

VEAES WEEKLY

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



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VSB Budget Survey

It's budget time again and the VSB has released their [2023-2024 Budget Development Survey](#). The VSB has stated they have a structural deficit and are looking for ways to address it. In recent years, the board has decided to fund expenses using the accumulated surplus. Currently, the Board's total projected surplus for next year is not in compliance with the Board's policy of how much surplus they need to carry every year.

VEAES is representing members at the budget consultations and stakeholder meetings and presenting the perspective that if cuts are required, they need to be as far from students as possible, that further services need to be provided in frontline positions, not expanding management, that the recruitment and retention issue needs to be addressed, and that student needs are being underserved by the current staffing levels.

Please read the survey carefully, as the questions provided after the explanatory paragraph are misleading. In the first question, they tell you that they will need to consolidate & close programs and then ask you if your level of support for changes to improve equity and quality of programs. While we support equity, it seems problematic to conflate equity with the closing and consolidating of programs.

The second question states that "Dedicated, highly skilled and caring staff are the backbone of the public education system", yet then asks your level of support for improving "staff efficiency" to deliver educational programs. We know that "staff efficiency" has always meant fewer teachers. While the VSB is staffing above the minimum ratios for non-enrolling, we keep reminding them that it is a floor, not a ceiling and that we have not heard from one school who feels their staffing is adequate to provide the services their students need. It is our experience that those ratios are not being met, given the frequency of non-enrolling teachers being pulled to cover TTOC & SSW absences.

The third question is regarding facilities and talks of moving classes in annex buildings to main schools and asks your level of support to maximize facility use to improve efficiency and save money. With this year's closure of Queen Elizabeth Annex, we are really concerned that this is the direction that the VSB is moving and we are really concerned about student accessibility to neighbourhood schools.

In the end, they are asking the public if they support larger class sizes, fewer teachers, and closing school sites, while saying that this is the way to improve equity in our district.

Anyone can complete the survey, so please discuss it with your colleagues, friends, and family. Talk to them about the realities that you face in your work every day to help them gain a better understanding of what is happening in schools. While the first 3 questions are multiple choice, question 4 allows you to share your ideas and provide some feedback. We strongly encourage you fill this section out. While the survey is anonymous, please remember to not leave any identifying information in the comment section, and remember that you are an employee of the district and caution should be practiced in making public statements that are critical of the employer.

Extended Health Benefits Plan Results

Thank you to all members who took the time to participate in the Extended Health Benefits Plan vote. An email was sent to all VTF members yesterday giving the following results:

- 43% of members voted
- 74.9% voted in favour of remaining in the local Vancouver plan
- 25.1% voted in favour of moving to the standardized provincial plan

While a significant majority voted to stay in the VTF plan, we know that it continues to be insufficient to address many members' needs. Please remember that while current legislation does not allow Vancouver to negotiate improvements to our local plan, we can, through upcoming rounds of provincial bargaining, continue to seek improvements to the provincial plan. The decision to remain in our current plan at this time does not end our conversation about benefits. We continue to have the right to “opt-in” to the provincial benefits plan at any time in the future.

We know that our current counselling provision is a big issue for members. If affordability of counselling is an issue for you, we encourage you to participate in the [BCTF Health & Wellness Program](#). It's a confidential program that supports members with their wellness and pairs you with an Occupational Therapist to help you navigate accessing supports, accommodations, leaves, and can potentially cost share medical services that are not covered by our plan.

VEAES New Building

We are pleased to note that the city permits have been received, and work has begun on our new office space. At this point, an optimistic occupancy date is scheduled for May 19, 2023.

For those of you who have been around for a while, the building we currently occupy reached its' lifespan limit back in 2011. Through General Meetings at that time, the membership decided not to spend the millions of dollars that would be required to extend the life of the building, but instead to invest in a more sustainable building that will be lower cost overall.

Many members don't know that our ownership of the building at 2915 Commercial is subsidized by renting out office spaces above and below the union office. As the building continues to age, the expenses, upkeep, and administrative work of managing this site have become untenable.

Part of the decision to purchase our new space is to reduce the amount of time required to manage the building, relationship with tenants, and the overall maintenance and upkeep. Our new space is one suite in a strata building, where we will not only have fewer building-related expenses, but will be able to dedicate increased time to members and the defense of the collective agreement.

We look forward to providing additional updates as the process continues.

Provincial Budget and Working and Learning Conditions

The provincial budget, announced on Tuesday this week, is a missed opportunity for Education. Many of the increases in funding will improve the lives of our students and our families in terms of health care, few improvements will be seen in teachers' working conditions as a result of the budget.

