

Teacher

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Special Election Issue: What's at stake in 2001?



GAVIN HAINSWORTH PHOTO

Teachers rally in front of the B.C. Legislative Assembly to deliver the message that “It’s about time...” for a significant salary increase and improved working conditions in our schools. The delegates to the 2001 Annual General Meeting also made it clear that teachers will vigorously oppose any attempt to restrict our democratic right to bargain all terms and conditions of our employment.

by David Chudnovsky

The BCTF was formed in 1917 with three goals: to foster and promote the cause of education in B.C., to raise the status of the teaching profession in B.C., and to promote the welfare of the teachers of B.C. The BCTF has never contributed to or endorsed any political party but does canvas the views of political parties and candidates on issues related to education. In this special election issue of *Teacher*, we carry the responses of the leaders of the two parties in the B.C. Legislature to questions formulated by the BCTF Executive Committee. The issue also contains articles outlining some of the issues facing public education, not just in our province, but throughout the English-speaking world.

We hope this edition of *Teacher* will help ensure that the issues facing public education are addressed during the election. We encourage you to raise these issues and concerns

Education is the way society passes on its values and maintains itself. Public education is the way democratic society passes on its values.

with your family, friends, neighbours, and candidates during the provincial election. Education is the way society passes on its values and maintains itself. Public education is the way democratic society passes on its values. It is the only way

children from all backgrounds and communities can be ensured of the opportunity to reach their potential. There are powerful forces attempting to reduce the level of equity in our public schools. There are those who would like to see a market model imposed. Standardized tests designed to rank rather than assess are one of the tools of preference for this. The Fraser Institute has budgeted \$250,000 a year to produce and publicize studies supporting the private provision of education. The annual Fraser Institute rankings run in *The Province* are a good example of the misuse of assessment. As we go to print the West Vancouver School District is offering all-day Kindergarten to parents who can afford to pay for it.

Corporations have targeted schools as an untapped source of funds. These are more and

more contracts between schools and companies giving those

Many issues face public education. In engaging these issues we confront the welfare of our society at large.

companies access to students in our public schools. As a society we require children to attend school and should not then be selling access to those children.

Many issues face public education. In engaging these issues we confront the welfare of our society at large. That's why these questions are much too important to be left to the politicians.

David Chudnovsky is president of the B.C. Teachers' Federation.

Election 2001

What the leaders said

President David Chudnovsky and Teacher Editor Peter Owens met with the leaders of the NDP and Liberal Parties to discuss issues affecting education in B.C. These pages are a compilation of their written and oral responses.



Ujjal Dosanjh
Leader of the B.C. New Democratic Party



PETER OWENS PHOTOS

Gordon Campbell
Leader of the B.C. Liberal Party

1. The West Vancouver School District has established an all-day Kindergarten program where they offer the second half of the program for a fee. This type of for-profit initiative within the public school system threatens the foundation of an accessible and free public education for all students. Are you prepared to act to make such initiatives a contravention of government policy?

We believe as strongly as you do in public education and anything that undermines public education is unacceptable to us. We also know that it was never the intent of the *School Act* to allow this kind of situation to occur. We are committed to protecting universal access to public education and will act to clarify government policy in this regard.

The short answer to the last question is no. We believe that local school boards should have local autonomy to meet the needs of their students and their community. I think the West Vancouver board was within its rights to do that. I don't see it as undermining public education. I see it as providing people with a choice. We will also encourage school districts to make local decisions rather than having one-size-fits-all decisions imposed from Victoria.

2. Teachers want assurances that they will continue to have full and free collective bargaining on all matters of their employment relationship with the employers. Are you prepared to commit your party to support this basic right for teachers, free of essential service legislation or government intervention to end job actions or any further limitation of the scope of bargainable issues?

Our party believes that full and free collective bargaining between teachers and the employer is the best means of addressing matters of employment. Education is very, very important but so are the rights of teachers and other people who work in education and what kind of a message is it that we send to our children when we educate them at the hands of those that have no rights to free collective bargaining. We are very firm on that issue and there is no question about it, whatsoever.

David Chudnovsky: What about ordering CUPE back to work?

Well, I think that that was a very, very difficult issue. Ordering CUPE back to work was done very reluctantly. Underlying that dispute was the issue of how to bargain and it was almost an irreconcilable impasse. We introduced an Industrial Inquiry Commission and they did reach a collective agreement.

We would introduce essential services legislation to protect workers' right to strike while ensuring students are able to safely access school and classroom services throughout the collective bargaining process. Students being in school, learning from their teachers is essential. What I'm saying is I think our kids should be in the classroom and they should be learning. Now they may not get the full and complete education that they get on an ongoing basis and I'm sure there will not be extra curricular activities and all those things that make a complete public education system. But we do think that they should be kept in the classroom and we think it's important for children that they be kept in the classroom.

We are not today contemplating constraining the scope of bargaining but what I want to be careful about, when I look at the scope of bargaining, I believe our obligation is to say what's in the public interest here and will act in the public's interest always. Certainly that's not something I'm contemplating today. I don't know what we'll be contemplating in six years.


David Chudnovsky: At our AGM last month, teachers passed a motion without dissent directing us to vigorously oppose any attempts by government to limit full and free collective bargaining for teachers. I'm anxious that we not face the kind of disruptions that have plagued the Ontario school system for the past five years. Given the consensus among teachers on essential services, do you worry about that?

Sure, I don't want to have to—I'm not looking for disruption in the system. I think one of the reasons that we're looking at essential services is that the system has been disrupted and we should recognize that.

3. Teachers believe the current bargaining structures include a bargaining agent for employers that is not publicly accountable. Do you support changes to the bargaining structures that require the employer agent to be more publicly accountable for its actions?

The model in Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) provides accountability through local school boards. The B.C. Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) is accountable to its members—school boards—which are elected. Having said that, Bill 7 expressly calls for the Industrial Inquiry Commission (IIC) to review bargaining structures in K-12 and make recommendations on what, if any changes, should be adopted to improve the current bargaining model. Consultation with the BCTF is an important part of those considerations.

We have no plans to change the current bargaining structure.



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New Democratic Party

Liberal Party

4. Will your party advocate changes to existing bargaining structures so that bargaining can be more responsive to the needs not only of teachers, but also the needs of the community and students in public schools?

