

VESTA WEEKLY

TOPICS WORTH TALKING ABOUT! PLEASE READ AND DISCUSS WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES



INTERNATIONAL TRANSGENDER DAY OF VISIBILITY MARCH 31

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Transgender Day of Visibility

Trans Day of Visibility is an annual awareness day celebrated around the world. The day is dedicated to celebrating the accomplishments of transgender and gender nonconforming people while raising awareness of the work that still needs to be done to achieve trans justice.

Right now, members of school communities can take these actions to help create trans-inclusive school environments, using these resources available for download:

- Educators, use our [gender terminology discussion guide](#) and [accompanying visual](#), plus our [pronoun resource](#)
 - Students, check out our [Know Your Rights guide](#) to learn about your rights protected in school
 - GSA members and advisors, check out our [guide on making student clubs inclusive](#) of trans and gender nonconforming students, as well as this [GSA activity](#) on telling trans narratives
 - Advocates, use our [trans model policy](#) in your advocacy
-

Paid sick leave for Unionized Workers

After a concerted political drive by BC unions, the Horgan government is moving quickly to stop employers from denying thousands of BC workers paid sick leave coverage.

Teachers, along with many unions in both the private and public sector were told their employers would not be implementing the 5 days of paid sick leave for all workers in fall of last year. In our case, TTCs were denied the universal sick leave coverage because contract teachers were entitled to sick leave through the Collective Agreement. This was contrary to the intent of the legislation to provide paid sick leave for all workers, and unions worked together to push back on the position taken by employers. Across the province.

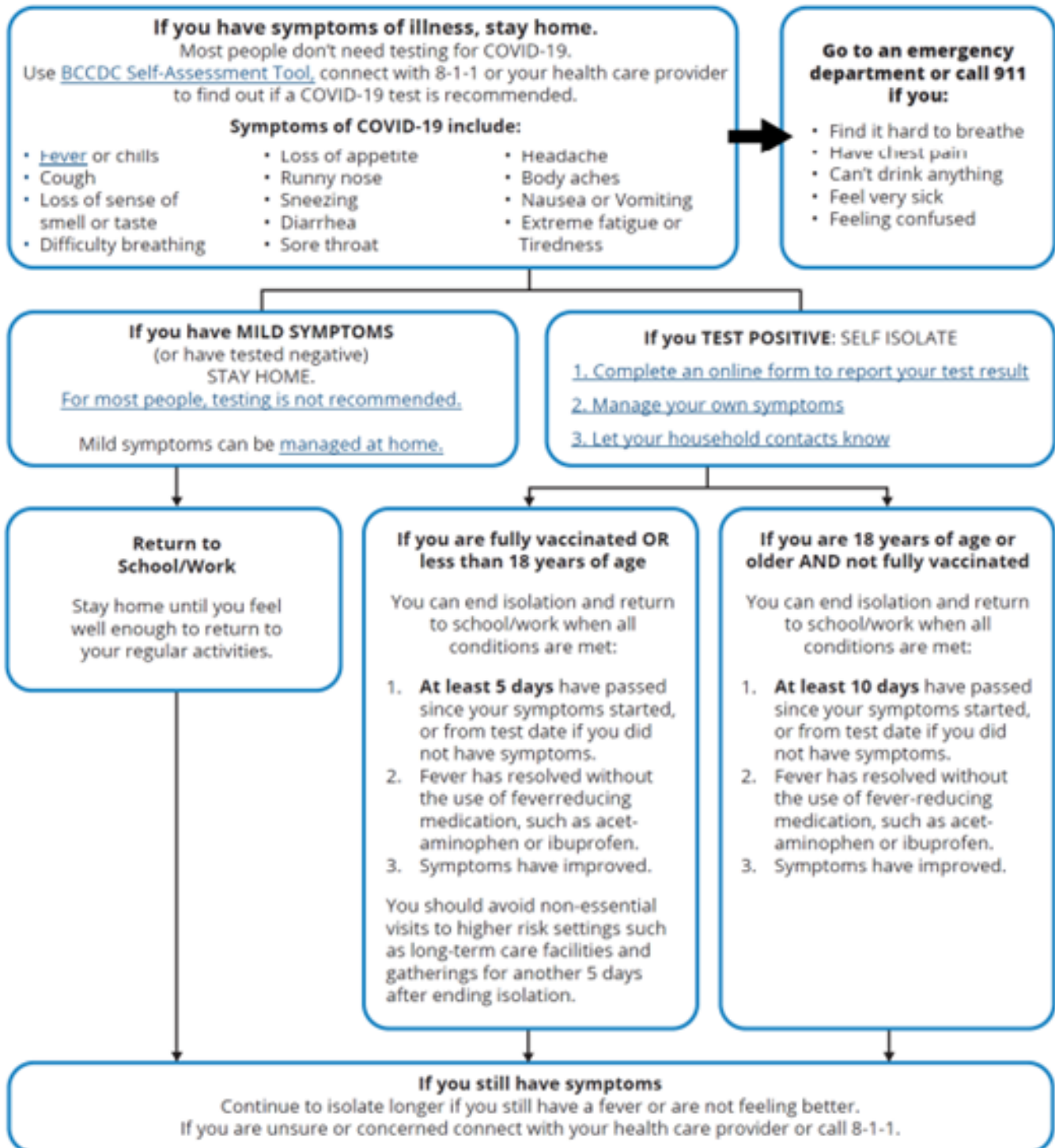
The [BC government tabled an amendment yesterday to the enabling legislation for paid illness or injury leave](#) to make it clear that the 5 days of paid sick leave apply even if a collective agreement is in place for some workers in that bargaining unit. Solidarity works!



