

Conference Report

The BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) conference including Professional Development Sessions, the Representative Council (*Teacher–Public School Employer Collective Bargaining Conference 2011: K-12 Publication and Employment — A Future Focused Dialogue*) and the 17th Annual General Meeting (AGM) were held January 27-29, 2011 at the Coast Coal Harbour Hotel in Vancouver, BC.

The conference activities concluded with great success and several important decisions in place. Attendees representing all 60 public boards of education worked hard during the three-day program.

Conference Activities

The Representative Council and AGM were preceded by a series of professional development opportunities for delegates, including:

- I Think I'll Have to Say No to This One — Neuroscience and Why it is Difficult to Say No
- When it's K-12 Bargaining, it's Essential — Bargaining, the *Labour Relations Code* and the Application of Essential Service Provisions
- Bargaining, the Media, and the Wired World — the Implications of an Evolving World of Communication on Bargaining
- Turning Points — Learners in Transformative Times; What Does This Mean for Employment?
- Professional Growth, Achievement and Development — Integrating Workplace Practices, the Collective Agreement, and Learners' Needs.

Representative Council

Representative Council opened Friday, January 28. Susan Lambert, President of the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) addressed the assembly. Ms. Lambert outlined for delegates the union's bargaining plan, including an overview of key objectives and an explanation of why the BCTF is seeking expanded local bargaining. The presentation certainly got delegates thinking as they moved into the initial plenary session, *Bargaining Foundation — Setting the Context and Identifying the Variables* presented by Hugh Finlayson, Jacque Griffiths, and Lindsie Thomson.

The Representative Council then focused on delegate working sessions, during which a variety of labour relations and human resource themes were discussed for possible inclusion in upcoming bargaining with the BCTF:

- Working Session A: Employee Growth, Development and Professional Engagement
- Working Session B: Compensation Currency
- Working Session C: Employment and Sectoral Change

Each of the three working sessions was structured to build on the consultation and input of school districts which began early last fall (including the BCPSEA regional meetings, two surveys of trustees and district staff on bargaining issues, and November's Symposium).

Participants discussed 14 separate issues through the day, with three distinct methods for collecting recommendations and concerns related to bargaining. Each of the working sessions included a reporting out process and the consolidation of recommendations by delegates to form broad bargaining objectives. Although time intensive, the working sessions ensured the voice of every trustee could be heard on each of the issues previously identified as significant by school districts. Final recommendations were drafted from the consolidated input of delegates in what proved to be a strong collaborative and consistent process.

Following an informative presentation — *Labour Relations 2011: Observations and Implications for Bargaining* by Eric Harris, QC of Harris & Company LLP — delegates voted on the bargaining direction as drawn from the consultation period and validated/amended by the working sessions.

The following motion was unanimously approved by Trustee Representatives at the Representative Council:

“To accept the direction of the Representative Council as established through the working sessions and input initiatives and move to the establishment of broad/specific bargaining objectives for Teacher Bargaining 2011”

Carried

This motion creates the base from which BCPSEA staff will now create the formal bargaining agenda and proposals focusing on the likely opening of talks in early March.

It is important that we recognize the hard work of delegates throughout the day, the consistency of the recommendations put forward, and the firm base created by the unanimous vote on our bargaining objectives. Full details of the objectives will be circulated to all boards in the coming weeks.

Friday's recommendations of the Representative Council will now be used to develop bargaining objectives as the basis for bargaining and proposals to be exchanged with the BCTF. This will include a review of all the specific input provided by individual delegates and table working groups as well as submissions made by all school districts through last fall. Boards of education will receive detailed proposal information and updates on a regular basis through this spring and the entire bargaining process. BCPSEA will also be seeking further input from boards as bargaining takes shape.

To facilitate input and information-sharing, BCPSEA launched its new website on January 30. The site includes enhanced navigation, a publications search, research articles, and improved overall layout. In addition, BCPSEA now has a social media presence on both Twitter and Facebook. Trustees, district staff, the media and interested members of the general public will be able to receive current and accurate updates on bargaining and related issues by following “BCPSEA” on Twitter (search BCPSEA on the Twitter website to sign up) as well as detailed background information on Facebook at any time.

We anticipate the opening of bargaining with the BCTF in early March. Our focus will be to build on the success achieved during the 2006 round of provincial bargaining. Recognizing that K-12 public education bargaining has its challenges and stresses, BCPSEA will be continuing with regular written updates, conference calls and possible further regional meetings to ensure both trustees and staff are fully informed of issues and events. The continued input and feedback of school districts will be vital to a successful round of collective bargaining.

Following a review of the weekend's work we will be sending out an updated version of *Getting to Objectives: Teacher–Public School Employer Bargaining 2011* that includes a:

- summary of the working sessions and the disposition of the themes
- revised General Negotiation Framework with:
 - Broad Bargaining Objectives
 - Specific Bargaining Objectives
- review of the bargaining context

Annual General Meeting

The AGM opened Friday evening, January 28, with reports from BCPSEA Chair Ron Christensen and CEO Hugh Finlayson, as well as nominations from the floor for elections to the Board of Directors. Melanie Joy of School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) was nominated for the position of Chair.

As the day opened on Saturday, January 29, the assembly moved into a Representative Council to review the 2009-2010 financial statements, and review and consider the BCPSEA budget proposal for 2011-2012.

Proposed Resolutions

BE IT RESOLVED that BDO Dunwoody be appointed auditors to the British Columbia Public School Employers' Association for the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

Carried

BE IT RESOLVED that the membership approve the proposed BCPSEA budget for July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012.

Carried

The finance session was followed by candidate speeches and voting.

Elections

The following trustees were elected to the Board of Directors:

Chair

Melanie Joy, School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake)

Vice-Chair (by acclamation)

Alan Chell, School District No. 19 (Revelstoke)

Directors (by acclamation)

Ron Christensen, School District No. 6 (Rocky Mountain)

Ken Denike, School District No. 39 (Vancouver)

Eve Flynn, School District No. 69 (Qualicum)

Michel Saab, School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

Silas White, School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast)

Pete Williams, School District No. 64 (Gulf Islands)

Sheryl Yaremco, School District No. 54 (Bulkley Valley)

Proposed Resolutions

The following resolution was considered by the members:

BE IT RESOLVED that the BC Public School Employers' Association identify emerging human resource issues which impact all school districts, advise districts of these issues, and provide draft policy on each issue for consideration by individual districts.

Referred: Referred to the BCPSEA Board to report back to the assembly regarding the estimated costs to proceed with the initiative proposed by this motion.

Thank You!

Thank you to all of the 160+ delegates who attended the 2011 BCPSEA Representative Council and AGM. Your hard work, dedication and quality input has helped to create a positive and firm position for BCPSEA and the 60 school districts we represent going into bargaining later this spring. In addition, the work of all school district trustees and staff in preparing for the important decisions of the three days is appreciated. It is now possible to move into bargaining with unprecedented commonality of both vision and purpose.

Resources

Conference presentation materials can be accessed at
<http://www.bcpsea.bc.ca/access/events/agm17/2011/agm17downloads.aspx>

Questions

If you have questions on any aspect of the conference, please contact:

- Melanie Joy, Chair, mjoy@sd8.bc.ca
- Hugh Finlayson, CEO, hughf@bcpsea.bc.ca or 604 730 4515.