The recent agreement between the BCTF and BCPSEA to extend the K–3 class-size reduction and address the concerns with its initial formulation gives me increased confidence in the responsiveness of the bargaining structure. That both local school boards and the BCTF overwhelmingly supported this agreement is a very good sign that bargaining in the K–12 sector is improving. Nonetheless, government will consider proposals for the improvement of the process if such improvements are in the public interest. As well, Bill 7 expressly calls for the IIC to review the bargaining structure in K–12 and to make recommendations on what, if any, changes should be made. Consultation with the BCTF is an important part of those considerations.

We have no plans to change the current bargaining structure.

5. Improvements in education funding are essential to ensure quality education continues to be delivered in public schools. What commitment does your party have to improving educational services by increasing funding for public schools?

Since 1991, B.C. has invested more than \$30 billion in education funding and is one of the only provinces in Canada that has consistently increased its financial commitment to education over the past decade. The increase in funding is much greater than the rate of increase in the population. The standard of education offered in British Columbia is admired by other jurisdictions. While other jurisdictions have maintained or decreased support for education, British Columbia has increased support.

Education is our number one priority. It is vital that we give our children the best chance to succeed and that means we have to provide the best possible education system. However, in order to pay for the education system that we are all striving for, we need to have an economy that is growing and generating revenues for government coffers. That’s why we have proposed an economic package that will encourage investment, opportunity for growth, and job creation.

One of our primary investments has got to be in our teachers. I believe that one of the biggest cultural changes and societal changes we’re going to have to face is that for us to provide a healthcare system that works and an education system that works, we’re going to have to recognize that the most important component of those changes are the people—the caregivers in healthcare and the teachers in the classrooms. Those are our goals and objectives.

Other areas that we’re concerned about are areas like arts and physical education, which seem to get cut back on a regular basis and we don’t think that’s right, special needs children, First Nations children. Our goal is textbooks, educational resources, all those things, we feel have not been properly funded.

6. Teachers support a process of school self-assessment, but find the existing ministry accreditation process requires too much time and energy for teachers, emphasizes standardized test results inappropriately, and is of dubious value to school improvement. Does your party support a school self-assessment process that leads to school improvement as determined by the people who work at the school and their community?

The current accreditation process is strongly supported by parents, principals, district administrators, trustees, and the aboriginal community. It is seen as a process that supports school improvement as well as local accountability. Accreditation reports are based on performance information derived from a wide variety of sources, including examination results, teacher judgments, opinion surveys, and school completion results.

The process was revised last year to reduce workload, especially for teachers, in response to teachers’ concerns about workload. The implementation of the accreditation policy has been monitored throughout the year, and all indications are that teacher workload has been greatly reduced.

An advisory committee with representation from the associations representing teachers, parents, principals, superintendents, CUPE, trustees, and the Aboriginal community meets regularly to review the accreditation program and provide advice about improvements.

We support an assessment process that includes people who work at the school and in the community.

7. Currently the Ministry’s Foundation Skills Assessment program does not provide valid and authentic assessment of the work of students. Will you rely on teacher judgment and assessment in their everyday work with students as the most valid method for assessing student achievement?

The government values teacher judgment and classroom-based assessment of student achievement. This is why the Ministry of Education has worked with teams of B.C. teachers to develop suggested, not mandated, assessment strategies in the Integrated Resources Packages (IRPs) for B.C. curriculum, as well as the cross-curricular Performance Standards, and the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA). In addition, for the purposes of reporting progress to parents, student performance in Grades K–11 is fully based on teacher judgment; in Grade 12, 60% of a student’s mark is based on teacher judgment/evaluation in the 21 subjects that have provincial examinations.

The FSA tests are made in B.C. tests, put together by B.C. educators, marked by B.C. educators. And we should use them the way they were intended, to take this as one indicator of how we can improve the education system for our students.

All ministry communications regarding the Foundation Skills Assessment confirm the importance of classroom-based assessment and stress that FSA provides teachers, parents, and students with additional, external information about student performance based on a particular set of tests, at a particular point in time.

Classroom assessment and provincial assessment both have roles to play in improving learning for B.C. students.

We would continue with the Foundation Skills Assessment but I don’t think it’s the only tool to use. I don’t think we should become overwhelmed by any uni-dimensional testing process. I do think people want to see what results we’re getting and I’m a big fan of results so I understand and I talk to teachers occasionally about these things.

The relationship between teachers and students is the most important component in the educational experience for students. We believe a teacher’s judgment is the central part of assessing student achievement.

8. Increasingly, school boards are turning to corporate sponsorships to obtain funding for public education, frequently exposing students to commercial advertising. Do you support constructive steps to eliminate commercialization in public schools and to ensure students can learn in a healthy and productive environment free from advertising and other commercial intrusions?

Government understands and shares your concern; that is why the Ministry of Education has its own corporate sponsorship policy that makes educational value the paramount consideration in developing relationships with corporate or other organizations. The ministry encourages school boards to have similar policies to guide their decisions.

We do not believe that schools should have to raise money for instruction in the classroom.

I can remember when I was in school going around and people would make contributions to our yearbook, or they’d make contributions to our basketball team—I never thought it was advertising and I never thought it was commercialization, I thought it was community support. I want community support, I think those are good things. I think making sure that parents can help in schools and those sorts of things are good things. We certainly don’t believe that schools should have to raise money for the basics, you shouldn’t have to raise money for your textbooks, you shouldn’t have to raise money for the educational infrastructure that you have or the teaching resources that you need and I wouldn’t want that sort of intrusion. I don’t want to close people out from supporting the public education system but I think we have to always be vigilant and remember that it’s a public education system, it’s not a private education system.



New Democratic Party

Liberal Party

9. *Catching up and keeping up with the rapid changes in information and communications technology is expensive and requires extensive teacher training. Some people are concerned that the focus on technology is leading to a loss of other valuable programs such as the arts, music, and drama. Will you provide funding to keep up with technology without endangering other key school programs?*

Technology initiatives should augment and supplement students' learning. This is why we will continue to focus on integrating technology into school curriculum. Technology will enhance student learning in areas such as social studies, language arts, mathematics, and science. We do not intend to replace programs, such as drama, the arts, and music, but rather enhance them with the use of technology for learning.

Technology funding is separate from district operating funds and does not affect other programs.

