



No More Hokey~Pokey Staffing!

As you know, staff reps and teachers are currently engaged in this year's round of Bill 33 consultations (now Section 76 of the School Act). Many members have asked, "Why are we doing this? I'm not going to get anything, anyway!" The palpable frustration experienced by many teachers engaged in this process is compounded by the knowledge that our consultations done in good faith last year still resulted in over 1200 class size and composition violations in Vancouver secondary schools alone.

The failed promise of Bill 33 is something the VSTA is working hard to address at all levels of government and within the BCTF.

As a direct result of the data collected by teachers during Bill 33 consultations, the VSTA has been successful in keeping this issue in the foreground of the media and on the table at the Board and the BCTF.

On September 8th, there was a tense meeting of the Board's Finance Committee called to discuss what to do with the Board's \$2.1 million budget surplus left over from last year. Senior management put forward a recommendation to split 17 new *temporary* teaching positions between elementary and secondary schools. Anne Guthrie Warman vigorously presented compelling arguments that this type of "hokey-pokey staffing" causes instability in schools, and that all new positions should be made permanent ones. Following the meeting, the *Vancouver Sun* interviewed Anne, who noted that the "surplus [is] 'a grim irony' because teachers had pressed trustees in April to deal with class size and composition. 'We advocated very forcefully but were ignored,' she said". (*The Vancouver Sun* 09/09/08)

The collective efforts of teachers to

gather the Bill 33 data and Anne's efforts to bring attention to the untenable situation in many secondary classrooms resulted in a significant victory for Vancouver teachers and students when, at a subsequent Board meeting on September 15th, the trustees decided teachers were right and made the full complement of 17 positions permanent!

As a direct result of the diligence of teachers and staff reps during Bill 33 consultations, the VSTA has been able to present compelling data that persuaded the Board to make the right decision. This is a significant turnaround for the Board and a hopeful sign that all of our efforts are having a positive impact in challenging the failed promise of Bill 33.

Thank you for continuing with the work of the Bill 33 consultative process. We are making inroads. Bill 33's failure to remedy class size and composition violations is now firmly planted in the minds of both senior management and trustees, and, significantly, it will be a vote-determining issue in the upcoming municipal elections for school trustee.

Shelley Sullivan, 2nd Vice-President/Communications Officer

Take Heart: Gains Made as a Direct Result of Bill 33 Consultations

- January 2007, 37 full time equivalent positions were added to staffing
- September 2008, 17 full time equivalent continuing positions added to staffing
- A Class Size and Composition provincial grievance from last year is going forward
- A Class Size and Composition provincial grievance for the current school year has already been filed (details on how to sign on will be published in *Tackboard* on Sept. 25th)
- Class Size and Composition is now a critical vote determining issue in Vancouver Municipal elections for school trustee
- 3 full-time peer to peer mentoring positions have been created as a result of VSTA's work at the Class Size/Class Composition Committee

General Meeting

September 30th, 4pm, Tupper Auditorium

This is a very important General Meeting for our membership as we head into the election season. It is critical that every school is well represented. We are hoping for a large turnout. At the meeting there will be an update on the new Bill 33 consultation process and the provincial grievance going forward. We will discuss the candidates for the upcoming municipal elections for school trustee and vote on the VSTA's direction and involvement in the election. Also on the agenda is a vote on whether to support or reject a proposed two week spring break vacation in February of 2010 (to coincide with the 2010 Olympics). As an incentive for schools to get their staff members to attend, the school with the largest turn out (on a percentage basis) will receive a complimentary pizza lunch! So mark your calendars and come with your questions and suggestions!