Updated VSB Communicable Disease Prevention Plan

Members can learn about the [updated Communicable Disease Plan](#) (that replaced the COVID safety plan). This document (Version 8!) includes information on cleaning protocols, risk assessment, hand and respiratory hygiene, field studies, protocols for students who become sick at school, advice about international travel, and direction about when to self-isolate.

Summary: What to Do When Sick



What to do if someone is sick in your household:

You can continue to attend school if someone in your household is sick and/or self-isolating as long as you do not have any symptoms of illness and feel well. This includes if they have tested positive for COVID-19. Ensure you closely monitor yourself (or your child) for symptoms of illness and stay home if you feel unwell. The best way to protect yourself and your family from COVID-19 is to get vaccinated. Vaccines are available for anyone ages 5 and up. Register now at: [Getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca](https://getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca)

Dates to Remember

Health & Safety Committee Meeting

April 4, 2022 @ 4:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8380436196>

[4](#)

Meeting ID: 838 0436 1964

Passcode: 391392

One tap mobile

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

WLC/B

Committee Meeting

April 5, 2022 @ 4:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83928402>

[043](#)

Meeting ID: 839 2840 2043

Passcode: 707032

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

Social Justice & Solidarity Committee Meeting

April 5, 2022 @ 4:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8918153009>

[1](#)

Meeting ID: 891 8153 0091

Passcode: 365082

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

VSBC "Stronger Together" Anti-Racism Report

In December 2019, the VSBC carried a motion to undertake an Anti-Racism Strategic Plan to address racism and discrimination in Vancouver Schools. An investigation was completed during 2021 and the resulting report was presented to the Board in December 2021. [You can read the full report here](#). It's 400 pages long, but accessible and sorted. The overarching conclusion connects to the following topics: Expression of Identity, Sense of Belonging and Participation, Learning and Development, Racism and Discrimination, COVID-19, and Truth and Reconciliation. Vice President Marjorie Dumont represented VESTA through the process, alongside stakeholders and students.

VESTA's Rep to the VSBC Governance Committee, Glen Hansman, presented VESTA's response to the report and you can read this [here](#) on the VESTA website.



Mandatory Health and Safety Committee Training for New Members on Worksite Health and Safety Committees

From the VSB:

WorkSafeBC introduced an important Regulation in 2017 creating one day of mandatory training for all “new members” to a workplace Health and Safety Committee.

