

NOTEBOOK

Issue #5 November 25, 2016



A Message from the NVTa President

Thursday, November 10, 2016 truly was an historical day. After a 14-year struggle, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled completely in our favour after less than 30-minutes of deliberation. The BC Liberals illegally stripped our contract language in 2002, removing language that provided the supports and the class sizes our students need.

I am so proud of all of you for your willingness not to give up. At Rep Assemblies and General Meetings, through phone calls to the office, and school visits, I heard the pain in your voices of what these cuts meant to your students. Because of you the government will now be forced to put hundreds of millions of dollars back into the Public Education system. No politician did that. No school trustee did that. No superintendent or school board official did that. You did. And for that the entire province thanks you. I have not heard a word of criticism since the court ruling. Administrators, parents, school trustees, and opposition politicians have all expressed their gratitude to me for what the teachers of BC have accomplished.

The Supreme Court decision puts our language back in our Collective Agreement. The negotiations that will now take place will be about timelines and how to implement the language. No doubt, the government will try to push back but we need to remain firm in our resolve that the language has been restored. For now, everything is status quo but hopefully that will change very soon. The NVTa will share all updates as we move forward on this. A summary of our restored language will be found on Page Two of this *Notebook*.

The following statement was read by NVTa President, Martin Stuible, at the Board of Trustees Meeting on Tuesday, November 15, 2016

Thank you for this opportunity. So last week was quite the week. We had the shock of Trump and we had the sadness of the passing of Leonard Cohen. But juxtaposed with that was a true Hallelujah moment. For as you all know, the Supreme Court of Canada issued a swift and decisive decision. Fourteen years. Fourteen years we have been fighting this assault on public education. And though we are excited about the court ruling, many of us are still angry. We are angry at the generation of public school students who lost the chance to reach their potential. We are angry at the fact that young teachers have had to start their career in such a broken system. Many of them took years to get a job, as the jobs just weren't there. But they should have been. Thousands of them. Many of these fine, brilliant, caring young teachers left the profession. We are angry that teachers were told to fill their toolboxes up with new strategies and that would somehow make up for all of this. Let's now be clear. The toolboxes are brimming with strategies but those toolboxes have been kept together by duct tape, jimmy rigged by teachers who have used every last ounce of their fibre to keep the system together.

And where was our Board of Trustees when all of this was happening? Unlike Vancouver, North Vancouver gave in. They were willing participants in the illegal actions of our provincial government. They were closing schools and cutting programs and telling us that the pie is what the pie is and we should not expect it to be any larger. Those were the very words said to me in such a condescending tone at a Board Standing Committee meeting two years ago.

Well, I humbly disagree. The pie is the second smallest in the land, the funding an average of \$1,000 less per student than other provinces. This government has saved billions on the backs of our students, on the backs of our most precious resource. But as Bob Dylan would say, Things have changed. Yes, the Supreme Court decision has truly altered the landscape as we have known it for the last 14 years. Finally our teachers will have working conditions that will allow them to create learning environments where students can flourish, where special needs are met, where every child can reach their potential. To quote Naomi Klein, "This changes everything."

So where do we go from here? To the land of redemption, I say. For this Board has a chance to be a different Board. They can be a strong voice for the proper funding that will be needed to fund our restored language.

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In conclusion, I urge Trustees to seize this moment. Ensure that the provincial government, a government that has lied, manipulated and shown complete disregard not only for public education but the collective bargaining relationship, finally accepts the wisdom of the highest court of the land. This will not be easy. But I know the current Board of Trustees is up to the task. So often with moments in history, they pass and we do not realize till after, the missed opportunity. Do not let this be one of those moments. Teachers are counting on you. Parents are counting on you. Most importantly, students are counting on you. I know each of one you and I know each one of you will do the right thing.

A Summary of our Restored Language

Article: Teachers Assistants

The guarantee that teachers' assistants shall not be used as alternatives for lowering the pupil/teacher ratio or reducing class size.

Article: Access to Information

The guaranteed right of the Association to information on staffing, class size, enrolment, including students with special needs and educational leadership allotments.

Article: Class Size and Composition

- all local class size provisions (K-12)
- guaranteed class size for special education classes, LAC classes, and ESL classes
- guarantees of absolute limits to the size of classes
- guaranteed release time for teachers with oversized classes
- guaranteed limits on the number of students with special needs who may be integrated into a regular classroom
- guaranteed limits on the number of high incidence and low incidence students with special needs who may be integrated into a regular classroom
- guaranteed release time for teachers who enroll students with special needs beyond the specified limits
- guaranteed rights of teachers to use their professional judgment and give approval for the addition of students into the classroom

Article: Specialist Personnel

- guarantees that the Board will provide appropriate levels of specialist personnel
- guaranteed levels of staffing of library, learning assistance, and counseling services

Article: Staffing Formula

- guaranteed levels of staffing of non-enrolling and ESL teachers
- guaranteed staffing ratios for teacher librarians, counselors, LAC teachers, Special Education teachers, ESL teachers

Article: Special Needs Schools

- guarantees additional staffing to special needs schools
- the opportunity for additional support for special needs schools including reduced class size, increased support from counselors and LAC teachers, increased funding and additional leadership time and non-instructional time, and hot lunch programs
- the guaranteed right of teachers to work jointly with the Board on the identification of special needs schools and on the allocation of additional staffing and resources to the schools

Article: Mainstreaming/Integration

This article has been in our Collective Agreement since 1991. Many of the provisions were endorsed by the joint NVTA/Board Mainstreaming Integration Committee for inclusion in the Collective Agreement.

- the joint mainstreaming committee and the guaranteed right of teachers to participate with the Board in studying and making recommendations on the issue of mainstreaming and integration
- the guaranteed right of teachers to be consulted on the appropriate placement of students with special needs
- guarantees that teachers and staff will determine prerequisite conditions and resources for each student needing placement
- guarantees that appropriate renovations will be completed before integration occurs
- guarantees that receiving teachers and SEAs will receive in-service training and support
- guaranteed levels of SEA support for Low Incidence students
- guaranteed levels of SEA support for classrooms with High Incidence students
- guaranteed time for teachers and SEAs for planning meetings
- guaranteed replacements for SEAs in the case of absence
- guaranteed release time for integration meetings, training, and planning
- guaranteed process for the design and writing of Individual Education Plan
- the joint District Screening Committee and the guaranteed right of teachers to participate in identifying students with special needs and to allocate resources to students with special needs
- school based resource team and the guaranteed composition of the team and the guaranteed right of teachers to participate in the referral process for identifying students with special needs

Article: Home Education

- gives responsibility of home schooled students to the principal or vice principal
- guarantees that teachers not be required to register, instruct, advise, prepare materials or exams, assess or prepare reports on home schooled students, but give a "reasonable amount of assistance"

Article: Assignment in School: Equitable distribution of workload

- equitable distribution of workload as one of five guaranteed criteria for basing assignments in school

Memorandum of Agreement K-3 Primary Class Size

- guaranteed maximum class sizes K-3 and absolute limits
- guaranteed process for resolving any disputes
- guaranteed process for resolving special circumstances where the K-3 class size maximum may be exceeded