



# The Advocate

In consensus atque unitate stat potentia

*"There is strength in unity"*

A Monthly Newsletter

March 2020

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring break is almost upon us and not a moment too soon. The ATU office is closed for spring break as we all need a vacation and some time to rejuvenate. In addition, all of the Release Officers are attending the BCTF AGM which starts on the first Saturday of our break. Despite the fact that the office is closed, I will still be monitoring my email and if the matter is urgent you can always call the BCTF directly at 1-800-663-9163.

We have had several inquiries lately about benefits and coverage. There have not been any recent changes to our plan so if you are getting a different message from a medical provider or pharmacy please check out the following link for information: <https://www.abbotsfordteachers.ca/benefits.html>

If you have questions about coverage contact the ATU office.

I hope everyone has a restful spring break. The remainder of the school year will fly by, so take some time away from the workplace to refresh and spend time with family and friends.

## Contact Us:

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Our office hours are Monday to Friday,  
8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Any inquiries can be directed to the  
emails listed above or reach us at  
604-854-1946

In Solidarity,  
**Jennifer Brooks, ADTA President**

## Important Leave Deadlines Approaching

If you are interested in applying for a Job Share or Job Exchange for the 2020 - 2021 school year all applications must be submitted to the School Board Office by March 15th.

If you are interested in applying for a leave for the 2020-2021 school year all applications submitted to the School Board Office by March 15th. Leaves that you might be interested in are Long Term Service Leave (*Article G.33*) and Educational Leave without pay (*Article G.35*).

If you are interested in signing up for the Deferred Salary Leave Plan (*Article G.31*) the deadline is March 31st.

## Labour Relations Rant of the Month

### Staff Meetings

*n. the devotion of time to a useless activity*

*"the waste of time could prove fatal" Type of: dissipation, waste, wastefulness. useless or profitless activity; using or expending or consuming thoughtlessly or carelessly.*

The collective agreement outlines that the purpose of staff meetings is to *"facilitate the administration and enhance the operation of the school."* While these meetings are limited to 105 minutes from the dismissal of classes, there is only weak language about their frequency and nothing about their usefulness.

While many would argue that a face to face meeting in our digitized world may have benefits that a well-crafted email cannot deliver, most teachers bristle at what our staff meetings have become. As teachers we are all very busy people with an almost interminable workload to address, so spending 105 minutes shackled to the oration of *Novus ordo seclorum* by an administrator who no more wants to deliver the message than the teachers pressed to receive it, can be gratingly tiresome. It is no wonder then that principals in some schools have forbade teachers from bringing electronic devices or paperwork into these meetings, for how would apt attention be garnered otherwise.

Although we attempted to discuss our concerns about staff meetings at the bargaining table, the district had little interest in defining their purpose or limiting their frequency. No doubt, given the opportunity they afford for the employer to deliver their in-service message to a trapped audience of employees. Although teachers view themselves as professionals who are best served by choosing what supports their pedagogy, the message is clear; the strategic plan and all of its intricacies will be fed to teachers while trapped in their staff meetings.

So, what then can teachers do about their concerns? Staff meetings are a contractual right of the employer and teachers are required to attend. The CA allows teachers to place meaningful items on an agenda, but the administrator has the right to *"arrange the agenda in order of priority"*. What then if all the items of interest and importance to teachers are sequestered to the end of each meeting and are pre-empted by the *Company Message*? By all accounts these items then either require an extension of the meeting itself in order to discuss them, or they fall off the agenda and remain unresolved. In either case, the operation of the building is not debated.

Although the CA doesn't restrict the employer's ability to provide their own belvedere for teachers to view the rhetoric, once the delivery is over teachers do have the right to exercise their professionalism. The CA outlines this right in Article F.22 which opines that the Board will recognize and respect the professionalism of teachers when determining the planning, presentation and method of instruction for their classes. Teachers are operably forced to listen to the presentations at staff meetings but incorporating what they've heard into their pedagogy thus remains a personal choice.

Perhaps then, as a personal decision, teachers ought to determine their own level of engagement with the contents of a staff meeting; respectful and professional at all times of course, but at a level of participation more in keeping with the vigor of the Queen Mother than a rugby 7's match.

Meanwhile, the ATU will continue to question the district's adherence to the CA language that the "Administrative Officer will make all reasonable efforts to restrict the frequency and length of staff meetings". Having a staff meeting may be reasonable if it *facilitates the administration and enhances the operation of the school* and serves the needs of teachers, but the current iteration certainly is not doing so from the ATU's viewpoint.