A “new member” is defined as:

- Someone who has never previously served on an H&S Committee.
- Someone who has served on an H&S Committee in the past, however, has been away from it for over 2 years.

Please identify your H&S Committee’s “new members” who joined your H&S Committee **after September 2017**. ONLY these staff are **REQUIRED** to attend the training date below:

Health & Safety Committee Training (New Members Only)

April 7, 2022, 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

TO REGISTER: Go to the VSB Pro-D Site: <https://prod.vsb.bc.ca/> by April 6, 2022

SOGI themed New Teachers' Zoom Gathering

Come share ideas and resources while making connections with new teacher colleagues and bilingual SOGI-focused practitioners from across the province at our upcoming New Teachers' Zoom Gathering.

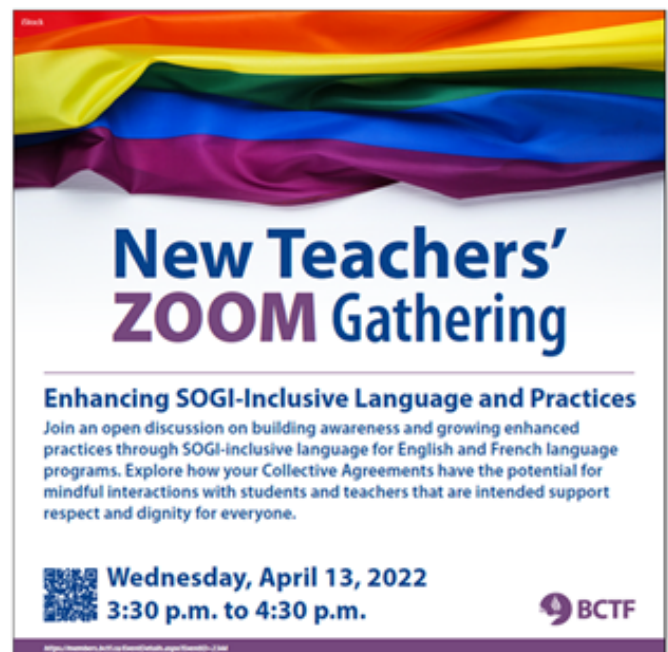
[Register Now!](#) (choice of English or French breakout rooms)

Join an open discussion on building awareness and growing enhanced practices through SOGI-inclusive language for English and French language programs.

Explore how your Collective Agreements have the potential for mindful interactions with students and teachers that are intended support respect and dignity for everyone.

Theme: Enhancing SOGI-Inclusive Language and Practices

Time: 3:30-4:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 13th



Anti-racism resources and supports

Please take the opportunity to explore the link to the [Resilience BC Anti Racism Network website](#). They have an excellent list of antiracism tools and resources. There are also links to local organizations that work with the network that you can connect with. The site also includes an impressive number of talks and video links with folks like Desmond Cole, Ibram X Kendi, Ileoma Olou, Robin DiAngelo, and Layla Saad as well as the organized reading and listening links.

Climate Justice grant available!

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH \$500?

Support for sustainability Action Projects!

- GARDENS
- TREE PLANTING
- WASTE REDUCTION
- CITIZEN SCIENCE
- OUTDOOR LEARNING
- & MORE!

APPLY BY APRIL 8
bit.ly/LSF-Project

Learning for a Sustainable Future
LSF

Be a part of VESTA's governance!

VESTA's AGM is held in May of each year, where members elect the Executive Committee for the subsequent year. If you are interested in becoming part of the Executive Committee, please reach out to one of our EC members and complete the [CV on the website](#) before **April 15**.

The Executive Committee directs the work of the In-House Table Officers and makes many of the ongoing decisions about VESTA's operation, including making recommendations to the General Meetings and Staff Rep Assemblies. It's an excellent way to increase your knowledge and understanding of our work, the collective agreement, and our relationship with the board, as well as to give back to your fellow members.

VESTA's EC meets every second Tuesday throughout the year and is an excellent opportunity to learn and grow in your professional and activism!



