



## President's Message

Although the winter vacation seems but a fading memory, I sincerely hope that you had a chance to rest and recharge.

Teachers in Vancouver and across the province face the challenges of meeting the needs of their students, balancing their work and personal lives and advocating for improvements in the learning and working conditions in our public schools. Perennial budget cuts and contract stripping have made teachers' work much more difficult. The VESTA Executive Committee have conducted school visits to update members on the state of provincial and local bargaining and to seek guidance on our strategy moving forward. The BCTF provincial bargaining team continues to pursue fair and reasonable improvements to salary, preparation time, and working conditions, including class size and class composition, and ratios for specialist teachers. Government, has yet to table a counter on salary and has indicated that it remains unwilling to address the gap between BC teachers and teachers in other provinces. Furthermore, government proposals include:

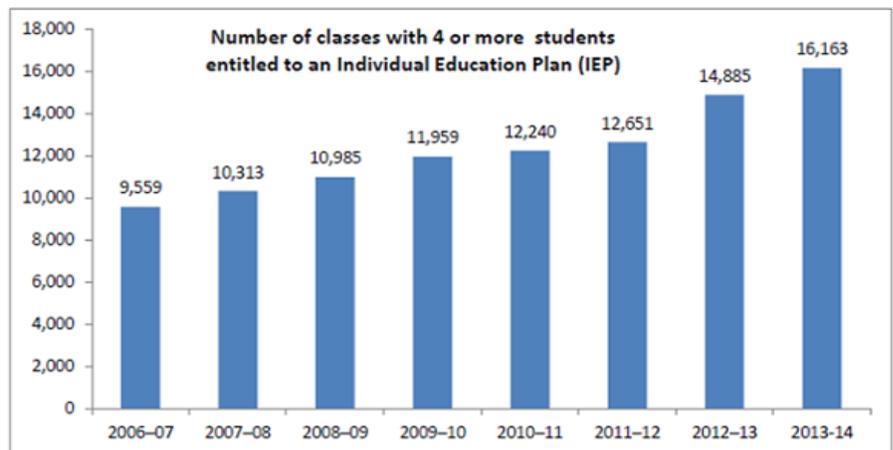
- stripping due process, timelines and criteria from the evaluation language in our current collective agreement and giving complete control of those areas to administrators
- prescribing new, longer hours of work which would replace all provisions that address the length of our work day and work year, as well as prep time

It will take sustained pressure from teachers and other advocates for public education to convince the government to move away from its desire to further strip away the freely

bargained collective agreement rights of teachers and to instead provide increased funding to school boards, that meet the needs of students. Government negotiator Peter Cameron has stated that the

impossible to imagine what else could be cut from our system, which according to the VSB would need over \$47 million in additional annual funding to meet the service level provided in 2002.

### Class composition



BCTF Research table, with figures from BC Ministry of Education (2006-07 to 2013-14 reports). *Overview of Class Size and Composition in BC Schools*, p.3; accessible from the ministry data reporting page, [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/prov\\_data\\_summary.php](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/prov_data_summary.php)

Note: The 2006-07 report is not available online. Contact BCTF Research for a PDF version of the report. Updated January 7, 2014

system does not need more "inputs" (as in increased salary, ratios, etc.) because the outputs/outcomes are fine. If this is what he believes, then why the continued attack on teachers' collective agreement rights? The table above is just one small indicator of the challenges that more than a decade of strips and cuts has produced. Almost 25% of all classes in BC now have 4 or more students with IEPs.

Soon VESTA will be tasked to provide input into what appears to be another devastating budget process, with a District projected deficit of over \$24 million. It is

Teachers again must advocate, not only for our bargaining and professional rights, but for public education. We must raise our individual and collective voices to rally support from parents and the community to pressure government to honour our collective agreement, bargain with genuine intent to improve working and learning conditions, and to provide truly adequate resources for public education. "A fair deal for teachers – Better support for kids."

Gerry Kent  
President

# VTF Building – Change is Ahead

In 1989, the VESTA membership, along with our VSTA colleagues, purchased the building we currently occupy at 2915 Commercial Drive for \$1.3 million. This was a great decision. Each organization paid half and retains 50% ownership. The property has recently been evaluated at \$4 million and we have recently paid off the mortgage.

We currently occupy, along with VSTA, about 6000 of the building's 19,423 sq ft. The remainder is occupied by tenants who provide income through rent, leases, and parking receipts. A property management firm looks after this for us. This income helps to offset the operating costs of the building and helps us to keep our membership dues low.

Despite the value of the property itself, the building is in very poor shape and requires serious and substantial repairs. Important decisions need to be made about this as the repairs can no longer wait. We have known for some time that this day was coming and have been working towards a solution.