**Doug Smuland, Labour Relations Officer**

## News From The Executive

### VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Calendar Update:**

The Abbotsford School Board was presented with the draft 2020-2021 School Calendar at the February 11 Board Meeting. The calendar presented includes a two-week Spring Break. The 2020-2021 calendar was agreed to by the ATU and is the only calendar that was submitted to the Board. It has undergone a public feedback process and will be voted on at the next School Board Meeting on March 10, 2020. The meeting starts at 7:00 and is open for all to attend.

*Liane Loepky, Vice President*

### TTOC

Our local contract enables TTOCs to be reimbursed for the TRB fees they paid if they have worked for the Board for 40 days in one school year. If the District deducted your fees from a pay statement in the spring of 2019 for the 2019-20 school year, you may not have a receipt. You can request a reimbursement for your fees by email and quote the date of the pay statement when the deduction was made or attach your receipt if you have one.

**The Collective Agreement states in Article B.34.2**

"Upon written application to the Human Resources Department, including the original of the TRB fee receipt, substitute teachers who have worked for the Board for forty (40) FTE days in any one (1) school year shall be eligible for reimbursement of the annual TRB membership fee."

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me through email [pat.smith@abbyschools.ca](mailto:pat.smith@abbyschools.ca) or contact the ATU office.

*Pat Smith, TTOC Representative*

### ATU FOCUS GROUP

The ATU is pleased to announce the start of an Abbotsford Teachers' Union Focus group. The purpose of this focus group is to create a platform where the ATU can support local members through 3 broad areas: union education, union connection and union empowerment. During the ATU Focus Groups we will address teacher challenges and experiences, what BCTF programs and services are available to members, and how teachers can participate and identify with the Union.

Please come join ATU Second Vice President Khaled Dardir at our first ATU Focus Group.

**Date - Monday April 6th**

**Time: 3:30**

**Location: ATU Hall**

## News From The Executive

### #RedforBCEd

At the February 26 ATU General Meeting, the membership passed a motion that members wear red on Fridays beginning April 3 until a new Collective Agreement is reached. #RedforBCEd is one of the actions the BCTF is encouraging locals to participate in to show support for the BCTF Bargaining Team and put pressure on government to reach a new Collective Agreement between the BCTF and BCPSEA.

But why is it #RedforBCEd?

Wearing red goes back to 1989 when CWA Chief Steward, Gerry Horgan, was killed on a picket line in Valhalla, New York. Horgan was taking part in a strike against the telephone company, NYNEX Corp, when a driver, the daughter of a NYNEX higher-up, ran him over. The driver was not jailed for the incident due to differing reports at the scene, with corporate sympathizers in the police department suggesting that Horgan was at fault for jumping on the hood of the car, while fellow strikers maintained that the killing was intentional. Many labour unions in the United States since then have designated a day of the week for their members to wear red in remembrance of Horgan and the risks that striking workers continue to face.

In the United States, the symbolism of the colour red for education started with a grassroots movement "Wear Red to Support Public Ed". This started in West Virginia when educators rallied at their state capitol for nine days. Their action earned a raise for teachers and the governor issuing an executive order meant at fixing the public employees' insurance program. Striking educators picked up the red shirt movement in many other teacher unions such as Kentucky, Oklahoma, Chicago, North Carolina, and more in their fight for a fair contract and better working conditions.

The Red for Ed movement is now gaining momentum in Canada with Ontario and BC teachers wearing red shirts in opposition to changes that would negatively impact classrooms and in response to budget shortfalls. Alberta teachers have also joined with a #Red4EdAB campaign after a \$275 million shortfall in the education budget. On Friday, February 28 teachers across Canada showed up at their schools, professional development events and picket lines wearing red to support bargaining efforts in many provinces and against the underfunding of education by many provincial governments.

The ATU encourages all members to wear red on Fridays starting on April 3. We would love to see pictures of your staff wearing red to share in the newsletter.



BCTF BARGAINING TEAM



BCTF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

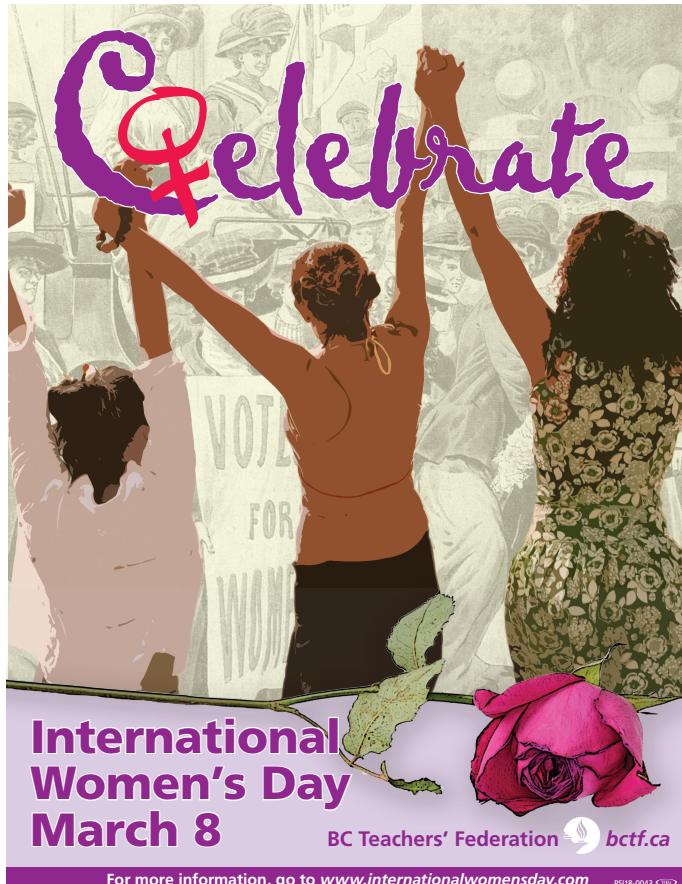
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### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH 8