We are committed to providing the technology needed to prepare students for the world of work. Research indicates that parents are worried their youngsters will not be prepared to get a job in today's technological world. It is our job, as government and teachers, to make sure students have the tools they need to succeed in their adult lives.

Over the last 6 years, our government has committed \$170 million (\$100 million in PLNet funding and \$70 million in technology grants) in funding in technology grants to be used for hardware, software, and teacher training. Where school districts decide, they are able to augment technology funding with some of their own funding to meet technology requirements of their district.

This year we have provided school districts \$17 million in targeted technology funding to help ensure schools have the resources they need to keep up with the rapid changes in technology and more importantly to ensure that all B.C. students have access to technology.

In addition, this year, government spent an additional \$1.6 million in a teacher-training program to integrate information and communication technologies into teaching and learning. Beginning this spring, more than 1,000 teachers will be supported to develop strategies and activities to integrate communication technology into the classroom in ways that will help students develop research and information literacy skills based on a mentorship model.

The BCTF is supportive of this program.

We believe that computer literacy is an education priority. We want more computers in homes and schools and will increase technology training for teachers. We will work to eliminate the regional and socio-economic barriers to high-speed Internet access and focus technology where it can be most effective in helping teachers to improve student learning.

10. *Charter schools constitute a form of privatization within the public school system. The public system already offers a wide range of options and alternatives for parents and students. Where do you stand on the introduction of charter schools into B.C.'s public education system?*

The government does not support charter schools in the B.C. public school system. I agree with the observations that schools in B.C. offer an incredibly rich and diverse educational experience.

We support creating more flexibility and choice in our education system. This could include more traditional schools or other innovative options. We have no plans to introduce charter schools.

11. *Do you support the idea of merit pay for teachers? Do you support job security for teachers based upon the performance of students on standardized tests?*

The government does not support merit pay for teachers or teacher job security based upon the performance of students on standardized tests.

Our goal should be to encourage innovation and excellence among teachers because the quality of our teachers has a direct effect on student success. Generally I like the idea of merit pay, it would be dishonest for me to say I don't. I don't know how it works in the public education system right now. It's not something I'm rushing around saying "I've figured out how to handle merit pay."

12. *B.C. teachers are opposed to recertification for teachers. Where do you stand on this issue?*

Issues of certification are the responsibility of the B.C. College of Teachers. My view is that teachers in British Columbia are among the best educated and best prepared in the world. It is typical of them to maintain high standards for themselves and to engage in many activities that ensure that they are apprised of the most recent developments in their areas of responsibility.

We believe in life-long learning for teachers. We think that every professional has a responsibility to stay up-to-date, we believe that our teachers are trying to stay up-to-date, are looking at best practices. We have no plans to implement a teacher recertification program.

13. *Polling results obtained in the fall of 1999 show that 88% of British Columbians support class-size limits in collective agreements. Do you support further reductions in the class size limits of all levels (K-12) in B.C. public schools? Do you support the continued right of B.C. teachers to negotiate those limits into their collective agreement?*

The government supports the right of B.C. teachers to negotiate class-size limits into their collective agreements. As I indicated earlier, government believes that full and free collective bargaining between teachers and the employer is the best means of addressing matters of employment.

We agree smaller class sizes are a generally laudable goal provided schools have the flexibility to adjust those sizes to accommodate local needs. We believe that schools should have the flexibility to determine class sizes based on the make-up of any given school population.

14. *An analysis of the current teaching force indicates a major shortage of qualified teachers is likely to occur in the next few years. What steps would you take to ensure that B.C. will always have an adequate source of qualified teachers to fill the positions in public schools in all parts of the province?*

The shortage of teachers affects particular subject areas at the secondary level—mathematics, chemistry, physics, modern languages, etc.—and manifests itself differently in different regions of the province. Government, through the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, are working with a consortium of organizations, including the BCTF, that collectively have responsibility for addressing the shortage of teachers. Among the strategies under consideration are forgivable loans to beginning teachers prepared to work in communities where there are teacher shortages, assistance to help teachers bridge from one teaching area into an area in short supply, relocation incentives for people willing to work in areas where there are shortages, specialized teacher preparation programs like the one that is helping to meet the shortage of chef instructors, etc.

Within 90 days of taking office, a B.C. Liberal government will introduce a dramatic cut to personal income tax. And by the end of our first term, British Columbians in the bottom two tax brackets will pay the lowest base personal income tax rate in Canada. We must take this step to retain skilled workers in B.C. and attract skilled workers from other jurisdictions.

We understand that British Columbia, like other jurisdictions in North America, faces a daunting human resource challenge. We must be tax-competitive with other jurisdictions to attract and retain the educators that we need.

We will also establish an all-party Education Committee to consult with all education stakeholders. Teacher training and retention would be a priority of this committee. The NDP hasn't activated the Education Committee once in the past ten years.

New Democratic Party

Liberal Party

15. *Currently teachers spend a considerable amount of their time undertaking activities that can only be described as administrative—filling out forms—paperwork that often has little to do with teaching and other such activities. What will you do to free teacher time from such activities?*

I understand that the BCTF has raised this matter with the Ministry of Education and that talks between the Federation and the ministry are scheduled in the very near future. The ministry has indicated that it is willing to look at ways of reducing unnecessary paper work, so long as recordkeeping essential to student learning and safety is not compromised.

We want teachers to be able to focus their talents on educating our students. We would be prepared to review the impact of activities that detract from classroom learning. Teachers should have more time to work collegially to improve student learning.

16. *The Ministry of Education recently completed a review of special education. However, the review did not include an examination of special education funding. Improvement in the support the school system provides to students with special needs requires additional resources. What is your view on increasing funding for support and services to students with special needs?*

Improving the education of youngsters with special needs is a high priority for government. As you probably know, from 1991–92 to 1998–99, the total funded student enrolment (FTE) reported by school districts increased by 14%, while over the same time period, the total number of students reported and funded with supplementary special education funds has increased by 44%. The province currently spends over \$430 million annually for special education over and above the base-per-pupil funding provided to every student in B.C. public schools. School boards are required to spend at least this amount in support of special education services. Having said that, I am not convinced that serving youngsters with special needs is simply a matter of resources. We need to be more oriented to the results those youngsters have achieved. I am convinced that, with early intervention and similar initiatives, we can ensure that more students are successful and achieve a high standard of education.

We want the public education system to ensure that all students achieve their full potential. Students with special needs require special support. We will work with local school boards in an effort to ensure that happens.