September 30 Statutory Reconciliation Day

We have learned that September 30 will continue to be a non-instructional day in the school calendar, but that the hours of instruction contained in the School Act will not be reduced, which means that minutes will be made up throughout the school year. Your reps on the VSB Calendar committee will be representing you and considering the implications of this government decision. As teachers, this statutory day is recognition of the need to pause and reflect on the nature of reconciliation, to read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, and to reflect on the position of privilege we occupy as teachers and, for many of us, as settlers on this unceded territory.

Provincial Bargaining Underway

You may have seen this advertisement that ran in the Province, The Globe and Mail, Times Colonist and Vancouver Sun, in addition to local newspapers across the province. There is also a social media version available. This ad is a partnership between the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF), BC Government Employees' Union (BCGEU), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Hospital Employees' Union (HEU), and Health Sciences Association (HSA), to put pressure on the government as a collective in relation to the unions' salary objectives. Keep an eye out for it and feel free to share on social media

Nearly all public sector unions are negotiating at the same time this year, and it's important that we stand together and expect better working conditions, salary and benefits, especially after the years of hearing from government how essential and central our work is to a thriving and healthy economy, community and the mental and physical well-being of students and families alike.

Updates on the progress of bargaining will be available through the BCTF e-blasts and on the website. The provincial teams have met a few times already and are canvassing the items determined as priorities by the BCTF bargaining conference.

THEY'VE SEEN IT ALL.

Workers across B.C.'s public sector have been on the front lines of a pandemic, floods and fires, and the poisoned drug crisis.

They have kept our families safe and our province working through challenging times.

And they will be critical to building a strong recovery that will protect our communities into the future.



But they're being left behind.

As the cost of living skyrockets, these workers are seeing their pay cheques shrink.

This year, almost 400,000 workers across the public sector who provide the services we all depend on will be at the bargaining table. Some of them are already there.

They deserve a fair deal.

A deal that protects their wages against inflation and supports the strong public services we need to build a stronger B.C. together.



A FAIR DEAL for public sector workers protects us all.



Support and Solidarity with Occupied and Invaded Nations

As teachers and community leaders, it's important that we take a stand whenever we see or experience injustice. For this reason, it's essential that we join with our community partners to denounce war, whether it takes the form of armed conflict, occupation or oppression by economic means or political interference by other nations. In the case of Ukraine, as Western Nations, it may be perceived as a clear and unprovoked invasion, based on colonialist and expansionist greed. In other cases, where the stories and timelines are less familiar, or where, as Westerners, we don't understand the history or nature of war, we must also take the time to understand, to speak out, and to identify the many ways that war impacts children, families, communities, schools, global peace, and the environment.

There are currently wars underway in Syria, Palestine, Yemen and Ethiopia, as well as Ukraine, wars, invasions and occupations that have caused, in some cases, literal decades of harm. Many of our students, colleagues and communities are impacted by these wars and may even be refugees from them. However, the disparities in media coverage and lack of public awareness of other global conflicts is not lost on our students whose families live, or fled from, those nations, and the widespread lack of empathy, knowledge and understanding of those wars connects to the Eurocentric nature of our media, experiences, and perspectives.

VESTA and the BCTF have taken public positions in support of Ukraine, and against the Russian invasion. We have also acknowledged that omitting to publicly support other global sites of war, alongside our commitment to decolonizing our union work, was an incomplete analysis, and problematic. We urge members, and the BCTF, to take a universal position against occupation, invasion and war, as teachers and community members, and to ensure that we continually educate ourselves on the way that our worldview and our solidarity efforts are shaped by our western identity and location.

N99 Mask Donation

If you were unable to pick up your school's masks on the pre-spring break, we will be open for pick up again next Wednesday, April 6. You can pick up your school's allotment at the back door of VESTA between 8 and 4. Our address is 2915 Commercial and the back parking lot is accessible from the East-West alleyway between 13th and 14th avenue.

