

Retirement is in your Future —sooner or later—

The Teachers' Pension Plan offers two seminars to assist teachers understand their pensions.

Thinking about Retiring

If you are within five years of retirement, then this free seminar is for you. Thinking about retiring and starting your pension may raise many questions for you. Teachers Pension Plan seminars can help you with this period of change. To register online, visit tpp.pensionsbc.ca.

Jan 2012

14	9—11am	Coquitlam	Best Western Convention Centre
14	12:30—2:30pm	Coquitlam	Best Western Convention Centre
21	9—11am	Vancouver	BCIT Downtown Campus
21	12:30—2:30pm	Vancouver	BCIT Downtown Campus
26	6—8pm	Delta	Delta Town & Country Inn
28	9—11am	Richmond	Kwantlen University
28	12:30—2:30pm	Richmond	Kwantlen University

Your Pension, Your Future

This free seminar is aimed towards new and mid-career plan members. Seminar leaders explain your pension benefits and help you understand how decisions you make today can impact your future pension income, no matter how far into the future it may be. To register online, visit tpp.pensionsbc.ca.

Jan 2012

17	6—7:30pm	Vancouver	Holiday Inn Vancouver Centre
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

December

- 05 Anti-Poverty Committee Workshop
- 06 TTOC Committee Meeting
- 08 Sustainability Committee Meeting
- 13 **General Meeting/SRA**
- 15 Aboriginal Ed Committee Meeting
- 16 **Schools close for Winter Break**

January

- 03 **Schools reopen**
- 04 Sustainability Committee Meeting
- 09 Anti-Poverty Committee Meeting
- 12 Health & Safety Committee Meeting
- 12 Pro-D Committee Meeting
- 17 Anti-Poverty Film Night
- 19 Aboriginal Ed Committee Meeting
- 30 Status of Women Committee Meeting
- 31 TTOC Committee Meeting

My Life as a TOC cont'd

for a day to a job which gets extended to 3 months and a day. Others, like me, have not 'lucked into' an extended position. I am still an category "F", applying for positions constantly. Seniority-based hiring would ensure more equity in that TOCs who have years of experience would be hired for temporary contract positions before new graduates.

I enjoy my job as a TOC. I have no report cards to write, no ongoing behavioral problems to deal with or parents to contact. However, being a teacher on call is unpredictable, and can entail being on call for three, four, five years or more. TOCs need improvements in our working conditions—we need a guaranteed amount of work, leading to a living wage as we work towards the elusive dream of having our own classrooms.

Andrea Morgan
Teacher Teaching on Call



Seasons greetings

From all of us at the VESTA office:
Chris, Dan,
Gerry, Nancy,
Lori, Olga,
Rossanne & Vilma

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Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association

VESTA news



Volume 38 Issue #3

2011 December

Rally for a Fair Deal

On Monday, 2011 December 5, hundreds of Vancouver teachers, retired colleagues, teachers from other districts and members from local unions filled the street to protest BCPSEA's unwillingness to negotiate fairly at the bargaining table. They came together in front of Christy Clark's constituency office in a noisy and colourful rally to demand that the government stop bullying teachers and start bargaining in good faith.

Demonstrators gathered with signs and banners to send a strong message to the premier that teachers will *not* accept any proposals that de-professionalize our jobs, undermine our professional autonomy or weaken our current collective agreements. Teachers, as usual, were creative with their sign and prop making. Public response was very favourable as many drivers showed support by honking their horns and shouting encouraging comments. Media representatives from television, radio and print were there interviewing participants.

Trustees Allan Wong, Mike Lombardi, DPAC Chair Gwen Giesbrecht, VESTA President Chris Harris and VSTA President Debbie Pawluk spoke out about the broken bargaining process and the decade of strips and underfunding. The Solidarity Notes Labour Choir set the tone and spirit of the rally by performing rousing tunes for all.

Thank you to all who came out and stood in public solidarity. Too bad Premier Christy Clark was nowhere to be seen!