17. *Research on early childhood education indicates that additional resources allocated at this stage of a child's development results in increased opportunities for success in later years. Do you support improving resource allocations for students in their early years of development, through the public-school system and in other community initiatives?*

Our government believes that ensuring children are supported is in their interests and the interests of the wider community. That is why we are expanding childcare, providing more resources to feed hungry children, ensuring a good beginning to school in small classes, and emphasizing early intervention to prevent school failure. As resources permit, we will expand these opportunities making them available to all children in British Columbia.

We agree that early childhood initiatives are critical to a child's long-term success. We support locally driven initiatives that enable early learners to maximize their educational experience. While you have not requested a comment on First Nations education, we do note that it is also an area of high need that requires the resources to help First Nations students achieve greater success rate.

18. *The BCTF is opposed to any inclusion of public education in the on-going trade talks called the General Agreement on Trade in Services, part of the World Trade Organization negotiations. Do you favour putting public education on the GATS table for negotiations?*

The government does not support putting public education on the GATS table for negotiations. Education is the most fundamental way of protecting one's culture and preserving one's identity as a province or a society. From my perspective, be it education, be it health care, be it water, they are not on the table.

We recognize that the standard of teaching in British Columbia is amongst the very best in the world. We will protect and maintain our high standards and quality of education. There is no way we will trade our high standard of education in any negotiations.

Accountability and high-stakes census testing: Myth and reality

by Sandra Davie

Spring 2000, after our “Say No to Accreditation” campaign and our disagreement with the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), my superintendent asked, “Why do teachers not want to be accountable?” I realized then that teachers are the victims of prejudice. No matter what we say or do, the myths around accountability and the value of high-stakes census testing have gained a foothold in the public consciousness, and our reasoned, principled arguments against them are automatically discarded as self-serving and irresponsible. We all have been victimized by this prejudice. What do we do about it? Maybe it's time we became vocal and challenged the prejudice at every opportunity. Let's start by looking at the myths and the realities.

Myth #1:“Teachers don't want to be accountable to the public.” This myth suggests that because we object to placing absolute importance on high government exam scores and to

drawing significant conclusions about schools from the data generated by FSA and government exams, we want to hide in our classrooms and do whatever we want. Well, the reality is vastly different. Teachers report to parents five times a year and are always available to meet with parents. We value discussions that emphasize a child's achievements, and we long for co-operative meetings to solve learning problems before they become chronic. In addition, we can be required to give an account of our practice at any time by students, by parents, and by administrators. Even when we are outside the classroom, our accountability extends for 24 hours a day. Behaviours that are deemed unprofessional can bring disciplinary investigation. What other group in society is held to such a high standard? And teachers accept the standard because we want to teach kids and do the best for kids. We just want people to understand that linking accountability with accreditation and high-stakes census testing is wrong-headed and not helpful in

the education of children.

Myth #2: “The administration of high-stakes census testing helps us teach kids.” The argument is that high-stakes census exams tell us where children are having difficulty and help us then to direct resources to remediate problems. The reality is that neither FSA results nor Grade 12 exam results give us information to help individual students. The FSA is not a diagnostic tool. It paints a broad picture of how well a small part of the curriculum has been learned. And those students who write Grade 12 exams are leaving the system, so remediation is impossible. The Grade 12 teacher sees each student's exam score, but getting specific information on class performance on various questions is difficult and may not be meaningful with the next class. And given that the information is not diagnostic, the argument that resources can be directed for remediation falls apart.

Myth #3: “When test scores improve, children are getting a better education.” The reality is that placing emphasis on high or improved test scores pressures

teachers to direct more and more time to exam preparation. The children's test scores may improve, but active participation, higher thinking skills, co-operative group learning, and hands-on discovery learning may be sacrificed. We value those practices because they promote more profound learning, so we could argue that we are jeopardizing a better education for our students. Emphasizing tests that send a message to our kids that if you don't do well on tests, you are not important. Some schools may discourage students from taking a government-exam course because their performance will bring the average down. That's a message that a public school system sends to its citizens at its peril!

Myth #4: “High-stakes census testing is a good use of taxpayers' money.” Well, let's examine that one. The cost of the tests is hard to come by, but for argument's sake, let us say that it costs the taxpayer six million dollars a year to run both sets of exams. Grade 12 exams have been running for approximately 20 years, and

PLAP/FSA for approximately 15 years. Doing the math, we see that \$105,000,000 has been spent over the last 20 years. Has the money been well spent? How do we know? What evidence is there that children in British Columbia are better educated than they were because of these tests? Who has assessed the assessors? And, more important, how many teachers could have been hired? How many extra classrooms could have been created? How many new schools could have been built? How much more support could have been provided for children with special needs?

The next time someone mentions the accountability myth, explain to them the level of accountability to which teachers are held. And the next time people suggest that high-stakes census exams improve education, remind them of what is lost in our educational practice, and what could have been done with the money spent over the last decade on those exams.

Sandra Davie is president of the Prince George Teachers' Association.

Class size: 34 years and counting

by Peter Owens

It was 1967 and teachers at the BCTF Annual General Meeting decided that it was time to get class sizes reduced. They began the “Under 40 Campaign” to ensure that no teacher would have to teach a class with more than 40 students. They decided that the BCTF would support any teacher refusing to teach a class over 40. Teachers who lost pay because they refused to teach classes over 40 would be paid by the BCTF until they had their jobs back or had employment elsewhere. This was a serious financial commitment by the teachers of B.C. to reduce the number of students in the classrooms of the province. That support was never required, boards responded positively.

Teachers rallied at the Agrodome in 1967 to bring attention to their demands for smaller classes. Burnaby and Vancouver teachers pressed their boards to negotiate class-size limits.

Two years later, the 1969 AGM defined a desirable class size as one where the class does not exceed 15 pupils. The wisdom of that position has recently been corroborated by the findings of the Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) class-size study begun in 1985 in Tennessee (see STAR).

In 1974, 900 Surrey teachers left their classrooms for a day and travelled to Victoria in protest of large classes. The result, through vigorous negotiations by the BCTF, was a three-year commitment by the NDP government to a significant reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio. Thousands of teachers were hired, and class sizes and the PTR were reduced.

