

## Adult Educators

### Local Bargaining Works

Welcome back! In Vancouver Adult Ed classes are underway for the new school year, and our teachers and reps are busy planning for the coming year.

We have always bargained locally, so as our school year begins we will be back at the table. Our issues are diverse and numerous, but because of our ongoing tradition of successful local bargaining, we know this process will result in substantial improvements in our Collective Agreement—which means improvements for teachers and students, achievements that make all the work worthwhile.

We hope to see all of our teacher colleagues benefiting as we do from free and full local bargaining in the coming year.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

#### September

- 26 Status of Women Committee Meeting
- 29 Health & Safety Meeting
- 30 Teachers on Call Social

#### October

- 3 Anti-Poverty Committee Meeting
- 4, 5 Staff Union Rep Training
- 5 Sustainability Committee Meeting
- 7 District Closure
- 10 Thanksgiving
- 12 Living with Balance Workshop
- 12, 13 Staff Union Rep Training
- 17, 18 Staff Union Rep Training
- 18 General Meeting/Staff Rep Assembly
- 19, 24 Staff Union Rep Training
- 19 Living with Balance Workshop
- 21 Provincial PD Day
- 26 Living with Balance Workshop

### Member Participation cont'd

It provides a myriad of services for members including collective bargaining, professional development, communication and member support. It is our voice advocating for public education in BC.

If you want to get involved but are not sure how to go about it, email [gerry@vesta.ca](mailto:gerry@vesta.ca) for assistance.

**Remember the union is you, and you are the union.**

*Gerry Kent  
1st Vice President*

### VESTA Standing Committees & Chairpersons

Aboriginal Education—Laura Rudland (Fraser)  
 Anti-Poverty—Suzanne Salter (Renfrew)  
 Anti-Racism—vacant  
 Communications—vacant  
 Health & Safety—Patti Park (Thunderbird)  
 Pride—vacant  
 Professional Issues—Rod Ratzlaff (Carr)  
 Status of Women—Susan Garber (Dickens)  
 Sustainability—vacant  
 Teachers on Call—Shannon Harris (Nightingale)  
 WLC/Bargaining—Christina Schut (TOC)

### Section Representatives

Area Counselors—Leslie MacKenzie (Kitchener)  
 ESL—vacant  
 Gifted Education—Teresa Mildren (Mackenzie)  
 LATA—vacant  
 Psychologists—vacant  
 SLPs—Heba Ghobrial (Secord)  
 Teacher-Librarians—Mary Locke (Gordon)  
 Technology—vacant

### 2011 Collective Bargaining Timeline

- Mar 8**—BCTF begins bargaining with BCPSEA
- Mar 14**—VTF begins bargaining with VSB with member identified objectives
- Apr 13**—Bill 27 & 28 which stripped working and learning conditions from our Collective Agreement is declared unconstitutional by the BC Supreme Court
- Jun 29**—BCTF members vote 90% to enter into job action if no progress is made in negotiations
- Sept 6**—BCTF members enter into Phase 1 Job Action
- Sept 17**—Arbitrator Marguerite Jackson rules that some items previously deemed to be provincially bargained may now be bargained locally.
- Oct 11**—Justice Griffin will meet with BCPSEA and the BCTF to clarify her Bill 27/28 ruling

### Contact Us

2915 Commercial Drive  
 Vancouver, BC V5N 4C8  
 Office: 604-873-8378  
 Fax: 604-873-2652

Chris Harris, President  
[chris@vesta.ca](mailto:chris@vesta.ca)

Gerry Kent, 1st VP  
[gerry@vesta.ca](mailto:gerry@vesta.ca)

Dan Graves, 2nd VP  
[dan@vesta.ca](mailto:dan@vesta.ca)

Nancy Hawkins, 3rd VP  
[nancy@vesta.ca](mailto:nancy@vesta.ca)

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

**Moving or moved recently? Email [lori@vesta.ca](mailto:lori@vesta.ca) with your change of address.**



### President's Message



I know that teachers generally come back to school excited for a new school year, ready for the challenges they will face in learning about their new students and setting up their educational programs. However, it is rare that we head back into our schools already on job action. I know teachers did not make this decision lightly. After years of chronic underfunding by the provincial government, we need to make a stand for ourselves and our students.

In 2002, Christy Clark stood up in the BC Legislature and introduced legislation that illegally stripped our collective agreement of all the working and learning conditions we had previously negotiated. She is now Premier of British Columbia and seeks to further limit the negotiations that are occurring right now at provincial and local tables. A net-zero mandate by our employer is not realistic given the state of our schools, particularly in Vancouver. As teachers run themselves off their feet, trying to meet all the needs of their students with increasingly scarce resources, we are reminded that we have slipped far behind our colleagues across the country in terms of compensation. Christy Clark needs to come to the bargaining table with something in order for

us to successfully negotiate a collective agreement.

It is crucial that you keep up the pressure at schools. A job action like this is meant to be difficult for our employer. We see that when district management is walking around schools doing supervision. We see that when your principal is busy collecting money from students. These little things all add up to pressure on school districts, which in turn, adds to the pressure on provincial representatives to bring something to the table to negotiate. To date, our employers have not even put one penny on the table in order to try and make a deal with teachers. This has to change. Strong solidarity at all our schools is the way to achieve this change.

