



## President's Column

Date: December 8, 2011

Issue: #3

### What Strike is This? Teachers are still teaching; students are still learning

As we move into December, teachers are on strike, but continue to work the full day, teach the full curriculum, to plan lessons and evaluate student work, and to communicate with parents about student progress.

Since 2001, teachers' non-writing of Report Cards has been part of every job action. As recently as this summer, the B.C. Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) and the BCTF had agreed that the production of report cards was not considered an "essential" service without which there would be a serious disruption to students or educational programs.

However, BCPSEA filed an application to the LRB in October, saying many school districts believe report cards *are* essential, especially when identifying students who are struggling. The BCPSEA application had also requested the LRB to reduce teachers' salaries by 15%.

The BCPSEA application was dismissed by the LRB on November 29th. The argument that teachers on strike were working as much as 15% less, and should therefore have their salaries reduced was rejected. The Board's decision confirms that BCTF members are now teaching more not less, in place of the non-essential duties.

As one Intermediate teaching colleague stated last week, "Without Report Cards hanging over my head, I've been able to teach more – and students have been able to accomplish so much more; student learning has really taken off!"

### Abbott-hunting in South Delta

When teachers at Pinewood Elementary were informed the week before last that their school would be visited by the Minister of Education, George Abbott, they discussed the issue at an impromptu meeting at recess, took a position against the visit, and informed the DTA.

A second meeting at lunchtime that same day, which I requested, also dealt with the issue. Teachers reconfirmed their desire not to meet with the Minister of Education while on strike. Teachers were equally determined not to be the 'meat' in a Ministry of Education/BCTF 'sandwich'. Pinewood teachers also requested the DTA inform col-

leagues at other schools and worksites of their decision, which was done through "Notice of Motion" to Staff Reps, sent November 26.

At Monday's Staff Representative Assembly, the DTA took a strong position in opposition to the Minister's visits to schools in Delta. At the same time, the DTA invited the Minister to meet with interested teachers at the DTA offices in Ladner.

We knew the DTA decision to respectfully decline meetings with the Minister would not dissuade Minister Abbott from visiting Delta schools, and both SDSS and Cougar Canyon Elementary were visited by the Minister last Friday. The Minister toured both schools and met with representatives of admin and the Parent Advisory Committees.

Still, I wanted to make sure the Minister understood the DTA position, so I sought out the Minister at South Delta just before lunch. I explained that for DTA members who are on strike, his visits to schools are problematic. Nevertheless, Delta teachers want to inform his Ministry's policies to the greatest extent possible. I extended our invitation to meet with teachers at the offices of the DTA -- away from classrooms. The Minister was very receptive and said that he would 're-engage' with us in the future.

Later, in an email sent to me concerning the Minister's visits, one DTA member very direct: ***"Personally, I was insulted by the visit of the Minister . . . What exactly was the point of this visit? Was it to see how the lowest paid***

*Continued on Page 2*

### ***Seasons Greetings***

*From all of us at the DTA office, we wish you all the best of the coming Holiday Season. Whether or not you celebrate Christmas, please accept our very best wishes for a stress-free, restful and restorative Winter Holiday. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*

*Paul Simon Arbella  
Devin [Signature] Marilyn*



**teachers in the province are dealing with an incredibly stressful work environment?"**

Being on strike is not easy

In school visits through the months of October and November, what has become very clear is the knowledge that being on strike is not easy. Teachers preferred orientation is to be helpful, supportive and affirming. Being on strike, saying "No" to the employer in myriad ways is quite challenging for some, and raises the anxiety of a few.

The strike is not easy, but it has become so necessary. At the bargaining table, the employer is intransigent. Their position brings no improvement to salary whatsoever, not even an adjustment for inflation; no improvements to our benefits even after decades of no changes; no improvements at all to class size and composition provisions -- and calls for additional strips elsewhere in our contract. As always, the threat of a legislative hammer swung by government looms in the background.

Teachers, including Delta teachers, continue to be fair-minded and reasonable. We seek nothing that we would not also seek for other hard-working employee groups in society. We continue to be on strike, but we are still teaching. For now, it is important we support each other, individually, and collectively, and not give in.



## DTA General Meeting

Tuesday, February 7 ~ 4:00 - 6:00 pm  
Seaquam Secondary Library

Agenda Items:

- Election of BCTF AGM Delegates
- DTA Audited Financial Statements

## BCTF Annual General Meeting

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, BC  
March 17 - 20, 2012

Contact the DTA if you are interested in letting your name stand for election to our delegation.

## Condolences



The DTA sends its deepest sympathies to the family and friends of **Patricia Hillman** who passed away on December 5. Patricia retired on June 30, 2010, after teaching at Delview Secondary for over 30 years.



## Discretionary Day and Personal Leave Day

Although the Discretionary Day and Personal Leave day has been part of the Provincial Collective Agreement for several years, questions do arise from time to time.

Discretionary Day:

- Every continuing teacher (full-time or part-time) is entitled to one Discretionary Day per year.
- These days do not accumulate from one year to the next.
- The Discretionary Day can be taken for **any** purpose and can be taken at **any** time during the year.
- You do not need to apply for the Discretionary Day. Use the same process you would use if you were calling in sick, except key into the Smart Find Express System the reason for your absence is your Discretionary Day (reason #2). (It is helpful to the Board if you give as much advance notice as possible).
- You receive full salary and benefits when you take your Discretionary Day.

Personal Leave Day:

- You must apply to the Human Resources Department for this day. Application forms are in your school. Make your application as far in advance as possible.
- You receive your full salary less the cost of a teacher-on-call for the day.
- This day **cannot** be attached to Christmas Break or Spring Break. Also, it **cannot** be attached to a discretionary day, which is attached to Christmas break or Spring break.
- Smart Find Express Reason #7 - Leave at TOC cost.