Together we are proudly standing up for our rights as professionals and for the rights of our students. It is time for this government to listen to those who know what is best for students and for public education! It is TIME TO BARGAIN!

Helen French
Fraser



Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,

I was disheartened to read the "Letter to Parents/Guardians" which was posted online on VESTA news (November 15, 2011) and sent home to parents/guardians.

As Principals and Vice-Principals in Vancouver schools, our desire is always to work collaboratively with teachers in the best interests of students, parents and communities.

We understand that teachers are currently on a legal strike and are permitted to withdraw services, such as collecting money for field trips. As educational leaders, we have taken on many new tasks outside the scope of our usual roles, and we are committed to maintaining positive working relationships, even during these challenging times. Our desire, like that of teachers, is for this labour dispute to be resolved through collective bargaining, so that we can once again work closely together for the benefit of children.

In such difficult times, we are disappointed with a letter that contains statements such as "We have asked the administration to do so, but they have refused." because we feel this is divisive, potentially diminishes regard

for public education, and detracts from the efforts of all educators who are dedicated to providing excellent experiences for students while building strong support for public education.

Respectfully,
Chris Gilmour, President
Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice-Principals Association

Dear Chris Gilmour, During Phase 1 and in many previous strikes teachers have taken a public stand to fight for their rights and to improve the learning conditions of students. During strike action, management in any labour dispute, has to assume some duties normally done by employees. It goes with the job. Conversely, there are a number of duties and meetings that principals are not currently doing, organizing or attending during Phase 1. In this case, teachers are still willing to seek out, organize and take students on field trips to provide them with enriched learning experiences. Some principals have made a personal decision, not under direction from the VSB, that they will not support these activities if they have to assume the responsibility of collecting the money. We believe that parents do have the right to know why field trips have had to be cancelled. Teachers do not wish to create divisiveness within our schools and would rather their students receive the support of administrators and continue to benefit from out of school field studies.

Editor



VESTA supports teachers in Namibia

Honorary Life Member Don Reader presents VESTA President Chris Harris with a handmade scarf from the VESTA twinned teachers' union in Namibia (NANTU) in recognition of the financial and professional support that VESTA continues to give teachers in Namibia.



Peer to Peer (P2P)

P2P is a joint venture of VESTA, VSTA and the VSB. All parties recognize the essential need to mentor and support new teachers (and teachers new to a position) in a safe, supportive and confidential service.

P2P is **not** an evaluative process. We do not report back to Administrators, Human Resources, or the Union. All support is confidential.

Mary Filleul is one the two P2P Support Consultants in the district. She has teaching experience in both elementary and secondary and has worked in Adult Ed as well. P2P can work with teachers to:

- Provide assistance with year, unit and lesson planning
- Provide support and ideas around classroom management strategies
- Generate ideas for engaging teaching strategies
- Find access to useful resources
- Create alternate assessment practices
- Be a confidential and objective sounding board

Mary can be reached at 778-229-9578 or mfilleul@vsb.bc.ca.

Myrne Ross is the Elementary P2P Resource Teacher Consultant. Support can be for individuals or teams and can look like:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Coaching | Mentoring |
| Planning | Organizing |
| Scheduling | Learning |
| Sharing | Discussing |
| Collaborating | Observing |
| Doing | Chatting |
| Researching | Problem solving |

Myrne can be reached at (604)713- 5026 or myross@vsb.bc.ca

Educational Leave—Opportunities and Deadlines

Continuing contract teachers with the VBE are eligible for a variety of educational leaves (G.9.):

- Teachers with a continuing contract for at least five (5) consecutive school years immediately preceding the date of requested leave may apply for a paid (60% of annual salary and allowances) education leave of one (1) year. Teachers applying for an education leave of one school year must apply in writing to the Associate-Superintendent—Human Resources on or before December 15 for a leave commencing in September 2012.
- Teachers with a continuing contract of not less than one (1) year immediately preceding the date of the requested leave may apply for a paid (60% of annual salary and allowances) education leave of less than one (1) school year, but longer than ten (10) school days. Teachers must apply in writing to the Associate-Superintendent—Human Resources at least three (3) months prior to the commencement of the leave.
- Teachers with a continuing contract of not less than one (1) year immediately preceding the date of the requested leave may apply for a paid (100% of annual salary and allowances) education leave for ten (10) school days or less. Teachers must apply in writing to the Associate-Superintendent—Human Resources at least four (4) weeks prior to the date of the commencement of the leave. Application forms are available from the VBE.

