Report from the Chair

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Looking Ahead…Bargaining and Beyond

I am pleased to send you my first *Report from the Chair* since my election at AGM 17 on January 29. I was honoured with the assembly's show of support and the many good wishes extended to me since my election. Your BCPSEA Board of Directors is ideally suited and prepared to meet the challenges of the next year together.

I think it's safe to say that 2011 will test all of us. Continued support staff bargaining, the commencement of BCPSEA–BCTF bargaining, and changes in provincial leadership will have employment implications that, together, we will have to work through.

But, as always, there is more going on than bargaining. The exciting work of Make a Future-Careers in BC Education — with online recruitment, executive search services, and promotion of public education as a place to be — continues to enjoy district support Our HR Learning Series has now trained over 1500 participants and new courses are being developed with the input of district practitioners.

But back to bargaining…there are many issues relating to BCPSEA–BCTF bargaining that are top of mind. The work done by BCPSEA Trustee Representatives at the January Representative Council provides us with a solid foundation for setting objectives, which will be reviewed by the board when completed and communicated to districts. The objectives will be used to develop the proposals for exchange at the bargaining table. Of course, as we said at our January meeting, we still have to integrate the education policy agenda with the bargaining agenda, to the degree that the policy agenda has employment implications. That work will kick into high gear once the provincial leadership issues are resolved.

One of the other important issues is the BCTF push for a higher degree of local bargaining. As BCTF President Susan Lambert said in her address to our Representative Council, the BCTF has been working on their bargaining model — most items at local tables with compensation and leaves at a provincial table — and their expectation is that this model will be adopted. Given that this is essentially a local bargaining model reminiscent of the late 1980s and early 1990s, BCPSEA proposed an alternative that included elements of the structure recommended by respected mediator Vince Ready after the successful round in 2006. To date the BCTF is remaining with their original position. It's important to remember that there is a structure in place and neither party can compel the other party to accept a change in process as they define it.

Many of you may have seen letters from local teachers' unions requesting that local bargaining commence. To clarify and assist, I will shortly be sending a letter to Board Chairs that details everyone's obligations. This will be followed by further resources and conference calls next

week. It's my hope that the process issues can be sorted out, setting the stage for meaningful discussions. However, there is no doubt that bargaining will be a challenge.

The strength of the employers' association is its members and the work we do together to contribute to a strong and vibrant public education system. As Chair, I am committed to working with each board to ensure that BCPSEA is a responsive and effective employers' association. We are all managing in changing times with many different issues, and many decisions will be made by boards that affect human resources. I hope that those decisions will be made with an understanding that our individual decisions may have broader implications for other boards.

It is integral to keep the lines of communication open between boards of education and the Board of Directors. I am available, as is any member of our Board, to speak with you or meet with you on matters of interest or concern. Please don't hesitate to contact us — our contact information can be found on our newly re-designed public website at http://www.bcpsea.bc.ca/about-us/contact-us.aspx. I look forward to hearing from you.

Melanie Joy, Chair
Board of Directors