A research study by Dr. Martin Olson in 1976 documented the benefits of smaller classes to teachers and students. He reported on nine generalizations that can be garnered from class-size studies at that time. They included:

- Students benefit from more individualized instruction.
- Teachers employ a wider variety of instructional methods.
- Students engage in more creative and divergent thinking processes.
- Students develop better

human relations with, and have greater interpersonal regard for, other students and their teacher.

These findings were not a surprise to teachers but were helpful in building public support for reducing class sizes.

The Social Credit government introduced legislation in 1987 allowing teachers to choose between forming associations without the right to strike and forming unions with full bargaining rights. All local teacher associations became unions, and almost all negotiated class-size limits through the first two rounds of local negotiations.

The NDP government imposed provincial bargaining in 1994. In the first round of provincial bargaining, the class-size provisions in local agreements were incorporated into the provincial agreement. In the second round, in 1998, a provincial agreement to introduce provincial class-size limits for K-3 was agreed to as a letter of understanding. In March 2001, the BCTF and the B.C. Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) representing school boards agreed to incorporate the letter of understanding into the provincial collective agreement.

Teachers know, and the research proves, that class size affects the success of students and teachers.

We have opened negotiations in the third round of provincial bargaining, and teachers have indicated that reducing class sizes from Grade 4 to 12 is a priority. Teachers know, and the research proves, that class size affects the success of students and teachers. The public and parents understand the importance of having class-size limits in the collective agreement.

The class-size campaign begun in 1967 continues, and this election provides an opportunity to gain a commitment from all candidates running for office to support the conditions necessary for the success of our students.

Peter Owens is an assistant director in the BCTF's Organization Support Division and editor of Teacher news-magazine.



Teachers rally at the Agrodome in Vancouver in 1967 to build support for better pay and teaching conditions, including smaller classes.

STAR

STAR involved more than 11,600 students from 1985 to 1998. In the STAR project, students and teachers were randomly assigned to various class-size conditions in Grades K-3: small classes of about 13 to 17, regular classes of about 22 to 26, and regular classes of about 22 to 26 with full-time teacher assistants. The students who were in small classes for the first four years of school performed better on nationally normed and criterion-referenced tests by the end of Grade 3. Students who had been in small classes for K-3 continued to move ahead of their grade level as they continued through to Grade 12. A greater proportion of those students wrote entrance exams for post-secondary institutions. The study found that students in small classes did the best. Students in regular classes were next, and students in regular classes with a full-time TA were third. The only variable in the study was the size of the classes. Students do better in academics, and their behaviour is better because it can be monitored and they can be taught appropriate behaviour for school. They develop a more positive attitude toward school and their parents become more involved. Teachers find it more rewarding to teach small classes.

Opponents of collective bargaining ignore benefits

by Garry Litke

In British Columbia today a group of vocal school managers continue to attack teachers' unions and their collective agreements. They argue that the lack of flexibility in those agreements is hurting public education. But, objective data shows that collective bargaining is good for public education because it helps both teachers and students.

The most obvious specific example is the reduction of class size. The public continues to support class-size limits in collective agreements, recognizing that reductions did not occur while managers had “flexibility,” i.e., management prerogative, but occurred only when

teachers pursued the issue at the bargaining table and on picket lines, and negotiated firm limits into the contract. A survey conducted by McIntyre & Mustel Research in 1997 and again in 1999 showed that support for class-size numbers in contract is increasing. A 78% support level in 1997 rose to 84% in 1999. For those with children in public school, support was 4% higher in both years.

Numerous studies, which are documented elsewhere, show conclusively that reduced class size improves student achievement. Collective bargaining alone is responsible for bringing that condition to British Columbia. Support for the

...the educators in this province recognize that a unionized teaching force and collective bargaining have improved education and produced results that were only dreamed of two decades ago.

integration of students with special needs is another example of the teachers' collective agreement supporting children. A wide variety of issues are covered, including assessment, teamwork, and implementation strategies.

Some critics say that unions care only about money, but while the economic function is the starting point of collective bargaining, it is not the end point. Before teachers became unionized and gained collective bargaining rights, bargaining did indeed pertain only to salary and benefits. Now contracts contain 130 or more items, all of which benefit teachers, students, and public education. This is direct testimony that the teachers' union does care for more than just the financial well being of its members.

The more unionized the teaching force, the better the student performance. The Institute for Wisconsin's Future recently examined the impact of collective bargaining on student achievement. The study looked at the relationship between levels of unionization among teachers and student test scores on the SAT college entrance

exams and the NAEP fourth-grade reading tests. Student performance on the tests was significantly better in states with high levels of unionization, when variables such as race, region, family income, and school spending were held constant. Average student scores on the SAT exams were 43 points higher in states where more than 90% of teachers were unionized than in states where less than 50% of the teachers were covered by collective agreements.

Good collective bargaining regulates the employer/employee relationship and, as such, is an exercise in self-government. Catherine Wedge, a lawyer from the Victory Square law firm, maintains that “collective bargaining is the most significant occasion upon which employees ever participate in making social decisions about matters that are important in their daily working lives. That is the essence of collective bargaining.”

Sometimes, the role of collective bargaining and the function of trade unions can be even greater, and Wedge says that the BCTF is a good example:

“The Federation is a compelling example of a union that has managed to secure in its collective agreements not only working conditions for teachers, but also provisions that improve the learning conditions for children. That is a remarkable achievement for a union.”

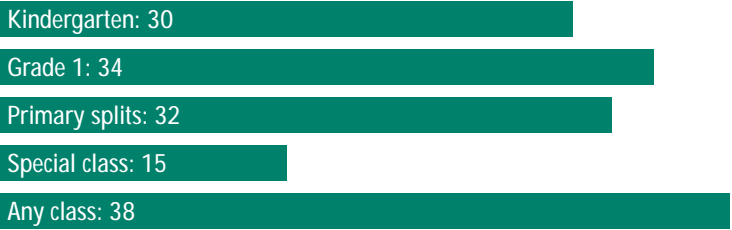
Collective bargaining is good for students, and it is good for teachers. Gone are the days when a superintendent could hound a teacher to the grave, when a principal could staff his school exclusively with attractive females, when transfers were handed out on the opening day of school, when only a select group obtained professional development, and when elementary teachers suffered from kidney infections due to extended duties without a break.

While some employers yearn for a return to unfettered management rights, the educators in this province recognize that a unionized teaching force and collective bargaining have improved education and produced results that were only dreamed of two decades ago. Public education is the beneficiary.

