trade unionists.

A delegation of BCTF teacher activists recently returned from Colombia, considered the most dangerous place on earth for educators (see bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=20672).

African projects

The Federation supports projects in Mozambique, emerging from years of civil war and coping with severe poverty. BC teacher, Yom Shamash, fluent in Portuguese among other languages, has worked with the teachers' union, the ONP, in developing a handbook for school union representatives.

BCTF worked with the South Africa Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) from its formation in 1990, offering funding to help organize SADTU as a non-racial teachers' union as apartheid was ending. Now SADTU is a union with some 350,000 members.

The Federation has also worked in Namibia since 1994, helping develop and carry out a long-term union training program and creating an English-language-proficiency mentorship program for teachers in 2011.

International conferences

BCTF representatives travel to Mexico City in May for an education forum on the impact of the North American Free-Trade Agreement

(NAFTA) on Canada, the US, and Mexico. Such conferences offer an opportunity to discuss governments' neoliberal policies, which are eroding public education, and to help educator activists identify common patterns, Kuehn says. The Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA) network facilitates exchange of information on resistance to neoliberal policies and the development of alternative pedagogies.

BC teachers have worked with educators from other countries since the 1920s...

Education Beyond Borders (Africa) and BCTF Namibia Project presentation

When Noble Kelly was in South Africa seven years ago, he began working with street kids, and eventually helped found an independent organization called Education Beyond Borders. It has sponsored three teaching projects in Kenya, with most of the 16 teachers coming from BC. The program has benefited from funding from the BCTF and other teacher groups in Canada.

Involved in BCTF projects in Africa is Susan Crowley, a retired teacher from Prince Rupert, who travelled to Namibia to help teachers acquire English language skills and methodology. Working closely with the Namibia National Teachers' Union (NANTU), a union representing 23,000 teachers in a sparsely populated country of 2.2 million, the project has also been

aimed at training teachers to train each other.

CoDevelopment Canada presentation—Steve Stewart

Steve Stewart, education program director of CoDevelopment Canada, an organization committed to partnerships in social justice between Canada and Latin America, says half of the non-profit's budget goes toward programs to strengthen teacher practices and rights in Central and South America.

CoDev also organizes and maintains the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA) network. This network monitors educational issues and involves researching, organizing forums, and maintaining a website and Facebook page.

CoDevelopment Canada depends on union funding, CIDA matching funding, and individual memberships. Stewart encourages teachers to learn more and consider becoming involved.

Peru presentation—Barb Ryeburn, Carol Jkanovich, Paula Naylor

Workshops on the pedagogy of teaching English to English-language teachers in Peru began four years ago, based on the successful BCTF projects in Cuba. Paula Naylor, a teacher in Vancouver, and Carol Jkanovich, a Spanish teacher on Vancouver Island, spoke about the lack of resources and autonomy faced by Peruvian teachers, and how the pedagogy workshops also offered an effective way to build union membership.

"Last year we set up a new model," adds Barb Ryeburn, a teacher in Cranbrook. "We paired four BC teachers with four Peruvian teachers and mentored them at our

first site, so they could teach our workshops in the second sites."

World Café

Teachers engaged in lively small-group discussions focused on different global issues: the changing role of Canada internationally; teacher pensions and mining investments; English language teaching—a colonial practice?; the impact of neoliberal policies on public education; solidarity versus charity; education of indigenous peoples.

Wrap-up

As the workshop concluded, Kuehn encouraged participants to spread the word by telling three people about their workshop experiences.

"If we make connections globally, we all learn," he says. "It's about interconnectedness."

BCTF International Solidarity Committee members: Susan Crowley (Prince Rupert); Nancy Hawkins (VESTA), Janek Kuchmistrz (VESTA, Adult Ed); Barb Ryeburn (Cranbrook).

Larry Kuehn, BCTF Director; Anne Field and Sharon Taylor, BCTF support staff program assistants.

For more information, visit:

- BCTF International Solidarity Program: bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=6292
- IDEA Network: <http://idea-network.ca/ideas>
- CoDevelopment Canada: www.codev.org
- Education Beyond Borders: www.educationbeyondborders.org

Janet Nicol teaches at Killarney Secondary, Vancouver and participated in the BCTF Peru project in 2010.