

Issue # 7

February 18, 2009

President's Column

The Liberal Government's so-called "Gag Law", Bill 42, took effect last Friday, the 13th. British Columbia now has the dubious distinction of having the most restrictive laws concerning third-party advertising in Canada. Individual or group violations of the law may invoke penalties of up to \$10,000 or a year in jail. As a registered third-party advertiser, the DTA is covered by this law; as such we are limited to spending a maximum of \$3,000 in each of the two electoral districts in Delta. While the DTA is in no position to breach these limits, offenders can be required to pay penalties that are up to 10 times the amount by which the limit was exceeded. If DTA election spending was to exceed the spending limits in each of the two Delta ridings, by as little as \$1,000, the ensuing financial penalties could be as much as \$20,000.

Chief electoral officer Harry Neufeld has indicated that the definition of election is broad. He maintains that it can be difficult at times to determine if an activity is, in fact, election advertising. If the person charged with the responsibility of "interpreting" the legislation is not clear on what constitutes a violation, how can those outside his realm know what the rules of this game happen to be?

As teachers, we have many concerns about the public education system. Over the years, we have seen our collective agreement stripped, our incomes lose pace with the increased costs of living, and our working conditions deteriorate. Under Bill 42, teachers may be prevented from speaking out on these issues because of the following sentence in the bill: "Election advertising includes taking a position on an issue with which a candidate or registered political party is associated." As an example: Teacher opposition to FSAs is widely known. The government obviously supports the continuation of these tests. Would the DTA be in violation of the law if election advertising contained references to our continuing opposition to FSAs?

The DTA Public Education Advocacy Committee is planning to survey provincial election candidates on education issues. Responses will be mailed to teachers who reside in Delta North and Delta South, the two provincial ridings in Delta. Plans also include posting this information on the DTA website and, perhaps, publishing a pre-election ad. Will these actions violate Bill 42? It is clear that our 'third-party' ads might be subject to 'third-party' interpretation.

Since school boards are unwilling to speak out about the effect that underfunding is having on both existing programs and infrastructure needs, it is left to others, including teachers, but ultimately parents and members of the broader public, to speak out. If nurses and police officers don't speak out about the needs of their professions, who will? And if teachers do not let the public know how underfunding is impacting students, who will? The Liberal government clearly wants to muffle all opposition, especially that which is expressed by third-party advertising.

In remarks last Thursday, BC Attorney General Wally Oppal said, "I think we've gone over these arguments before as to whether or not we want undisciplined spending by third parties who may be in a position to hijack elections".

The DTA is in no position to 'hijack' any democratic election, but voters need to have access to all available information and to make of it what they will. Is this not what openness and accountability is supposed to look like?



Happy District

BCTF AGM DELEGATES

Listed below are Delta's BCTF AGM delegates and Local Reps

Arabella Bowman	South Park
Annie Coblin	McCloskey
Marianne D'Souza	TOC
Jim Hope	Port Guichon
Simon Isbister	SDSS
Patricia McCullough	McCloskey
Elen Nikas	Sands
Tashi Papau	SDSS
Dinah Phillips	Pinewood
Stephanie Rainaldi	Seaquam
Amandeep Sidhu	Brooke
Paul Steer	DTA
Karen Symonds	SDSS
Steven Walker	Continuing Ed
Phyllis With	Cliff Drive
Chris Yang	SDSS

Alternates:

Jasvinder Dhillon	Pinewood
Sukhy Dhillon	Hellings

Local Representatives:

Val Windsor	DTA
Pat Truelove	Sands
Richard Kirincic	SDSS

Job Share Meeting

Teachers interested in job sharing in the 2009-2010 school year are invited to an information meeting **Thursday, March 5th, at 4:00 pm at the DTA office.** Job share approvals have to be renewed annually.

Teachers On Call Meeting & Workshop

The next TOC meeting will be held on **Wednesday, February 25th at the Resource Centre (4900—96th Street) starting at 4:00 pm.** The workshop "**Raising Health & Safety Awareness**" will be presented. Please RSVP by phone (604-946-0391) or e-mail (deltateachers@telus.net).

You can't direct the wind but you can adjust the sails. ~ Anonymous

Teachers' Pension Plan Retirement Benefits Update



The January 26, 2009 Communiqué from The Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees re post-retirement group benefits funding has been posted on the BCTF Pensions webpage at http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Salary_Benefits/Pensions_Committee/TPP-BoardCommunique.pdf along with a Questions and Answers sheet at http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Salary_Benefits/Pensions_Committee/TPP-QAs-PRGB-Funding.pdf

More information about retirement benefits is available on the plan's website at tpp.pensionsbc.ca. Click on the **Pensions Benefits: The Facts and the Challenge** button on the home page.

Paid Education Leave

Teachers interested in making application for Paid Education Leave (60%) for the 2009-2010 school year will find the form on First Class under All Staff—Human Resources Forms.

One of the main criteria for this leave is that the candidate shall have been employed continuously by the Board for five (5) years prior to being granted Educational Leave. Some applicants attach a letter to the application outlining the reasons that their course of studies would benefit the district. For further details, refer to Article G.29 of the new collective agreement.

Deadline for submission of completed application is MARCH 31, 2009

Early Retirement Incentive Plan

The DTA office has received several phone calls from teachers who are contemplating retirement asking whether the Early Retirement Incentive Plan as described in Section H of the new collective agreement is still in effect. Unfortunately, the only way the Board is obligated to pay the ERIP is if there is no cost to the Board. When this plan was negotiated in 1992, the district was able to keep the difference between retiring teachers salaries and those of the new teachers. This is how the plan was funded. The provincial government subsequently discovered that school districts received these funds and started recalculating salaries at the end of September of each school year, thus depriving Boards of the extra funds.

Given the likelihood of Boards not receiving extra funds for ERIPs, why was this Section left in the new collective agreement? Wishful thinking, perhaps, but ever the optimists, it was decided to leave it in the collective agreement. Just don't count on collecting the benefit any time soon!