BCTF AGM

A gigantic shout out to all of the VESTA delegates who represented Vancouver Elementary Teachers at the BCTF Annual General Meeting. One of the candidates we endorsed, Jelana Bighorn, from Vancouver Secondary, was elected to the BCTF Executive Committee and will be working with VESTA's Jody Polukoshko for the final year of her term at the provincial table.

While the virtual format creates challenges in dealing with the decisions that needed to be made by the delegation, all of the necessary business was completed, including by-law changes and amendments to the Salary Indemnity Plan, and the election of the Executive Committee, matters that only the AGM can decide. There were other significant motions carried by the membership to address climate change, including divestment from fossil fuels through our Pension Plan, equity, bargaining, physical and mental health safety and well-being of members, advocacy for public education, and ongoing decolonization.

On this latter point, two VESTA delegates, Vanessa Lefebvre and Karine Ng spoke eloquently and powerfully on the matter, in support of a motion that was carried by delegates province-wide to work with government to decolonize the School Act. Here are some excerpts of their words.

"I'm an uninvited immigrant settler who became a Canadian citizen at the age of 16, when I had to pledge allegiance to the Crown and sing the national anthem at the swearing in ceremony. Settlers born in these lands never have to do so. I did not have a choice to opt out then, but I do now. However, there is a tremendous amount of social pressure for staff and students to stand and honour the flag and sing the national anthem in school assemblies. These are symbols of a state government that has been and continues to unleash violence through apparatus such as the police and the military against Indigenous land defenders. Less than half of the lands occupied by the settler colonial government of Canada are NOT treaty land. We ought to have the right and the courage to conscientiously object to symbols of a genocidal state. In the case of Canada, nationalism is colonialism, as it continues to perpetuate the erasure of Aboriginal cultures and peoples.

Decolonization is not a metaphor; it takes action and commitment. Supporting this recommendation is a small gesture that attests to ourselves, to each other, and collectively to the Ministry of Education the integrity of our commitment to decolonization by putting our words into action." Karine Ng

BCTF AGM(Continued from Page 9

“The Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee has... continued the essential work of decolonizing our education system. This is heavy work and it’s not going to be easy. For those who feel uncomfortable, I invite you to sit with your discomfort and consider that your discomfort is because this system has worked for you, that the flag and anthem are a symbol of unity, as they were for me growing up, but this is not the experience of all members or students.

The flag and anthem are symbols of not only colonialism, but of violence for some Aboriginal people, making our schools unsafe for some members and some students. Our schools need to be safe for everyone, not just some people. Does the absence of the flag or anthem make you feel **unsafe** or **uncomfortable**? Those are two very different things.

We are in a time of reckoning and we need to look to and **listen** to our Aboriginal colleagues for leadership and direction on these issues and support the hard work they are doing to bring us to a more just education system on these, their lands that we continue to acknowledge.” Vanessa Lefebvre

Setting Pro-d Days for your School Calendar

Discussions are probably happening at your school at this time regarding the setting of next year’s school calendar. Setting of professional development dates is part of that discussion. We have 2 days that are designated as flexible pro-d dates. VESTA policy regarding these days is

That schools be encouraged to make use of Flexible Pro-D Days, and that, in those schools with part-time teachers, Staff Committee consider moving the two flexible Pro-D dates to Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday in order to accommodate part-time teachers’ access to professional development.

2017 Apr 18 SRA

Part-time teachers are often unable to access dedicated professional development time when their schedules do not include Mondays and/or Fridays. The board agrees that the flexible dates are a way for part-time teachers to access professional development. Please consider passing a motion through Staff Committee that one or both of the flexible dates be moved to accommodate part-time teachers. If your administration refuses to allow the dates to be moved, please have the reasons recorded in the minutes of the Staff Committee Meeting as per the Collective Agreement Article A.5.5.c.iii.d and contact allison@vesta.ca. Note that as staffing has not yet come out, your staff may not have part-time teachers currently, but may as of next year so all schools are encouraged to move the flexible dates. The new dates can be moved to any suitable time of year and do not have to be restricted to the same month.