Over the last two years we have:

- Formed a joint VESTA/VSTA building committee
- Hired a consulting firm to help us look at options
- Examined our core values related to our physical space
- Reviewed several accommodation options and additional information on these options
- Received and accepted the consultant's final report and recommendations
- Presented several proposals at an information session at a VESTA General Meeting

At the General Meeting on 2014 January 21 we passed two motions related to our building. They are:

*THAT VESTA supports, in principle, redevelopment of our current site, into retail space, office space, and rental apartments, and*



VTF office at 2915 Commercial Drive

*THAT VESTA representatives to the Ad Hoc Building Committee enter into pre-development research and planning with the VSTA representatives to this committee.*

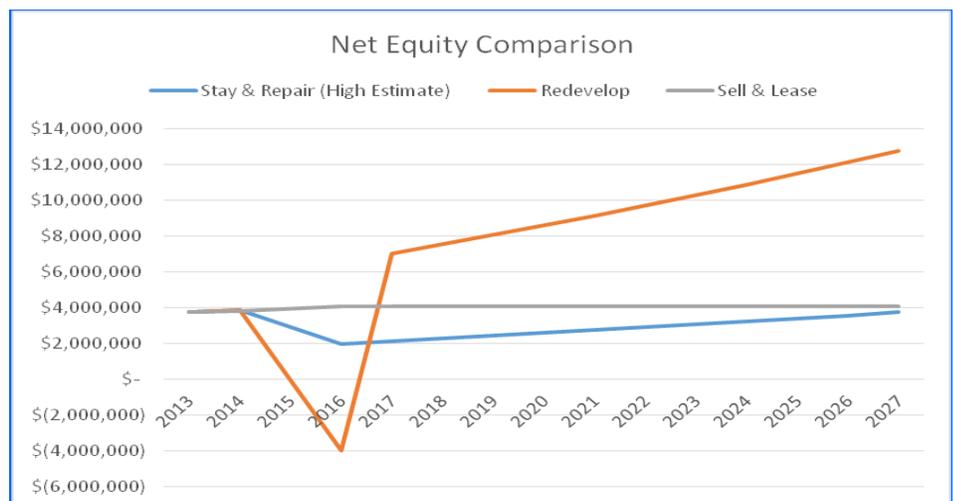
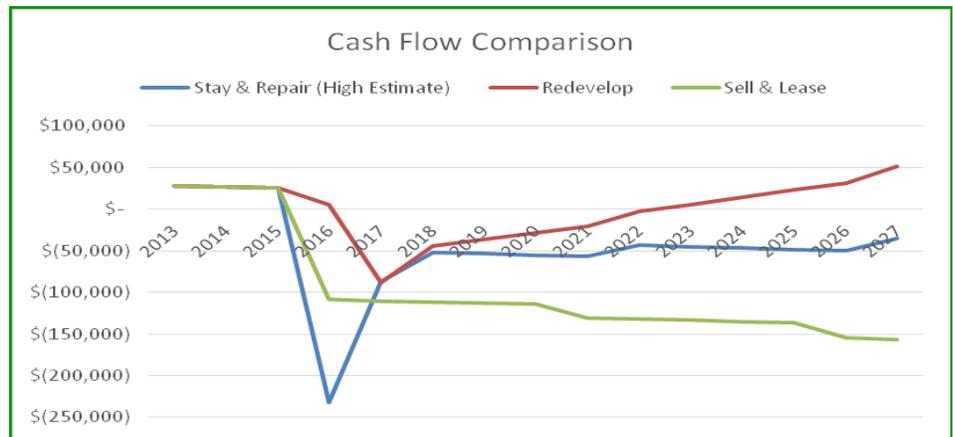
Thank you for taking part in these decisions. It will allow VESTA to take the next steps in creating a new home for our union.

The following graphs compare the financial performance in

terms of cash flow and net equity of the three options (Stay & Repair, Redevelop, Sell & Lease) that at least preserve (or nearly preserve) equity over the next 14 years.

Also, on page 3 is a summary of our consultant's final report which was shared with members at the December 10 General Meeting.

Heather Allison  
Vice-President



## VTF Building—Change is Ahead cont'd

The following is a summary of the consultant's final report outlining our options, which was shared with members at the VESTA General Meeting on Tuesday, December 10.