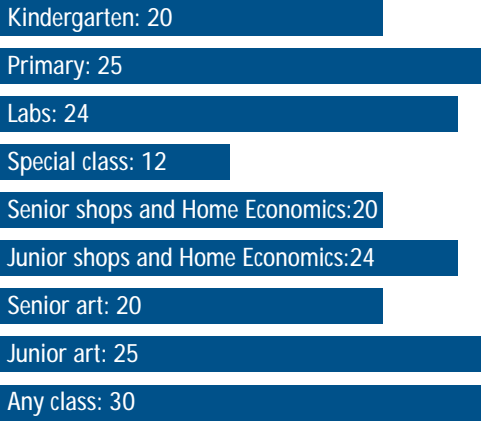
Garry Litke is an assistant director in the BCTF's Bargaining Division.

The 1967 “Under 40 Campaign” identified two categories:

Tolerable:



Desirable:



AGM 2001 Decisions regarding essential services

That the BCTF serve notice to all political parties in B.C. that B.C. teachers will vigorously oppose any attempts by government to limit full and free collective bargaining for teachers including any limitations or restrictions on the right to strike either through direct government interference or through the imposition of "essential services" legislation in education and any further restrictions on the scope of issues that teachers can bargain.

Carried without dissenting vote

That in the event of public education being declared an essential service, the BCTF Executive Committee call an emergency meeting of the Representative Assembly.

Carried without dissenting vote

Essential services designations under the Labour Relations Code

by Catherine Wedge

Fundamental to an understanding of collective bargaining as a legal concept is an awareness of the limits our judicial system has historically placed on collective action by employees.

The first prohibitions of collective bargaining occurred in the mid-1300s because of the labour shortage caused by the Black Death. The plague brought with it a scarcity of labour—which in turn created bargaining power in artisans and labourers—provoking national intervention by way of the Ordinance of Labourers in about 1350 and subsequently the Statute of Labourers and other related statutes.

The statutes compelled workers to remain with their employers and imposed both civil and criminal penalties for violations. The British legal treatment of labour contracts or contracts of employment has been dominated for centuries by the legal notions imbedded in those old statutes.

Labour contracts were accorded a different status at law than any other contractual

relationship. British courts later developed a doctrine known as "criminal conspiracy," which effectively outlawed unions. Under this doctrine, acts that were lawful when committed by one person became mysteriously unlawful when committed by several persons in concert. The premise that the objectives of organized workers were unlawful because they interfered with a basic principle of economics—namely, the sanctions of the marketplace: The market, and only the market, should govern the terms and conditions of employment and determine the worth of any given service. This deep suspicion of concerted activity by workers runs through the British common law.

Any concerted attempt by workers to increase the value of their work or have a say in the conditions of their work was seen as "restraint of trade" or interference with the marketplace and an invasion of managements' rights.

Collective bargaining is once again lawful because of the relatively recent statutory intervention based on public and social policy that recognized that collective bargaining is necessary to protect employees from the abuse of managerial power. The Labour Relations Code of B.C. makes collective bargaining lawful for teachers. Teachers were excluded from the Code until 1988.

A collective-bargaining regime is based on the recognition that the employee is in an inferior bargaining position to the employer, and that individual contracts of employment are not satisfactory as a regulatory mechanism in the workplace.

The economic function of collective bargaining is only the starting point in the case for collective bargaining; it is not the end point. The role performed by trade unions has never been narrowly monetary. The Federation is probably one of the best examples of a trade union whose role is much, much broader than that. The Federation is also a compelling example of a union that has managed to secure in its collective agreements not only working conditions for teachers but improved learning conditions for children. That is a remarkable achievement for a union.

Good collective bargaining attempts to subject the employ-



**Welcome
to the factory**

**The number of students per class
must be reduced through your actions**

A poster used to support our argument for smaller class sizes in 1973-74.

ment relationship and the workplace to the "rule of law." It attempts to create a more level playing field for employees in their dealings with their employer.

In my experience, collective bargaining is the most significant occasion upon which employees make social decisions about matters important in their daily working lives. That is the essence of collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining is an experience in self government. Instead of simply taking what the employer offers, you shape the offer through collective bargaining and you decide whether the offer is sufficient: That is the function of strike votes, strikes, and ratification votes.

Labour legislation rests on the premise that both sides of the dispute must be allowed to exert the maximum pressure in order to end the dispute quickly. Picketing provisions, strike-breaker or "antiscab" provisions, and strike and lockout provisions are all designed to

give both sides ways to exert pressure in a manner that gives neither side a leg up in the dispute. The theory is that maximum and equal pressure will bring a more timely resolution.

In industries that are deemed essential, the board takes a much more interventionist role by creating a "controlled strike," which permits the parties to exert maximum pressure on each other while at the same time monitoring issues of health and safety.

What services have been designated as essential in order to prevent "immediate and serious danger"? Services offered by healthcare workers, firefighters, police, health inspectors, and certain maintenance workers who ensure the safe operation of boilers and furnaces in large building complexes.

On a fair reading of Section 72 of the code, education should not be designated essential. That is because of the words "immediate and serious danger" to "health, safety, or welfare." But the wording of s. 72 is subject to legislative change, and the current wording is subject to interpretation by the Labour Relations Board.

Comparing healthcare to education is like comparing apples to oranges. But it is instructive to know the services within healthcare that have been deemed essential and, as important, the services that have been found not to be essential.

When job action occurs in acute-care hospitals, the only surgeries permitted to take place are those classified as urgent or emergent. Those are "essential." By definition, any elective surgery, regardless of the condition of the patient, is not urgent or emergent and therefore not essential. If you are booked for a hip replacement and are completely immobilized unless the surgery is performed, your surgery will be cancelled. Most day surgeries will be cancelled. Pre-admission clinics will be cancelled. Hospitals can take only urgent and emergent admissions. Beds must be closed wherever possible,

and even entire units where possible. Operating rooms are cut back dramatically, as are all areas of the hospital that work in conjunction with the ORs.

Overall, the ratio of patients to nurses becomes significantly higher, such that patients receive more basic care.

