



School Team Bulletin

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The Liberal Government's Assault on Democracy

The provincial government seems intent on making the practice of democracy even more difficult, if not impossible, leading up to the municipal election in November and the May provincial vote. It has passed two pieces of legislation, Bills 7 and 42, which put severe restrictions on what unions and organizations can do to publicize their issues.

Bill 7 forces locals to jump through bureaucratic hoops if they are engaged in any activity which might affect the outcome of a municipal or school board election. The bill extends the definition of "campaign organizer" to include any individual or organization that runs campaigns related to a local election. They have to have a separate bank account, name a financial agent, and file a financial disclosure statement with the municipality. There is no time limit on the rule—for example 30 days before the election, so anything a group does in the three years between elections is covered.

Bill 42 is even more antidemocratic. Organizations will be limited to spending \$150,000 for advertising in any provincial election campaign and a maximum of \$3,000 in any individual riding. That means that the BCTF and all its teacher locals will be restricted to that amount. In the last election the BCTF spent \$1.5 million in advertising.

Even more outrageous is the new, broad definition of advertising and the length of the period during which the law applies—120 days before the writ is dropped. So for five months (including the actual election period), no organization will be allowed to engage in a public interest advertising campaign that exceeds the spending limit either in support of a party or potential candidate or that "takes a position on an issue with which a registered political party or candidate is associated."

The BC Federation of Labour, including the BCTF, are looking at a number of possible responses to Bill 42 including a constitutional challenge regarding freedom of expression.

School Trustees Join Teachers in Attacking Fraser Institute Rankings

On May 6, the BCSTA issued an e-alert critiquing the Fraser Institute rankings. The bulletin included the following statements:

"BCSTA believes that the conclusions drawn by the Fraser Institute are incomplete and misleading because it ranks schools based on a narrow snapshot of information that fails to reflect the breadth and depth of activities occurring in schools. Fine arts, sciences, athletics, student citizenship and the success of many school programs are not reflected in the report.

Furthermore, the rankings are potentially harmful to the morale of those who work and learn in B.C.'s public schools. The report does not take individual school, student population, or other community factors into consideration. The narrow snapshot of data used by the report fails to recognize the significant accomplishments and progress taking place every day in B.C.'s public schools."

Go to <http://www.bcsta.org/main/?whatsNew&32> to read the full e-alert.

The Stop BC School Closures Petition

In the past five years, B.C. has lost 150 public schools and at least 46 are slated to close or are threatened with closure. To date, 22,000 students have been displaced from their neighbourhood schools. Parents and concerned members of the public in communities all over B.C. are speaking up for public schools and organizing to stop the school closure epidemic.

In Maple Ridge, parents have put together the Stop B.C. School Closures Petition. Go to <http://members.shaw.ca/stopschoolclosures/> to read the background information and sign the petition.

For more information on school closures in BC, go to <http://www.bctf.ca/SchoolClosures.aspx>