The budget does provide increased funding for public education, \$1.96 billion, however, this is connected to increased enrolment and some negotiated collective agreement improvements. We look forward to seeing how the District will amend their budgeting process in response to this.

There will be \$3.4 billion to build new schools and seismically upgrade existing schools, \$21.4 million in new funding for School Food Programs, and \$161 million for the Classroom Enhancement Fund.

The budget does not include any funds to address the recruitment and retention crisis, or to address the needs of students with disabilities / disabled students, or to meet the needs of students.

The budget is focused on health care and a significant amount of funding to a project called "Future Ready" that appears to be targeted at post secondary and to close skills and labour gaps in the province. What's not understood is that our students need the supports and programs in their K-12 or Adult Education schooling in order to provide the foundation for post secondary training and education. What a lost opportunity!

Watch for VEAES' public advocacy campaign coming soon to raise awareness on the issues facing Vancouver Teachers!

Food Safe and Pro-D

VSB Health and Safety policy only requires that a Food Safe certified person be consulted when members plan to prepare and share food with the school community. As long as the certified person is made aware of the plan and oversees its execution and delivery, the rest of the staff does not have to be Food Safe trained. That person should be provided Food Safe training as in-service, in order to comply with the policy requirement determined by management. If members wish to incorporate food preparation in their curriculum, they may elect to complete Food Safe training as part of their professional development. Members can access school based Joint Conference Fund (8120), or Temporary Supplemental Funds which is administered through the district.

Spring Transfer Timeline

The timelines for Spring Transfer this year have been provided to schools, and you can find it online [here](#).

There are no Consultant or Mentor vacancies for the upcoming year.

Important upcoming dates to remember:

March 15 at 4:30PM is the deadline to commit to a transfer as per E.21.12. ***Please be mindful that there is no longer a "B" category, so committing to a transfer does not result in increased priority for posting.*** It should only be used by members who want to make certain that they will not return to their current site in the following year. In practice, this means that if a member commits to a transfer, and is not successful in the Spring Transfer Process, they will be placed in a position commensurate with their FTE.

March 31 at 4:30PM is the deadline for:

- applications of leave of one year or longer beginning in September 2023
- requests to increase FTE at your current school made to the principal using the Request for Increase / Change

May 31 at 4:30PM is the deadline for retirement notice to qualify for the Early Retirement Incentive Plan

June 1 or earlier is when the Board is required to provide surplus letters, if any.

June 6 is when the first round of continuing and temporary vacancies is posted.

June 14 is when placements begin for unassigned continuing employees (Category C teacher)

Other dates and relevant information are included in the full document on the [VEAES website](#) and available at your school.

REMINDER: General Meeting & Staff Rep Assembly

Next week's General Meeting and Staff Rep Assembly will be on **WEDNESDAY**, March 8th at 4pm in the cafeteria @ Tupper Secondary.



CPI Training

VEAES would like to advise members who receive CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) de-escalation training that they should not be compelled to do so. Members have professional autonomy to engage in training that they decide as useful for their practice. There are aspects of the training related to physical restraining of students that VEAES would caution members against. It is important that members understand that they should not be expected or required to restrain students.

If you are injured, or experience a near miss, when supporting students who exhibit harmful or violent behaviour, please be sure to fill out a [6A form](#) to document each incident. Email the form to your admin, your site-based Health & Safety chair, marjorie@veaes.ca, and hsreports@vsb.bc.ca. This is how we ensure that your incident is investigated and tracked by your school, VEAES, and the district.

If you have to be off work due to the incident, please call WorkSafe Teleclaim line: 1-888-WORKERS (937-5377). You need to submit a claim to work towards getting your sick days credited back to you. Equally important is to put in place a Student Safety Plan through the mechanism of School Based Team. If necessary, Employee Safety Plan can also be developed to protect members' health and safety at their work place.

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Dates to Remember

Adult Ed Executive Committee Meeting

March 7, 2023 @ 2:30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89250556621>

Meeting ID: 892 5055 6621

Passcode: 344279

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

General Meeting/ Staff Rep Assembly

Wednesday, March 8, 2023 @ 4 pm

General Meeting re Advice to BCTF AGM Delegates

Health & Safety Committee Meeting

March 9, 2023 @ 4:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83078279421>

Meeting ID: 830 7827 9421

Passcode: 958475

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada



VEAES

The Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society is the union representing elementary teachers and adult educators working in public schools in Vancouver.