Option	Disadvantages	Advantages
Stay and Repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget uncertainty (\$1.5 million - \$2 million)</li> <li>• Our current tenants would need to vacate during construction</li> <li>• To keep costs low we will need to stay during construction</li> <li>• Poor location for current retail/office combination means it may be difficult to find new tenants</li> <li>• End result is still an old, poorly designed, inaccessible building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Necessary repairs completed</li> </ul>
Sell and Lease on the Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No longer any participation in the real estate market</li> <li>• Income earned from investing the proceeds of selling the property would not be adequate to cover rent and operating expenses.</li> <li>• Member dues would need to rise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need for additional capital, no real estate risk</li> <li>• No need for temporary accommodation</li> <li>• No need for property management</li> <li>• Ongoing flexibility to change the amount of space or location</li> </ul>
Sell and Purchase Elsewhere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income earned from investing the proceeds of selling the property would not be adequate to cover rent and operating expenses. Member dues would need to rise</li> <li>• Lack of suitable strata title office on the market</li> <li>• Small strata title office space has limited potential to appreciate and can be difficult to sell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need for additional capital, no real estate risk</li> <li>• No need for temporary accommodation</li> <li>• No need for property management</li> <li>• Ongoing flexibility to change the amount of space or location</li> </ul>
Sell and Purchase Strata in the New Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income earned from investing the proceeds of selling the property would not be adequate to cover rent and operating expenses. Member dues would need to rise</li> <li>• Small strata title office space has limited potential to appreciate and can be difficult to sell</li> <li>• Requires temporary accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need for additional capital, no real estate risk</li> <li>• Assured ability to obtain appropriately sized and located space</li> <li>• No need for property management</li> <li>• Ongoing flexibility to change the amount of space or location</li> </ul>
Stay and Redevelop at Current Location with Retail, Office Space (for us), and Rental Apartments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires construction loan of approximately \$8 million (25-year mortgage)</li> <li>• Requires temporary accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substantial growth in cash flow over medium term</li> <li>• Substantial increase in net equity</li> <li>• Combination of strong cash flow and property value growth puts VESTA and VSTA in an enviable financial position</li> </ul>

# Teaching in Solidarity

**B**renda Sandoval Martinez, a teacher in El Salvador has struggled with the sexist attitudes and machismo common in her culture. Through her union, ANDES, and their Canadian partner, CoDevelopment Canada, she signed up for a workshop called *Non-Sexist Pedagogy*. In the workshop, developed and delivered together with the BCTF, she learned how to role play with her students to get them to understand about equality for girls and women. Boys and girls began treating each other differently, and as part of their lessons, brought the discussion home to their parents. ANDES then mounted a campaign to bring their successes to the attention of the Salvadoran government which now offers a “Non-Sexist Pedagogy” diploma course through its teacher training institute.

CoDev is a BC based, non-profit agency which links with educators, labour unions and community groups in Latin America to affect positive social change in education, workers’ and human rights, women’s equality and fair trade. CoDev builds relationships, knowing that solidarity, rather than charity, empowers people, recognizes common aspirations, honors local expertise and seeks mutual learning.

The organization was started in the mid-80s by a group of activist teachers in BC. CoDev has flourished over the years, supporting many projects with Latin American partners, offering workshops, bringing teacher and union leaders to Canada for union training, and taking delegations south on educational tours. BC teachers — including VESTA’s Paula Naylor, Greg Canning and Janek Kuchmistrz — have volunteered during summers



to teach teachers communicative approaches and effective assessment practices in second language development, then prepare the teacher participants to give workshops locally to their colleagues. In 2012, the BCTF, CoDev and the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA) Network hosted a *Teaching for Transformation* conference with participants from all over the globe. The similarities in our struggles – standardized testing, professional autonomy, fair evaluation – and in our aspirations were striking.

With the loss of federal funding through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), CoDev is going through a period of change, needing to reach out more than ever to supporters in order to continue its work. Because solidarity is the root of global justice, because teachers are so important in modelling justice, fairness and equity to students, and because colleagues like Brenda

## Mark Your Calendar

### January

31 **Global Ed Workshop**

### February

4 **Staff Union Rep Training**

4 **VTF General Meeting**

5 TTOC Committee

13 Sustainability Committee

17 Status of Women Committee

20 Health & Safety Committee

24 **VESTA AGM Delegates**

25 Executive Committee

25 Adult Ed Executive Committee

### March

4 Aboriginal Ed Committee

7 Status of Women Committee

13 Sustainability Committee

prove that CoDev’s programs lead to positive change, consider joining CoDev and contribute to a better world.

**Please check us out at [www.codev.org](http://www.codev.org).** Consider purchasing a membership for \$25 (individual) or \$40 (family).

Nancy Hawkins  
retired VESTA member and  
CoDev Board member

## Contact Us

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## Free! Professional Development

Status of Women Committee presents

### BCTF Global Education Workshop

**Friday, January 31**

9-12pm, VESTA office  
2915 Commercial Drive

Contact [vilmam@vesta.ca](mailto:vilmam@vesta.ca) to register

### Creating cultures of peace—acts of transformation from war toys to peace art

This interactive workshop provides resources for teachers and their students to create peaceful learning communities.

**Editor:** Gerry Kent **Proofreaders:**

Heather Allison, Janek Kuchmistrz

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