My life as a TOC

I finished my B.Ed. in the summer of 2008, full of ideas and excited to be starting my teaching career. Getting a spot on the Vancouver TOC list, at a difficult time, was gratifying.

During my three years as an employee on call, I have grown immensely as a teacher. Walking into an unknown classroom every morning is a challenging, yet rewarding learning experience, interacting with children from all walks of life and seeing how different teachers set up their classroom and implement their lessons. I am constantly writing down great ideas.

However, there are many uncertainties and challenges when working on call. Will the students be well behaved, or out of control? Will I understand the teacher's day plan, or have to resort to my 'bag of tricks'? What happens when I get called out at 8:30am for a 9am start? What will I do when I'm called to teach gym in November and the gym is unavailable? For the most part, the days are enjoyable, teaching the prepared lessons, marking the

day's work, leaving a note and day plan for the teacher. If you are really lucky, a primary student will draw you a picture. The hard part is wondering when the next call will come.

Unfortunately, job prospects are not much better now than they were three years ago. In BC, TOCs work an average of 70 days a year; 45% of TOCs worked less than 70 days in 2007. TOCs may teach 2–3 days a week depending on the time of year. In a good month, they could work as many as 11 or 12 days. According to the BCTF, "TOCs earn less than \$30,000 per year," and "the average TTOC earned \$14,000 in 2007." I earned less than \$20,000 in 2010, even though I was available to work every day.

Last year was particularly difficult due to the alternate calendar which penalizes TOCs. Not only are there 10 fewer days in the school year, but each day is 16 minutes longer and we are being paid the same daily rate as in previous years. Furthermore, our on-scale rate is still calculated on 189 days instead of 179.

Just as important for TOCs is seniority-based hiring for contract positions. Many young teachers acquire a temporary contract because they get called in



Cont'd on back page

Liberals' tweets hold no truth



Excerpts from BCTF press release by Nancy Knickerbocker

"It's all over Twitter," said the reporter, citing the following tweet from @macleankay: "BCTF now refusing to raise \$ for Terry Fox Run. Still 'all about the kids,' of course, just not the ones with cancer."

"Terry Fox run latest casualty in BC teachers' dispute" was the headline on CKNW's website and twitter feed.

CKNW newsroom: "We're getting word that as part of the job action, teachers won't participate in the Terry Fox run." This tweet was immediately retweeted by @Jeff_Melland and @BCMusings.

Global TV wants to know just what was up with teachers' strike and the run.

Here's the real story:

It turns out the source was none other than the BC Liberal caucus communications department!

Kay Maclean, the initial tweeter, is a communications officer for the BC Liberal caucus. Jeff Melland and Thomas Marshall (aka BCMusings) are also communications officers for the BC Liberal caucus. Geoff Sharpe, president of the BC Young Liberals, also chimed in with an ungrammatical reminder that folks "definitely need to remember that teachers doesn't equal BCTF. I know many who cannot stand the org[anization]."

Once the source of the story was known, Susan Lambert, BCTF President called Education Minister George Abbott's office. Apologetic tweets from the unethical hacks soon followed: "Mea culpa: happy to hear from BCTF indeed helping w/ Terry Fox Run. Sorry for any offence. TF's legacy transcends political divides," they said.

The apology was accepted, but the damage had already been done.

We should be very concerned when our sources for information perpetuate a lie as though it were factually based.