An equal world is an enabled world. As we enter March, an important date approaches us. International Women's Day, held yearly on March 8, is a day rooted in activism, protest, and justice. It was started by the Socialist Party of America in 1909 as a day to celebrate working women and was adopted by many socialist movements and communist countries through the early 20th century. The women's movement in America adopted the day in 1967, and in 1975, the United Nations declared March 8 as International Women's Day.

As we reflect and remember women who fought so hard for the rights that we have today, we also need to call for greater equality. As teachers, we have a significant role in educating, inspiring and challenging stereotypes and bias aimed at gender. The BCTF has a collection of lesson plans, resources and workshops for teachers to access on the Social Justice/Status of Women page on the BCTF Website.

<https://bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=47521>



### 8th Annual Holocaust Symposium

The ATU was proud to co-sponsor the 8th Annual Holocaust Symposium on Feb 25, 2020 at the Abbotsford Arts Center. It was a moving experience to hear firsthand the recollections of a child survivor from Belgium and served as a reminder of how we must all stand up to racism and hatred towards others.



## ATU BURSARY

The ATU Bursary Committee has updated the bursary application for the 2019-2020 school year. Application packages are available at the ATU office for pick up during regular office hours. The application will not be made available electronically.

The ATU encourages all members with children currently in Grade 12 and graduating in the 2019-2020 school year to apply. The ATU grants up to six bursaries each having a value of one thousand dollars and are awarded to students attending public school regardless of the district they are registered in. As per the ATU Bursary Policy applications are due by April 15th.

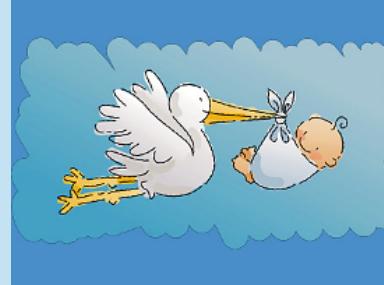
If you have any questions, please contact the ATU and we will be glad to assist in any way possible.

## Maternity/Parental Leave Workshop

The ATU is hosting a Maternity/Parental Leave workshop on April 8, 2020. Please join Liane Loeppky and Jennifer Brooks at the ATU hall at 4:00pm for an information session on the ins and outs of Maternity/Parental Leaves.

Please register online at:

<https://www.abbotsfordteachers.ca/maternity-parental-leave-workshop.html>



## CALENDAR / UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES

**BCTF AGM Delegates Meeting**

**Monday, March 9**

**Board Meeting (SBO)**

**Tuesday, March 10**

**Grievance Meeting**

**Tuesday, March 10**

**Pro-D Committee Meeting**

**Tuesday, March 10**

**BCTF AGM**

**Saturday, March 14 - Tuesday, March 17**

**Spring Break (Office Closed)**

**Monday, March 16 - Friday, March 27**

*Daylight saving time 2020 in Canada will begin at 3:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 8. Remember to set your clocks back.*



**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

# **Are you missing out on salary?**

## **Teacher Qualification Service policy changes**

### **MASTER'S OR DOCTORATE DEGREE CHANGES**

1. If you are in category five plus (5+) and hold a master's or doctorate degree that meets the requirements, apply for an upgrade.
2. If you hold an acceptable master's or doctorate degree with less than 30 semester credits and have not yet topped up that degree and received an upgrade, apply for an upgrade.
3. If you are in category five (5) and hold a graduate degree that contains a teacher education program, you will need to complete an integrated program to qualify for category six (6).

### **INTEGRATED PROGRAM CHANGES**

1. If you are in category five (5) or lower and have completed course work that meets the new requirements of an integrated program but have not yet used that course work for your current category placement, please apply for an upgrade.

