

Issue #1

September 10, 2009

President's Column

Bill 33 Don't Waive Your Right to be Consulted

After an unusually hot Summer in the Lower Mainland, teachers returning to work in September don't actually mind reaching for their Fall jackets because we know that cooler, wetter weather reinforces a natural tendency to move indoors. Cooler weather also helps students reconcile themselves to the end of Summer and a return to regular school routines.

For teachers, the additional work of filling out consent and consultation forms has become one of these Fall routines. These forms are important because they document the realities of classes that are too large, comprised of students facing an array of educational challenges that taken as a whole, make the class far, far less than 'appropriate for student learning'.

The **Dorsey Arbitration Award**, handed down in August, a 350 page document resulting from the BCTF-initiated 2006-2008 Provincial class-size and composition Grievance, has acknowledged that in 21 of 81 representative classes, consultation did not take place properly. While this can be taken as a 'win' of sorts, it comes with no remedy or relief to teachers who know that the size and complexity of many of the classes they teach are inappropriate.

As a new year and a new round of Bill 33 consultations begins, it is important for teachers to document their concerns on consent/consultation forms, and to ensure that their input reflects an accurate record of their classes, our real, educational world.

Teachers should not remain silent nor waive our right to have our professional concerns heard; silence will never reduce the size of a large class, nor make it easier for our students to learn. Share your professional concerns with colleagues and administrators. Engage in the consultation process, and document your professional concerns on the Employer and BCTF forms.

In 2001, Government stripped our Collective Agreement of language which enabled teachers to negotiate better access for students to educationally sound learning conditions. Now, government would pretend that all is well and good in the educational neighbourhood. But teachers have a different perspective. When Delta teachers do their individual part, by ensuring that they are 'meaningfully consulted'

concerning the size and composition of their classes, the DTA will be well positioned to advocate on behalf of all teachers, and to achieve the improvements that we seek and that our students and their families deserve.

H1N1

The Health and Safety issue of the H1N1 influenza has also been an issue of importance to many, including teachers, throughout the past Summer, as an expected return of this virus arrives with the Northern Hemisphere's annual 'flu season'. The BCTF will be issuing a Staff Alert which summarizes advice on this topic, but beyond the universal precautions of frequent handwashing and effective sanitary procedures, the BCTF has particular advice for teachers who may be pregnant and who, on the advice of their physician cannot be exposed to H1N1.

Teacher Wellness

A recent participant in a BCTF Summer Conference workshop on Teacher Wellness observed that the facilitator of the workshop was astonished to see over 35 teachers arrive for a workshop that he had only expected two dozen or so teachers to attend. Clearly, "Teacher Wellness" is a concern for many teachers who are coming to realize that our professional responsibilities combined with the daily stresses and strains of the job may be having effects on our long-term health. Teachers are becoming more conscious of the need to take responsibility for their own continuing good health and to do things on their own and with others to "stay well".

While BCTF members are fortunate in having good access to such benefits as District Sick Leave, the BCTF Short and Long-term Indemnity Plans, as well as access to the BCTF Rehabilitation Program, the hope is that most teachers will remain healthy throughout their careers. It is nevertheless important for teachers struggling with health issues to seek professional advice early on, and to rely on their doctor's advice. As with any other issue of concern to teachers, the DTA is available to provide advice and support to our members and to advocate for them.

A former Delta teacher would always close letters and emails with the enthusiastic salutation, "Take good care of yourself!" Let us all strive to do that, but, as we embark upon another school year, let's also do our best to support and encourage each other. Teachers supporting teachers: let's make sure we take good care of ourselves.



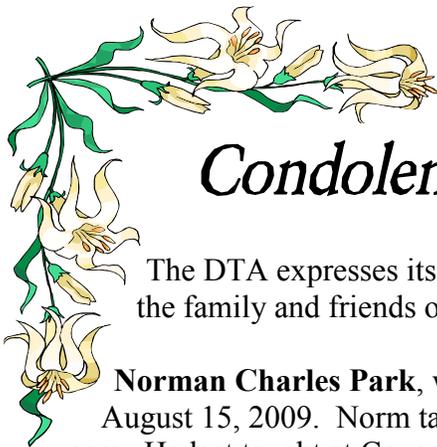
Simon Isbister 1st Vice-President

I am pleased to introduce myself as the new 1st Vice-President of the Delta Teachers' Association. I began my teaching career ten years ago, in Ontario's Peel District School Board. As a member of the Peel Elementary Teachers' Local, I gained an appreciation for the bond we all share as teachers. As a new teacher, I always understood that my union was there for me if I needed them.

When I moved to British Columbia, I found a home in Delta, in more ways than one. I have started my family here, but I have also grown professionally, and discovered a passion for Special Education. I have spent the past three years at South Delta Secondary running an academic support program for students with low-incidence learning disabilities.

In my personal life, I am an avid rock climber and skier, and spend many winter weekends as a volunteer ski-patroller. I have a 10-year old stepdaughter and a 14-month old baby girl. My wife and I have just moved into our first house. So, there have been many changes in my life lately, not the least of which is this exciting opportunity to represent you, the teachers of Delta.

If you have any questions or if there is any way I can assist you, please e-mail me at dtavicepresident@gmail.com, or call me at the DTA office!



Condolences

The DTA expresses its deepest sympathy to the family and friends of:

Norman Charles Park, who passed away August 15, 2009. Norm taught in Delta for 30 years. He last taught at Cougar Canyon.

William (Bill) Kushnir, who passed away August 13, 2009. Bill was a long-time Delta teacher and principal.

Committee Vacancies

The following DTA committees have vacancies:

- Executive
- Health & Safety
- Public Education Advocacy

If you are interested in serving on any of these committees, please call the DTA office.



Have you changed your name, address or phone number over the summer?

Please contact the DTA office (604-946-0391) so we can update our records. You will also need to contact the Human Resources Department at the Board office (604-952-5356) and Member Records at the BCTF (604-871-2192).

JOB SHARE PARTNER

Grade 7 French Immersion teacher seeks partner to job share. Interested teachers please contact Cyndy Pollock at Sunshine Hills.



Dates to Remember

- **September 21:** Staff Rep Meeting, 4:00, DSS Library
- **October 6:** PD Contacts Training, 08:30 - 3:00, Delta Manor Education Centre
- **October 7:** Rookie Staff Rep Training, 8:30 - 3:00, DTA Office

Call the DTA for further information (604-946-0391)

"Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire." ~ William Butler Yeats