

# VEAES WEEKLY

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



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## **Preparing for VSB Budget**

by: Jody Polukoshko

Ever wondered where those savings from Failures to fill go? What happens to the Resource funding when it's pulled to cover an unfilled absence? Why we have so many fewer dollars in our school-based funds? Why class complexity keeps increasing without additional staffing?

These are questions that VEAES has been asking for years. All of the VSB Board meetings are online, and video of the meetings are hosted on the VSB website [here](#). We always participate. We seldom get answers. Over the coming weeks, VEAES will be advocating for greater transparency with the VSB, as well as improved working conditions.

VEAES has always raised replacement of resource teachers from day 1 of absences, improved non-enrolling and itinerant teacher ratios, greater transparency on staffing and budgeting. As always, VEAES' budget feedback comes from our General Meetings and Staff Rep Assemblies.

Any member of the public or employee can watch all of the [Board Meetings online here](#) from the comfort of your own home. VEAES Executive Committee members attend each of these meetings and speak on behalf of VEAES members based on positions in our policy, and feedback provided by our General and Staff Rep Meetings and our Executive Committee.

## **School Union Rep Training**

by: Jody Polukoshko

Thank you to all Staff Reps who have registered for next week's Staff Rep Assembly, and for respecting the dates provided. We are pleased to bring an opportunity to talk about and prepare for bargaining in your role of Staff Rep, as well as the chance to talk about working conditions and concerns at your school.

Please remember to register as soon as possible if you have not already, and that schools can decide which rep they send to these trainings. It's a great chance to build capacity!

We are looking forward to meeting, learning and sharing with you. Remember that due to the SURT training, the ½ day release time is not available for Staff Reps.

## **Kingsgate Mall is in the News!**

by: Eric Proulx

In an under-reported piece of local news, the VSB has filed a civil claim against Beedie Development for allegedly owing the district \$49 million dollars in back rent for its Kingsgate Mall property. The dispute revolves around what “basic rent” should be for the property. Teachers wanting to learn the fine details of this case can [click here for more information](#).

On its website, Beedie, a real estate development company states that “community is at [their] core” and they “strive to do the right thing”, commendable values for any corporation. That said, if the VSB’s allegations are proven in court, it will be difficult to square Beedie’s stated values with the possibility that they are withholding nearly 50 million dollars from a public school board, one which serves many of the most economically and socially marginalized students in the province.

To put this number in context, last year’s VSB budget was set at close to \$735 million dollars. Over several meetings trustees and district staff discussed what cuts could be made in order to put forward a balanced budget. In the end, ABC trustees Faridkot, Zhang, Chien, Jung, independent trustee Richardson, and Green trustees Chan-Pedley, and Fraser voted to reallocate \$1.8 million from provincial food program funds given to the VSB to feed students, to instead balance the budget in general.

Therefore, during a cost-of-living crisis where many of our district’s families are struggling to make ends meet and feed their families, the money Beedie development is allegedly refusing to pay could have easily covered the district’s budget deficit. In this scenario, trustees would not have considered cutting the food program budget in the first place, as the district would not have been facing a deficit.

With this context in mind, one might be led to ask how exactly allegedly withholding so much money from students in need and facing food insecurity is in line with Beedie’s stated values of supporting community and doing the right thing.

If the VSB is successful in its claim against Beedie, the sum of \$49 million would have large consequences on the VSB’s finances. VEAES members can be certain that our representatives on the Finance and Personnel Committee will be consistent in advocating for such monies to directly fund improved services to students and improved working conditions for teachers.

## **Pacific Blue Cross Vote**

by: Jody Polukoshko

VEAES is working with the VSTA to schedule the vote. Please visit the comparison chart on the [VEAES website](#) to consider whether you support remaining in our current plan or moving to the provincial benefits plan.

Because of our inability to locally bargain improvements to our plan, it has remained unchanged while the provincial plan has incrementally improved over some rounds of bargaining. Members will note the improvement in provincial counselling reimbursement.

