

From the Chair



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By E-mail: Three Pages

With the provincial election now behind us, it's fair to say we're in a transitional time. The Premier has scheduled her cabinet announcement for this Friday, June 7. Clearly a new government and a new minister of education have implications for public education, including the current rounds of collective bargaining.

Collective Bargaining Update

▪ Teachers — Provincial Table

After a hiatus for the provincial election period, the BCPSEA and BCTF bargaining teams resumed negotiations on May 28. The parties have a full slate of dates set between now and June 30. As you will recall, under the Agreement in Committee — the process framework for this round of bargaining agreed to by the parties in January — if a collective agreement is not achieved by June 30, the facilitator, Mark Brown, will *issue a report to the parties outlining the outstanding issues and the position of the parties on these issues, matters resolved at the table and suggested processes for continued negotiations.*

On May 24, both BCPSEA and the BC Teachers' Federation received correspondence from James Gorman, Deputy Minister of Education, and Lee Doney, Interim President and CEO of the Public Sector Employers' Council. The letter to BCPSEA advised that, in light of the provincial government's election platform commitment "*...to immediately begin discussions with BCPSEA and the BC Teachers' Federation to achieve a 10 year collective agreement*" after the election, BCPSEA "*should expect to receive a letter rescinding the previous bargaining direction letter and replacing it with one more reflective of the newly elected government's priorities.*"

We anticipate receipt of the new bargaining direction letter once the Premier has named her cabinet and a Minister of Education in place. As referenced above, that announcement is scheduled to occur on June 7.

In the meantime, contrary to much of the commentary being reported in local media and by local teachers' associations, a possible "10-year deal" is not currently "on the [bargaining] table as government's position." The letters received by both parties do, however, signal a change in government's approach to bargaining that will most likely connect to the policy framework for a long-term agreement that the Ministry of Education released prior to the election.

We will continue to keep you updated as events progress with *At the Table* e-mail reports. We would also like to remind each board's BCPSEA Trustee Representative to please ensure that you distribute the *At the Table* to all trustees on your board to keep everyone up to date on progress. Trustees should also feel free to contact BCPSEA Vice Chair [Silas White](#), the BCPSEA Board representative to the bargaining team, if you have any questions.

▪ **Teachers — Local Tables**

Further to *Teacher – Public School Employer Collective Bargaining Bulletin* No. 2013-07 distributed to school districts on May 31, the BCTF and BCPSEA reached an agreement on May 29 that the date by which local matters could be referred to the provincial table would be extended to June 7, 2013, given the bargaining schedule and the fact that June 1 fell on a Saturday. The bulletin outlines the agreed-to process and means that no later than June 6, the parties will meet to confirm whether matters are agreed to, withdrawn, referred to the provincial table, or will be the subject of continued discussion at the local level. Those items that the parties wish to refer to the provincial table are to be referred by June 7.

With respect to local bargaining **after** June 7, the district may continue to bargain matters not referred to the provincial table at the local table. It should be noted, however, that these items will no longer be able to be referred to the provincial table after June 7 and are to be bargained to conclusion at the local table. This could include agreement, withdrawals, or no agreement.

Once it is determined that a party has gone as far as they are willing to go then the matter should be considered at impasse and abandoned. If the district has reached this stage already, then it's not necessary to meet further and the district should consider referring the matter to the provincial table or consider it abandoned.

▪ **Support Staff**

As we advised in *Support Staff Bargaining Bulletin* No. 2013-02 dated May 31, BCPSEA received confirmation from CUPE BC that their local unions are not contemplating a full withdrawal of services by unionized support staff in June 2013. BCPSEA and the CUPE K-12 Presidents' Council reached an agreement on the scope of strike activity that is consistent with the union's stated intention that they do not intend to take any strike activity that will pose a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of BC residents or to the provision of primary or secondary education.

Strike activity will be limited to one-day overtime bans, 30-minute study sessions during lunch breaks or when students are not in session, and picketing when classes are not in session and when there are no extracurricular activities occurring (with provisions to prevent any interference with access or egress for students or staff). Locals will also notify other unions that any study session or leafleting is not a picket line. Districts may utilize their excluded staff as needed and unionized support staff will be available in the event of any emergency or disaster situation.

It remains our understanding that notice will be given that strike activity in the form of an overtime ban will occur on Wednesday, June 5, 2013 at the end of the school day in the following school districts: 61 (Greater Victoria), 62 (Sooke), 63 (Saanich), and 64 (Gulf Islands).

We will work closely with districts to manage this process as it unfolds and will continue to update you on any new developments.

Exempt Staff Compensation Working Group

BCPSEA re-convened the Exempt Staff Compensation Working Group (ESCWG) in January 2013. The ESCWG — comprised of representatives from the BC School Superintendents' Association, the BC Association of School Business Officials, the BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) Secretariat, as well as two school district human resources

practitioners, external compensation consultants, and BCPSEA staff — is reviewing the current state of exempt staff compensation in the sector.

The purpose of the ESCWG, from a policy perspective, is to facilitate a common awareness and understanding of exempt staff compensation matters generally, and exempt staff compensation matters in the K-12 public education sector specifically, with the purpose of identifying implications and options to move forward.

The work of the ESCWG is part of an integrated approach (with Make a Future – Careers in Education and the Employment Data and Analysis System (EDAS)) to human resource management and workforce planning in the sector. The nature of the exempt employees in the K-12 public education sector is different from other public sector groups in that the first level of supervisors (principals/vice principals) is drawn solely from the dominant union group (teachers). District-based education administrators are drawn from the principal/vice principal group, with a minority of individuals coming from other jurisdictions. Selected school district business positions come from outside the sector, as the requisite skills are more readily transferable from other workplaces.

The ESCWG is examining the compensation data and relationships at all levels of the organization, including how to properly identify and effectively deal with compression and inversion issues, matters that continue to be the subject of much anecdotal discussion in the sector. Six half-day meetings have been completed, with a further meeting currently scheduled in mid-June.

The ESCWG is developing options/recommendations to address identified issues, which will be presented in a discussion paper to inform policy decision-makers. The discussion paper is scheduled to be finalized in early July.

Meeting with BCSTA

We met on May 27 with the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) to follow up on the motions passed at their April AGM regarding collective bargaining with the BC Teachers' Federation.

BCPSEA and BCSTA are committed to work collaboratively within the context of the organizations' respective mandates and will continue to engage in regular dialogue as events progress.

Stay Connected

If you have any questions or need more information on any aspect of BCPSEA work, please don't hesitate to contact any member of your [Board of Directors](#).

Alan Chell
Chair