### **SECOND TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND FAMILIARIZATION PROGRAMS**

1. If you are in category five (5) or lower and have completed a second teacher education program for which you have not been granted Teacher Qualification Service (TQS) category credit, please apply for an upgrade.
2. If you are in category five (5) or lower and have completed a familiarization program for which you have not been granted TQS category credit, please apply for an upgrade.



If you require clarification as to how these changes might affect your upgrading requirements or current category placement, please request a director's review of your file. Submit your request through the "Contact Us" page at [www.tqs.bc.ca](http://www.tqs.bc.ca). You must provide verification of current employment in the BC public school system (most applicants photocopy a pay stub) in order to receive a director's review.

To apply for an upgrade complete the Category Upgrade Application Form on the TQS website. Indicate that you are applying for an upgrade based on the policy and regulation changes.

No reviews or upgrades will be processed automatically. You must apply to the TQS in order to receive a review or upgrade. ↗

**For full information on these policy changes, please visit TQS at [www.tqs.bc.ca](http://www.tqs.bc.ca).**



iStock.com/malerapaso photo

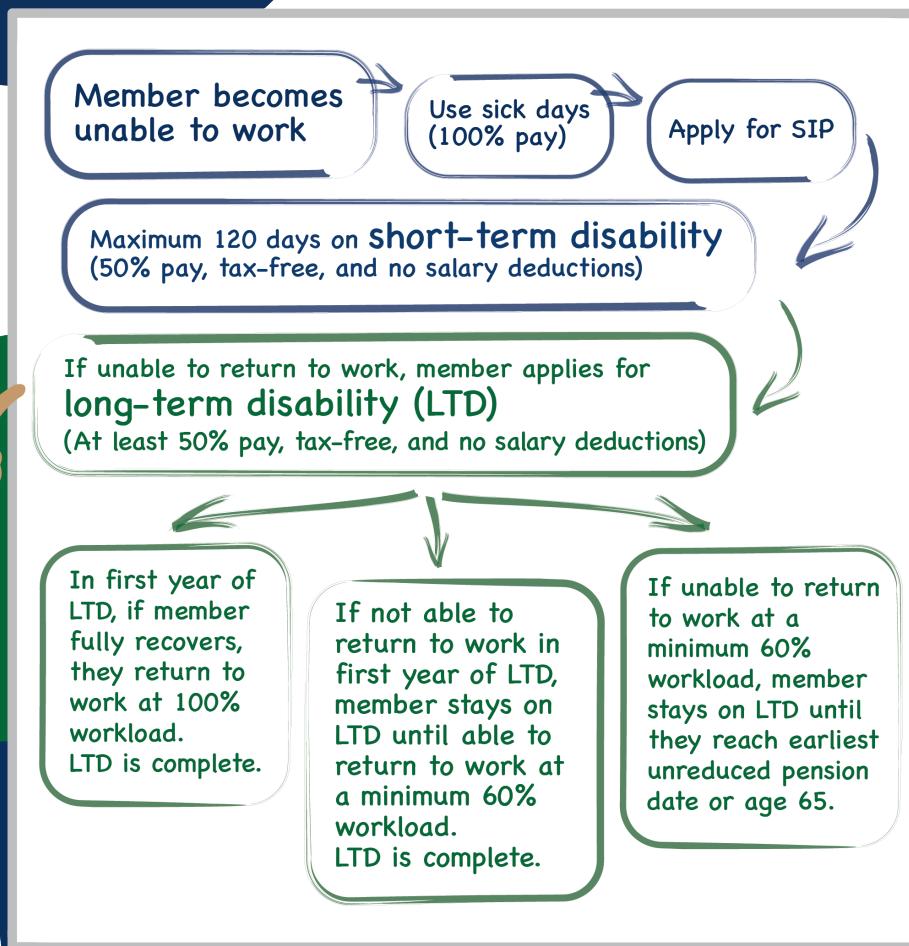
From the March 2020 edition of Teacher magazine, a publication of the BC Teachers' Federation.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

# What if you get sick?



**BCTF MEMBERS** with a contract participate in the Salary Indemnity Plan (SIP) with contributions of 1.87% from each paycheque. This plan provides both short- and long-term benefits to members who, because of illness or injury, are disabled from working and have exhausted all of their sick leave. If the illness or injury is work-related, a Workers Compensation Board (WCB) claim must be initiated.



There are more details than can be provided in this flowchart. Please contact your local union office or the BCTF with questions specific to your situation.

If you are close to your earliest unreduced pension date and have enough sick leave accumulated in your sick bank to provide you with an income until six months prior to your retirement, you may want to investigate withdrawing from the long-term section of the plan. This will save you 1.36% in SIP contributions from your paycheque. Contact your local union office for guidance. ♪

From the March 2020 edition of Teacher magazine, a publication of the BC Teachers' Federation.