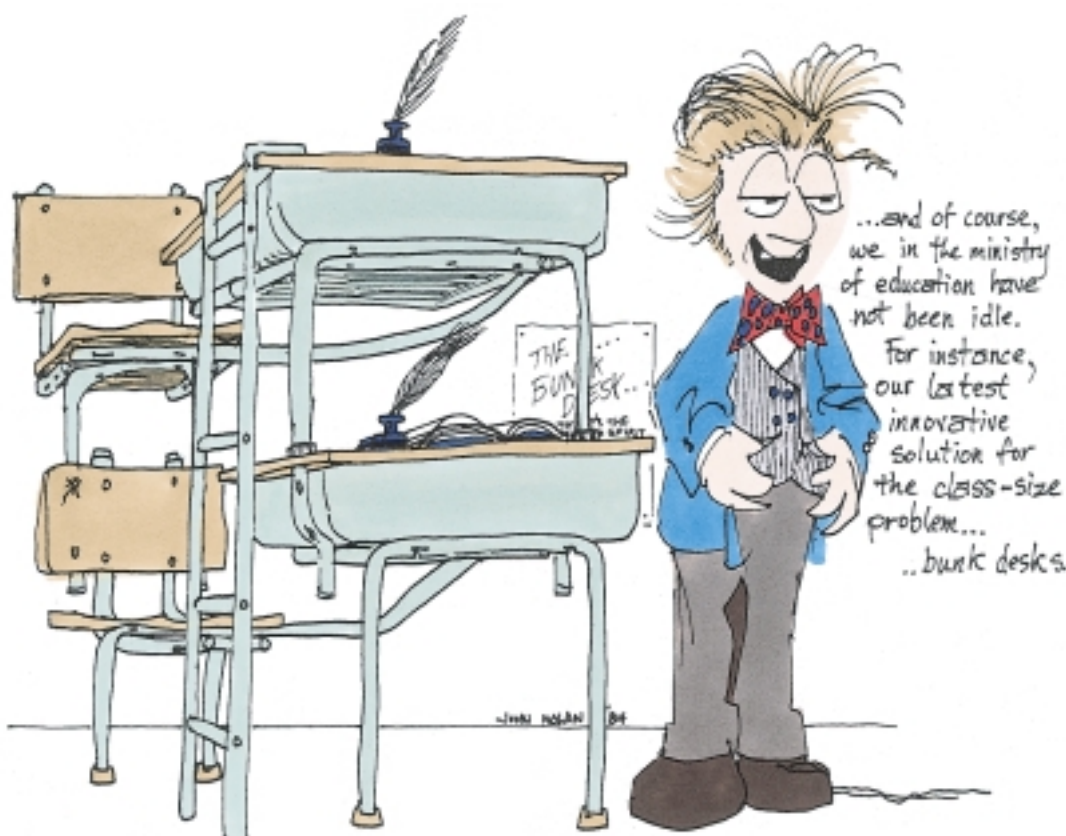
As many employees as possible are off the units and on the picket line. Conversely, excluded managers are required to roll up their sleeves and perform as nurses, porters, ward clerks, cleaners, and meal servers, and they must work at least 60 hours per week.

What are the steps in designating essential services? From the union's perspective, it is absolutely crucial to get the services defined as narrowly as possible. It is also crucial to get the number of employees working as low as possible. High numbers means a prolonged strike. The more work that is designated essential, the greater the prospect of the employer's successfully resisting the pressures of job action by the union.

Deprivation felt by the public serves as the only pressure point public-sector employees have. They must use that pressure if they want to succeed in collective bargaining. The LRB recognizes that. In the early 1980s, there was a lengthy municipal strike. Don Munroe, then chair of the Labour Relations Board, wrote a series of decisions concerning garbage disposal. He refused to limit the picketing by municipal employees that was preventing garbage pickup by private companies. Munroe said that in the public sector the public itself must be made to feel the brunt of the dispute. When garbage piles up, the public gets upset, and pressure is exerted on those in power to end the strike.

Do you want to be declared essential? No; it makes achieving your objectives in collective bargaining more difficult and makes the preparation for job action much more expensive and time consuming.

Catherine Wedge is a lawyer with Victory Square Law Office, Vancouver.



A Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association cartoon used to emphasize overcrowded classrooms in 1984.

Post-secondary education in the provincial election

by Maureen Shaw

The upcoming provincial election is critical for B.C. students and their families. In the past decade the provincial government placed a premium on expanding access by building capacity, funding more student spaces, and by making post-secondary education more affordable—freezing and recently, reducing, tuition fees. This election will determine what the next decade will bring.

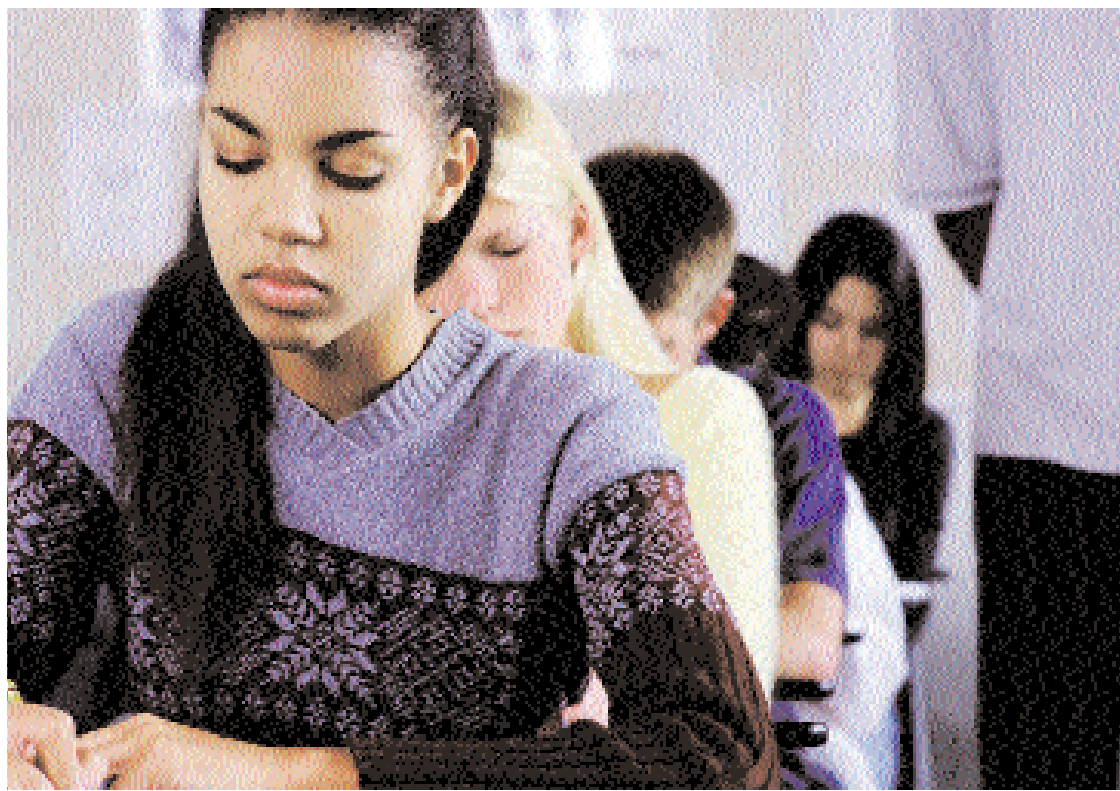
In anticipation of a provincial election, the post-secondary education organizations within the Coalition for Public Education (BCTF, B.C. Government Employees' Union, Canadian Federation of Students, Canadian Union of Public Employees, College Institute Educators' Association, and Confederation of University Faculty Associations of B.C.) identified key issues for voters and politicians. This article summarizes the issues.