It's important to view the plans as a whole – there are pros and cons to all of them, and our current plan has many aspects that are significantly better, such as our open formulary which covers medication prescribed by doctors, rather than the provincial Blue Rx which only covers certain medications, and can require members to try lower cost alternatives before being authorized for more expensive alternatives. The coverage for paraprofessionals (RMT, physio, chiropractor etc) are limited to dollar amounts, as opposed to our current plan that provides unlimited support within reasonable and customary limits, that can be exceeded with a doctor's note.

Our relationship to our medical needs and family priorities is deeply personal, and VEAES is not making a recommendation. However, it's important to understand that if we move, we will not have the ability to move back to the local plan. If you would like to review the material provided at last year's meeting, [you can read the presentation here](#).

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## **Found at Staff Rep Assemblies – Please Claim**

by: Jody Polukoshko

Tony Hawk is keeping an eye on three water bottles left behind at General Meetings.

If these are yours, please email [hitomi@veaes.ca](mailto:hitomi@veaes.ca) and we can blue bag it to you.





## **Second Bargaining Survey**

by: Jody Polukoshko

We have prepared and are launching the provincial bargaining survey today, based on the results of the first bargaining survey and member input at the first Bargaining Issues Session, held on January 22. An email will be sent to all members with the link to the survey.

Thank you to the almost 600 members who completed our first bargaining survey in December 2023, and to members who attended the first Issues Session! This year, we are working hard to democratize and build participation in the creation of our bargaining objectives. There are so many things that we need to improve in our collective agreement, and members have diverse priorities.

Our work as a union is to bring together those diverse priorities, bring forward recommendations to the February 13 General Meeting to be forwarded to the BCTF.

You'll find this survey much more specific to the objectives that the BCTF pursues on behalf of all locals. The structure of the survey is intended to provide some information about the scope of provincial bargaining. We often think about provincial bargaining as being connected to salary, benefits and workload, but we can currently negotiate many more items there as well, such as evaluation and discipline, supervision, violence prevention, and professional autonomy!

This survey is structured to inform members about the diversity of provincial bargaining objectives and to invite members to consider each of these possibilities. The survey is fewer than 20 questions and should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. Our issues session participants wanted to ensure that the full scope of possible objectives were provided for members.



## Change in Salary Category Reminder

by: Jody Polukoshko

If you have recently completed your 15 credits for a Category 5+ or your Masters Degree, please be advised that there are only two times per year that you can submit your reclassification information for the related salary increase, one being January 31. Please see Article B.25.4 copied below for information and make sure you get your documentation in by early next week! The process at the VSB may take a while, but if your information is submitted on time, reclassification can be retroactive to the beginning of January.

*a. Employees who consider that they have completed requirements for reclassification of salary category must apply to the Board. Proof shall be submitted in the form of a Professional card, Letter from the Registrar, or a Teacher Qualification Service category card.*

*b. Applications for reclassification to be effective for salary purposes from September 01, must be filed prior to September 30 in that year. **Applications for reclassification to be effective for salary purposes from January 01, must be filed prior to January 31 in that year.** Proof in support of the application must be submitted by the employee as soon as possible. Salary changes resulting from successful applications for reclassification filed on dates other than the above, shall be effective from the first day of the month following the filing of the successful application. Salary adjustments shall be made retroactively as stated as soon as possible following receipt of the documents mentioned in Clause (a) above.*

*c. Applications for change of salary category should be processed and the applicant notified of the Board's decision within six (6) weeks of the date of receipt of the application by the Board.*





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## **Dates to Remember**

### **Social Justice & Solidarity Committee Meeting**

January 30, 2024

4 pm

VEAES Office

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### **Executive Committee Meeting**

February 6, 2024

4 pm

VEAES Office

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### **TTOC Committee Meeting**

February 7, 2024

4 pm

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**VEAES**

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