

Report *from the Chair*

BRITISH COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION

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By E-mail: 5 Pages

As 2007 comes to a close, it's time to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and look to our individual and collective future challenges with optimism. On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy, healthy holiday season and best wishes for 2008!

Sustainable Workforce Initiative

The K-12 public education sector — like other employers in the private and public sectors — is contending with a variety of workforce and workplace challenges. Consistent with the third element of our statutory mandate, to coordinate human resources practices, BCPSEA is taking an integrated strategic approach to ensure that the sector is able to successfully respond to growing labour market pressures.

As many of you know, BCPSEA has been meeting with trustees, superintendents, secretary treasurers and district staff across the province to discuss how to approach the recruitment and retention challenges facing school districts.

We outlined in the October 2007 issue of *NewsLink* (distributed to boards at the end of October, this issue can also be found on our public website at www.bcpsea.bc.ca under Publications) the BCPSEA integrated approach and strategy. Comprised of eight components, the strategy attempts to integrate employment data collection/analysis, workforce planning, recruitment tools, and best practices. One of the central components to the model is the *Integrated Recruitment Portal*, an initiative aimed at ensuring the K-12 public education sector has the human resources with the right skills in the right areas of the province to educate, lead and support our students and their achievement objectives.

The portal is a tool for employers and those seeking employment in a competitive labour market to:

- broaden the pool of potential candidates
- make employment opportunities readily accessible
- provide the sector and individual employers with data to assist in labour market planning
- provide a cost effective way for employers to seek new employees and for potential employees to seek employment
- establish the *face of British Columbia* to the public education labour market.

All of us can benefit from a project like the portal, if we make it a priority and make it work. To be successful, this project requires a shared commitment and effort from school districts, the Ministry of Education, and BCPSEA. The Ministry has indicated their commitment to the development of the portal and we are now committed to creating a state of the art tool which will: (a) help school districts find the right people, and (b) provide labour market data to allow us to make the right case for government and sectoral action on labour market issues.

BCTF Actions and Reactions

▪ **Foundation Skills Assessment**

I would encourage trustees to read the most recent @ *Issue* (No. 2007-09 distributed November 27 (www.bcpsea.bc.ca under Publications). The BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) is continuing their opposition to the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA). We understand that BCTF members are being encouraged to "un-volunteer" for marking; in addition there were issues in some districts regarding distribution of a pamphlet containing inaccurate information to parents during parent/teacher interviews. If your district faces a similar situation with parent/teacher interviews and/or your union has posted or intends to post inaccurate information on bulletin boards in schools, please contact your BCPSEA liaison.

▪ **Class Size Campaign**

Many of you may have already seen the advertisements arising from the BCTF's latest media campaign launched in late November.

The print ads are titled, "Maybe if our schools were convention centres, they'd get the resources they need," and go on to question government funding priorities with particular reference to class size.

This campaign is consistent with the type of approach the BCTF takes in attempting to shape public discussion and opinion (see @ *Issue* No. 2007-07 on www.bcpsea.bc.ca under Publications). The tactic includes media advertisements and information posted to the BCTF website. The advertisements don't reference a source for the information quoted, nor do they note that class size parameters are contained in the *School Act* and that school districts are required to adhere to those parameters.

Public Education Recruitment and Retention Support Committee (PERRSC)

As you will recall, Letter of Understanding #12 under the Provincial Collective Agreement between the BCTF and BCPSEA called for the establishment of a provincial Recruitment and Retention Support Committee.

The BCPSEA reps to the committee are Jacquie Griffiths and Stephanie Tassin of BCPSEA staff, and Sterling Olson, Secretary Treasurer in School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes). BCTF reps are Susan Lambert, First Vice President and BCTF staff Dick Gilbert and Brian Porter.

The first bulletin from the committee was e-mailed to all districts today. Criteria for eligibility will be communicated to districts and local teachers' associations by January 21; the committee intends to wrap up its work by February 2008 so that eligible school districts not identified in LOU No. 12 will be able to offer this incentive to prospective and incumbent employees during the 2008 spring staffing process.

Exempt Staff Compensation

Exempt staff compensation continues to be a challenge for districts, but there is progress to report.

▪ 2006-2007 Labour Market Adjustment

BCPSEA was advised by the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) that its proposal for distribution of the labour market adjustment (LMA) funds for the 2006-2007 school year under the *Public Education Negotiating Framework Compensation Plan – Exempt Staff* (PENFCP) was approved by government and the notifications were provided to districts at the end of November. Although the decision approving the distribution was delayed, we are pleased that the funds have rolled out and we can now move forward. This is the first of four opportunities to access LMA funds; the process to access the LMA funds for the 2007-2008 school year will be communicated early in the new year.

