



# TACKBOARD

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## President's Message



ON TUESDAY, May 13, the VSTA held its Annual General Meeting to elect its Table Officers and Executive. The turn-out, sadly, was not what it should have been, and I want to here briefly address the importance of teachers attending and

participating in this process. A participatory democracy requires involvement through attendance, debate, and direct participation. We hear from staff reps and members of the Executive once a month at Council and we keep them updated with all current issues, but it is the larger membership whom we would like to see and hear from at our general meetings. A general meeting is *the sovereign decision making body* of this organization and important decisions around budget, union direction, and elections should be discussed and voted upon by a significant percentage of the membership.

This year with the addition of a 3<sup>rd</sup> part-time in-house table officer, we have worked hard to improve communication. I think it is fair to say that any member who phones the office either gets to speak to one of us immediately or we get back within the day or 24 hour period. Visiting schools on a regular basis is a goal but not always achievable with the volume of work all three of us face on a daily basis (at the moment it seems I only get out to visit schools if there is a problem). Additionally, a large priority for teachers next year will be the upcoming municipal and provincial elections and we will hold a general meeting early in the autumn to debate and discuss what position the VSTA will take to ensure we have candidates for both school board and provincial seats who put the defense and funding of public education as a priority in their platform. I encourage all of you to watch for this meeting and to attend to provide direction for the Executive and Table Officers on this important matter.

Fall will see the implementation of the Avison Recommendations (arising from the scandals around Ellison/Quest program). We have been active in providing feedback on the proposed code of conduct and training on policy around field trips, protocols on the inter-agency reporting and investigating of abuse. Currently, we are not clear as to when this training (in-service) will occur and we await the Board's response to our detailed feedback and recommendations on the proposed code of conduct.

On a cautionary note, one of the issues raised in the VBE's proposed code of conduct is the issue of online communication through private email or social networking sites. The BC College of Teachers has recently posted something called Facebook 101 on its website and advises teachers to be very careful about the use of personal email and using Facebook without all the privacy safeguards in place. I strongly advise teachers not to post anything personal (images or information) on a Facebook site, not to allow students to be "friends" on a personal networking site, and not to share any confidential information about students, colleagues, or administrators.

Finally, I want here to publicly thank Debbie Pawluk who has, this year, been our 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President (released .71 in the VSTA office). Debbie had the challenging task of being in the union office on both days and managing a teaching load at Templeton. Her work ethic, focused advocacy on behalf of members and the excellent job she did on improving our communication with members has been much appreciated. Debbie is taking a break next year, but we hope she'll come back to be part of the leadership of VSTA soon.

As always, June will be an extremely busy month as we wrap up the 2007/08 school year. Take time to enjoy the spring - like weather, pace yourselves, and look forward to your well-deserved summer break.

Anne

## Retiring This Year? Have You...

1. Contacted The Teachers' Pension Plan and:
  - a. Requested a retirement package be sent to you?
  - b. Applied to purchase service arising from a leave of absence arising within the last five years?
  - c. Applied for child rearing drop-out credit?
  - d. Applied to transfer service from another pension plan?
2. Contacted VBE payroll to find out when your current health benefits end to ensure you have continuous coverage until the benefits associated with the Teachers' Pension Plan begin?
3. Prepared your resignation letter to be sent to your employer 30 days prior to your date of retirement?
4. Considered converting your current group life insurance to an individual life insurance policy?
5. Contacted the BC College of Teachers as to the membership requirements for the 2008-2009 school year should you wish to work in the BC public school system after retirement?
6. Considered joining the BC Retired Teachers' Association?
7. Contacted the BCTF Income Security Staff if you have questions related to any of the above? Phone: 604-871-1921; toll-free 1-800-663-9163, extension 1921;  
E-mail: [alambert@bctf.ca](mailto:alambert@bctf.ca);  
[cprellwitz@bctf.ca](mailto:cprellwitz@bctf.ca)

## School Union Team Elections

As per established practice, elections for members of the VSTA School Union Team take place in the spring, or in the case of a school that expects significant staff changes, in the following September. Elections should take place at a Staff Organization Meeting and contested positions must be determined by secret ballot. Even if only one person is nominated or has volunteered for a position, it is important that s/he be openly acclaimed by the meeting. The School Union Team consists of:

- One (1) Staff Rep for every 25 teachers or fraction thereof on staff
- One (1) Staff Rep for parent contact
- Professional Development Chairperson ( who will also represent the school on the VSTA Professional Development Committee)
- Up to two (2) Reps to the VSTA Working and Learning Conditions/Bargaining Committee (who will also represent the school on the VSTA Working and Learning Conditions/Bargaining Committee)
- One (1) Rep to the VSTA Health and Safety Committee (who will also represent the school on the VSTA Health and Safety Committee)
- One (1) Rep to the VSTA Social Justice Committee (who will also represent the school on the VSTA Social Justice Committee)
- Staff Committee Chairperson (unless a school's Staff Committee Constitution specifies that Staff Committee elects its own chair. In either case, the Staff Committee Chairperson is a member of the School Union Team).

Members of the VSTA Executive (from the school) are also considered to be members of the School Union Team.

Additionally, members of the School Union Team are reminded that VSTA provides a budget to the team of \$2.00 per member to facilitate meetings of the Team and/or Staff Organization meetings.

## Friday Absences

Members are reminded that they *must report a full day's absence* when away on the shortened Friday, even when they have prep in the last block.

## 2008/09 VSTA Executive

Congratulations and thanks to the teachers who were elected to the VSTA Executive at our AGM held on May 13th at Tupper.