Continued demand for further education

B.C. has a unique post-secondary education system that combines high quality comprehensive universities with a province-wide system of comprehensive colleges, university-colleges, institutes, and agencies.

At the beginning of the decade (1990-91) the public post-secondary education system contained about 109,000 student spaces. Ten years later (2000-01) government had added over 40,000 new spaces for students to the system—an increase of close to 30% and well ahead of other Canadian provinces.

Despite the growth, demand continues to increase from British Columbia's relatively large youth population, displaced workers, and those seeking additional post-secondary credentials, all of whom understand the trend toward a more highly educated



workforce. A B.C. Statistics report recently estimated that some 72.4% of projected job openings in B.C. between 1998 and 2008 will be in occupations requiring post-secondary, trades, or industry training beyond high school.

B.C. has traditionally relied on importing skilled and highly educated people. We know, however, that the pending retirement of a generation of highly qualified employees over the next decade will result in worldwide shortages. B.C. must educate more of our own future workforce, including teachers, nurses, doctors, child protection workers, trades, information technology, and other technical workers, to name just a few.

Financing post-secondary education

Over the past several years, government operating grants to B.C. post-secondary institutions have increased at a faster rate than in any other province. The combined effects of inflation and increased student numbers,

however, mean that institutions have fewer dollars on a per-student basis. Without adequate funds we have limited student services, less competitive

We know that providing public post-secondary education is an investment that governments need to make.

salaries and benefits, poor maintenance of the physical plant, and more pressure on students, educators, and staff.

We know that providing public post-secondary education is an investment that governments need to make. Where do the political parties stand on continuing to invest in increasing access and student spaces in B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions and providing adequate funding levels?

Providing more post-secondary opportunities will cost more, and there are debates about who should pay. Although the federal government has increased funding for research initiatives, its role as a partner in supporting post-secondary education in B.C. and across Canada has declined dramatically—to the tune of \$1 billion annually.

On the research front, B.C. post-secondary institutions receive only 9% of federal research dollars despite the fact B.C. is home to 13% of Canadians. Where do the political parties stand on the role of the federal government in funding post-secondary education?

B.C. has led the country in implementing a tuition fee freeze and now a tuition fee reduction. This has been an important element of encouraging students from low-income backgrounds to attend post-secondary institutions, and in making education affordable for all students. Other provinces

have chosen to make students and their families pay. A student attending university in neighbouring Alberta would pay over \$1,500 more a year to attend university than he/she would in B.C.

In British Columbia, even with the freeze on tuition, student indebtedness continues to increase as the cost of educational materials (e.g. textbooks) and the cost of living climb. Where do the political parties stand on how to limit costs and debt for students and their families?

Commercialization

Public post-secondary institutions have become increasingly entrepreneurial or commercial in order to raise much-needed funds. This direction can undermine the mandate that public education has to serve a public interest. Where do the political parties stand on protecting the public interest within our public education system at all levels?

Keep qualified educators and staff

Due to the rapid expansion of British Columbia's post-secondary education and training system in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as many as 70% of the province's post-secondary educators will need to be replaced over the next 10 years as they retire or take positions elsewhere. Although B.C. post-secondary institutions have many advantages in attracting new educators and staff, uncompetitive salaries and benefits, lower support for research, scholarly activity, and professional development, and lower levels of technical and administrative support will make it increasingly difficult to attract and keep high-quality people. Where do the political parties stand on making sure we are able to keep and attract qualified educators and staff?

Maureen Shaw is president of the College Institute Educators' Association.

Voter registration

Who may vote?

To vote in an election for an electoral district, an individual must:

- be a Canadian citizen
- be 18 years of age or older on General Voting Day for the election
- be a resident of the electoral district
- have been a resident of British Columbia for at least 6 months immediately preceding General Voting Day for the election
- be registered as a voter for the electoral district, or register in conjunction with voting; and not be disqualified from voting in the election.

Who is disqualified from voting?

The following individuals are not entitled to vote in an election:

- the Chief Electoral Officer and the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer

- an individual who is imprisoned in a penal institution serving a sentence of two years or more or an individual who is prohibited from voting because of conviction for a serious election offence such as bribery.

How and when to register

To register as a voter, a qualified individual must complete an "Application for Registration as a Provincial Voter." This form is available on any business day outside of an election period from District Registrars of Voters, Government Agents, and Elections B.C. offices.

Voters who change their name or address must notify a District Registrar of Voters, Government Agent, or Elections B.C. office to have their registration corrected. Elections B.C. also receives address change information from the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles. This allows registered voters who have a

B.C. driver's licence or B.C. identification card to have their voter registration updated automatically.

In addition to on-going registration, special registration drives, enumerations, and other registration activities are conducted as required.

Registration during an election

During the first eight days of an election, special registration centres are established throughout the province to ensure ease of access to voter registration. From eight days after an election has been called until two days after General Voting Day, registration is only permitted in conjunction with voting. Qualified voters may register at any voting opportunity. To register at the time of voting, a voter must provide two pieces of personal identification, showing, in combination, their name, current address, and signature.

Web site: www.elections.bc.ca/reg/voterreg.html