We have already had some strong victories this past spring and into the summer. Judge Griffin ruled Christy's Bills 27 and 28 illegal. Arbitrator Jackson ruled that some items that had previously been deemed provincial can be negotiated locally. Bargaining is not always an easy process and there will, undoubtedly, be some difficult roadblocks on our way to a successfully negotiated collective agreement. If we stick together we can make it happen. Stay together and stay strong!

*In solidarity, Chris*

### Member Participation in VESTA and BCTF

VESTA's goal is to represent its membership in District and Collective Agreement matters, but also as a local union in the BCTF. An active and knowledgeable membership is crucial to our success. These are ways you can help.

- Provide feedback to the executive through participation in school based VESTA Meetings, General Meetings and Staff Representative Assemblies.
- Be aware of your collective bargaining rights in areas such as benefits, working conditions and procedures.
- Read and refer to your copy of the Collective Agreement (A copy is also posted on the VESTA website.)
- Complete surveys and questionnaires made available to you. Your input and opinions form the basis of VESTA's policies and actions.

• Consider joining in one of the various committees, sections or ad hoc working groups.

- Assert your Collective Agreement rights at the school level.
- Participate at least once during your career as a delegate to the BCTF Annual General Meeting to learn about and be part of the decision-making process. The BCTF is our union of professionals.



*cont'd on back page*

# A history of K-12 teacher bargaining in Vancouver

## ► What is collective bargaining?

Collective bargaining consists of negotiations between an employer and a group of employees (teachers are represented by their union) to determine terms and conditions of employment. The result is a collective agreement.

## ► The 1969 “Agreement”

Teachers in Vancouver, as a group, has a signed “agreement” with the VSB as far back as 1969. VESTA was not a union at that time, and “officially” a collective agreement could not be bargained, but this was a good first step.

## ► 1989—Unionization

VESTA recognized as a local of the BCTF meant that VESTA + VSTA (Vancouver Teachers’ Federation) would officially be the exclusive bargaining agent for K-12 teachers in Vancouver. We would have a collective agreement with all the rights and responsibilities that entails.

## ► Full scope local bargaining

- Vancouver teachers, through the Vancouver Teachers’ Federation (VTF), bargain directly with the Vancouver School Board.



- Vancouver teachers set priorities for bargaining and come to the table with those priorities as bargaining objectives.
- All working and learning conditions issues are up for grabs at the bargainable—class size, special needs support, ESL support, supports to address split grades, leaves, posting and filling of positions, security of employment, length of work day, professional development, health and safety, professional autonomy, salary and benefits, etc.

- Vancouver teachers were able to strike (independently from the rest of the province) on issues that were important to our community.

## ► 1994—PELRA

In the 1994, the NDP-majority provincial government introduces the Public Education Labour Relations Act (PERLA) that creates a new provincial model for teacher bargaining in BC.

## ► Provincial Bargaining

Government created a new entity—BC Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA) that would be the exclusive bargaining agent for all school districts in the province.

**At the same time...**the provincial government designated the BCTF as the exclusive bargaining agent for all teachers in BC. The autonomy that locals had to bargain at the local level was removed.



## ► VESTA opposes provincial bargaining

- Membership in Vancouver immediately oppose provincial bargaining.
- A complication, the BCTF Executive Committee of the day was complicit in the enactment of PERLA.
- VESTA and other locals mobilize against the province and the BCTF—Locals for Local Bargaining.
- Locals for Local Bargaining attempt to get an injunction against the province and the BCTF but is unsuccessful, thus provincial bargaining becomes the norm.



## ► 1995—Split of issues

- BCTF Executive Committee of the day negotiated a split of issues with BCPSEA that would allow some items to be dealt with at the local level.
- All cost items (salary, benefits, leaves, etc.) were designated as “provincial matters”.
- Some non-cost items (evaluations, harassment, etc.) also designated as “provincial matters”.
- Very little was left to discuss at a local table.
- No deal was reached between BCPSEA and the BCTF. From 1995 until 2006, all our collective agreements were imposed through legislation.

## ► 2002—Bills 27 & 28

- In 2002, the Liberal-majority BC government made it illegal for school districts to bargain class size and class composition issues related to class size and class composition was stripped from the collective agreement.

## In Vancouver this meant the loss of:

- Guarantees and protections pertaining to class size and split grades, ESL service, support for students with special needs, inclusion of students, including integration of new students
- Services levels for itinerant staff and non-enrolling teachers
- Processes related to School Based Team and Central Screening
- ...and more...

## ► Landmark court decision

In 2007, BCGEU won a groundbreaking case. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the provincial government’s stripping of the BCGEU collective agreement was illegal. This decision provided a strong precedent for BCTF to seek a reversal of Bills 27 and 28 from the courts.

## ► 2011 BC Supreme Court decision in Bills 27 and 28

The court found that removing bargaining provisions related to class size was unconstitutional.

## In the meantime...

Vancouver teachers have not made any significant gains under the provincial bargaining model:

- Benefits have not seen an improvement since 1994.
- All cost items that don’t “fit” into a provincial picture have not seen improvements since 1994 either.
- Gains in salary have not compensated for loss of stripped language, and we are grossly behind other provinces in terms of salary and prep.

## Furthermore...

- Provincial bargaining is far removed from the school level, making it difficult for individual members to participate in the process.
- Provincial Bargaining creates “middle of the road” language that doesn’t fit in local circumstances.
- VESTA has been working closely with many other locals to renew efforts provincially to get changes in our bargaining structures that would increase local jurisdiction of bargaining for K-12 teachers.