### Table Officers

<i>President</i>	Anne Guthrie Warman, VSTA
<i>1st Vice-President</i>	Shaun van der Hoop, VSTA
<i>2nd Vice-President</i>	Shelley Sullivan, KITS
<i>Treasurer</i>	Moira Ekdahl, DLS
<i>Local Reps</i>	Rory Brown, VT Anne Guthrie Warman, VSTA Sylvia Metzner, JO

<b>Members-at-Large</b>	Susan Gallpen, TEMP Gena Kolson, KITS Perry Mathias, VLN Raza Mirani, GLAD Lisa Pacheco, GLAD Mark Reid, VT Katharine Shipley, WC
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**TOC Rep** Treena Goolieff, EH

### Standing Committee Chairs

<i>Health &amp; Safety</i>	Louis Jefferson, WC
<i>Pro-D</i>	Brin MacIntyre, TEMP
<i>Social Justice</i>	Rosalind Kellett, EH
<i>WLC/B</i>	Peter Hill, UHS

Vacant positions will be filled by election at the next Council meeting.

On behalf of the membership, we wish to extend our thanks for their dedication and countless hours of service to those Executive members who have stepped down: Debbie Pawluk, Jim Gill, Sue Inglis, Alita Krickan, Mike O'Neill, Tom Ross and Marcy Toms.

## VSTA Retirees' Dinner

Members retiring this June or who retired earlier this year are invited, along with their guest, to the annual VSTA Retirees' Dinner on Wednesday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club. VSTA staff reps, committee reps, and members of the executive are also invited. Personalized invitations will soon be sent to the schools. Please mark the date on your calendar to ensure that you won't miss this sumptuous event!

## ERIP Deadline: June 2

Teachers planning on retiring this year and who wish to avail themselves of the Early Retirement Incentive Plan must submit notice of their intention to retire to Human Resources by 4:00 pm, Monday, June 02<sup>nd</sup>. At a PB 5 pay grade, the ERIP ranges from \$15,745 for teachers aged 55 to \$3,149 for teachers aged 64. ERIP information is posted in all schools. Contact VSTA if you have any questions.

## "88 and Out" — Save up to \$800.00 per Year

BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan regulations provide for a member who has reached age 64 or a total of age plus contributory service of 88 ("Factor 88") to withdraw from the long-term portion of the plan. You may wish to continue the plan, however, if your accumulated sick leave and BCTF Short Term SIP (120 days) will not protect your salary until you reach the age of 65 or factor 90. Members who withdraw from the long-term portion of the plan will still receive the 2% SIP allowance. Please note that there are *no retroactive payments for late withdrawals*. It is the members' responsibility to make application for withdrawal, and should do so as soon as they are eligible to do so. Call the Income Security Division at the BCTF at 604-871-2283 or VSTA for further information.

## VBE/VTF Collective Agreement Melding Update

Work continues on putting together the 2006-2011 Collective Agreement. The VTF, in conjunction with VBE Human Resources, is working diligently to complete the document with the goal of sending it to the printers over the summer. Hopefully, all members will have a personal copy of the Collective Agreement at the beginning of the next school year.

## Thinking Ahead: Ensuring Health and Safety when you are not there

As the year comes to a close we ask you to take some time to think about how you can improve for next year the accessibility of Health and Safety information in your classroom. To ensure the safety of students and the TOCs teaching while you are away it is essential that HS information be clearly marked in your room. If you are not currently doing so, be reminded of the VSB Staff guidelines that advises all rooms have clearly posted the *Emergency Procedures Flipbook* (orange and yellow flipchart) and *School Fire and Earthquake Drill Information* (specific to school), in order to ensure you and TOCs have immediate access to vital information.

Other considerations that may be included in your individual classroom Health and Safety package or poster board within your room are clearly marked exit maps and class lists with designated leaders for each block to whom TOCs may refer to if needed. Although the later points are not district policy, recognize the value these practices may have to ensure the health and safety of TOCs and our students. For copies of the *Emergency Procedures Flipbook* or *School Fire and Earthquake Drill Information* speak to your HS Committee and/or your AO responsible for HS.

Louis Jefferson, Health & Safety Chair  
Treena Goolieff, Teacher-on-Call Rep

## Tackboard Member Feedback

Is *Tackboard* meeting your needs as a member? Do you have any suggestions, comments, or questions that you would like to pass along to the VSTA Office? If so, please visit [www.vstaweb.ca](http://www.vstaweb.ca) and pass along your ideas to either Mo or Debbie. Feedback from the membership is greatly appreciated and valued.



**Always happy to hear from you!**  
Anne, Shaun, Debbie, Kim & Mo

## Medi-Assist while travelling outside BC

Pacific Blue Cross, through Medi-Assist, provides assistance to members and their dependents who experience emergencies while traveling outside of their province of residence.

The Medi-Assist does not pay your medical expenses, but it does provide the following:

- Notifies your insurer, Pacific Blue Cross, to facilitate claims payment.
- Puts you in touch with qualified licensed physicians and medical services.
- Connects you with qualified legal services.
- Assists with lost baggage or stolen documents/money.
- Arranges consular assistance and travel advice.
- Assists with arrangement of repatriation of remains in the event of a death.
- Helps to contact your family or business partners.
- Assists with transfer of patient from one facility to another or to return patient to province of residence.

Payment of medical expenses may be delayed or refused if the member fails to contact Medi-Assist within 24 hours of the emergency. You can call Pacific Blue Cross at 604-419-2600 or toll free at 1-888-275-4672.

You will need to provide Medi-Assist with

- your care card number
- your Pacific Blue Cross group and ID numbers

In Canada & U.S. 1 888 699 9333 (toll-free). Outside of Canada/US 1-604-419-4487.

Visit CARESnet for plan and claims information: [www.pac.bluecross.ca](http://www.pac.bluecross.ca)