BCPSEA took a salary compression-based approach to the allocation of the LMA funds for 2006-2007, in order to address the effect of a differentiated settlement with teachers. BCPSEA followed up with districts to collect exempt staff salary structures and actual exempt employee FTE data, as at July 1, 2006, for each position.

We then calculated a best estimate of the highest paid teacher's salary in the district, including the general wage adjustment, the 2% SIP rebate, department head allowance and, in some districts, the rural and remote allowance that will take effect in 2008. We proceeded to conduct district-by-district analyses of the impact of the Provincial Collective Agreement on the salary structures for the two exempt employee groups in the public school sector — principals/vice principals and general exempt/management staff. The approach utilized calculated the salary relationship (differential) between the salary of the highest paid teacher and exempt positions as at June 30, 2006; the salary relationship between the highest paid teacher and exempt positions as at July 1, 2006; and the salary that would be required as at July 1, 2006 to maintain the June 30 salary relationship.

Where the analysis indicated a demonstrated and pressing issue of compression between exempt staff salaries and the calculation of highest paid teacher's salary in the 2006-2007 school year, BCPSEA made a submission to Treasury Board through the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) for allocation of labour market adjustment funds. Allocation of funding was identified on a priority basis and, therefore, not all districts received funding for 2006-2007; additionally, for those districts that did receive funding, not all exempt positions in the district were included in the calculation of the allocation of funds.

▪ Superintendent/Secretary Treasurer Compensation

As you know, the manner in which exempt compensation is managed is a joint effort between districts and the employers' association within the PSEC statutory framework governing exempt staff compensation. Compensation increases over and above the general wage adjustments and LMA funds provided for in the PENFCP must be submitted to BCPSEA for approval, in accordance with the BCPSEA sectoral exempt compensation management plan (Policy 95-06). Such submissions should be grounded in a solid, data-driven rationale referencing recruitment, retention, compression, and/or overall competitiveness.

In this context, increases contemplated for the positions of Superintendent and Secretary Treasurer must fall within the parameters of the salary ranges for these positions as approved by the Minister of Finance in September (see *Exempt Staff Issues* bulletins No. 2007-01 and No. 2007-02 on www.bcpsea.bc.ca under Publications).

The portion of the salary range between the salary range maximum and the performance-based incentive plan maximum for the positions of Superintendent and Secretary Treasurer is reserved for school districts that have an approved plan in place that provides for an annual re-earnable performance-based pay incentive. Such plans require prior approval of BCPSEA. Information on the framework for such plans will be distributed to school districts this week.

Elimination of Mandatory Retirement

Effective January 1, 2008, mandatory retirement will be eliminated in BC. Earlier this week, BCPSEA distributed *Legislative Update* No. 2007-5, a Reference Guide providing general information regarding the elimination of mandatory retirement in a question and answer format, addressing specific questions raised by school districts. The *Legislative Update* can be accessed on our public site, www.bcpsea.bc.ca under Publications.

BCPSEA Client Services Survey 2007

The management of human resources in the K-12 public education sector is a shared effort between the employers' association and school districts. The BCPSEA mandate includes not only labour relations advice/resources and collective bargaining, but also includes coordination of human resource practices, exempt staff compensation, and benefits administration.

Your Board of Directors believes in service excellence and continuous improvement. In the fall of 2004, BCPSEA initiated its first client services survey, which provided us with baseline information about members' views of BCPSEA services as relevant, credible and effective. After our Labour Relations Symposium in October, we initiated our second survey in order to obtain insight to re-evaluate how the association is doing and what changes need to be made to better meet the needs of our members.

If you haven't already done so, please take five minutes to complete this anonymous survey and provide us with your feedback, comments and insights. Please contact the BCPSEA office (604.730.0739) if you haven't seen the survey and wish to complete it.

While surveys are helpful, direct discussion is best. That's why we're supplementing the survey with a series of facilitated discussions about our services and your needs. Wendy Herbert, in her capacity as a Consulting Superintendent to BCPSEA, is holding these sessions with our client groups. There will be a number of opportunities for trustees including a session at our AGM. We look forward to the dialogue.

Annual General Meeting

Speaking of the AGM, we hope as many of you as possible will be able to join us at our 14th AGM, scheduled for January 25-26, 2008 at the Coast Plaza Hotel and Suites in Vancouver. As

we are not currently in a collective bargaining phase, it's important to note that trustees who may be in a conflict of interest situation with respect to either teacher or support staff bargaining are eligible to attend all sessions at the AGM. Please visit www.bcpsea.bc.ca for more information or to register online.

Contact Us

Please feel free to contact me, or any other member of the Board of Directors or staff, with your questions, concerns, and comments. The Board and staff contact information can be found under Contact Us on the BCPSEA website.



Ron Christensen
Chair