

Draw for the Delta

At a recent PEITF Executive meeting, a draw was made from the names of those registered on the PEITF website for a night at the Delta.

Congratulations to the lucky winner, Becky Yeo from Miscouche Consolidated.



Gilles Arsenault and Executive Member-at-Large Aldene Smallman

PEITF Annual Convention

Presentations

At the PEITF Annual Convention held in Charlottetown, President Gilles Arsenault made the following special presentations on behalf of the PEI Teachers' Federation...



L-R: Richard Baker, Carrie St. Jean, Brenda Millar, Gilles Arsenault

Richard Baker
Bluefield Sr. High School
PEITF Award of Excellence in Teaching

Carrie St. Jean
Glen Stewart Primary School PEITF
Special Recognition Award

Brenda Millar, Retired
Western School Board
PEITF Honorary Membership.

learning about education for environmental sustainability. If you are interested, please email lemoffatt@upeii.ca or call (902) 620-5177 to receive more information about the study and the group. We will be meeting approximately once a month from September 2014 to April 2015.



Patrick MacFadyen
Deputy General Secretary

20 Days (Part III) How the Grievance Process Works

In the last two newsletter articles, I explained grievances and arbitrations. In this article I will discuss the decision process to go to arbitration and appeals. This article may be a little harder to follow if you didn't read the first two, (or you forget them) but you can check online for the previous

articles if you are interested.

The decision to go to arbitration is an important one. Arbitration is similar to a court case. Witnesses are called and sworn in, they testify and are cross examined, and the arbitrator is very similar to a judge, where his/her decision is final. The General Secretary makes the decision if the Federation is going to move a case forward to arbitration. He takes into consideration the chance of success and the impact on the membership.


The Federation has access to thousands of arbitrated decisions that involve Labour Law and most of the time we are able to find cases similar to the ones we are dealing with, although no two cases are exactly the same. For example, if we disagreed with the school board about teachers having to attend "meet the teacher night", we can find cases where an arbitrator has ruled on very similar grievances (spoiler alert: teachers do have to attend them). After that research is done and with possible consultation with our legal counsel, the decision on

whether or no to proceed with the grievance is made.

If the member does not agree with the decision to not proceed further with a grievance, they can appeal to the Executive. The Executive is an independent body that will hear both sides of the case. The member will present as to why he/she feels the Federation should grieve, and the staff member or General Secretary will present as to why the decision was made not to proceed. Once the Executive hears from both sides, it will render a decision and that decision is final. It is very rare to get to this point, as there have only been a couple of appeals in the past 15+ years.

If the member still feels that he/she was not treated fairly in the process, he/she can take the Federation to court under what is called a "duty of fair representation". In order to be successful they have to prove that the Federation was arbitrary, discriminatory, or made the decision in bad faith.

The grievance process is clearly laid out and is very similar to other unions. The courts have decided that employees cannot take their employer to court if they are disciplined or have a grievance with them, they must go through the union and through this process. The Federation understands the importance of the role of a union in the grievance process and takes that responsibility very seriously.

This is a lot of information to digest, but as always, if you have any questions please feel free to contact me at the Federation. 



RTA CORNER

by Sheridyth MacNeill
President, Retired Teachers' Association


I feel very honoured and proud to be the President and spokesperson for the RTA from 2014-2016. Following in the footsteps of the skillful Presidents before me, I will continue to work diligently for the Retired Teachers of P.E.I. I enjoyed every one of my 32 years teaching and met so many amazing students, teachers and Administrators as I hopefully passed my joy of music and learning on to them. I only wish you the same opportunity to pass your knowledge and life skills on to the next generation.

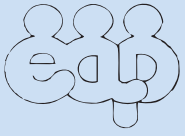
We are awaiting word from Minister Sheridan and Deputy Minister David Arsenaault on our concerns with Pensions and also hoping we will have a representative on the upcoming Commission to work on changes for present and future retirees. We have also met with MP's on concerns with the Canadian Health Act. To date we have met with Wayne Easter, Sean Casey and Hon. Gail Shea and Hon. Hedy Fry-Liberal Health Critic. Also meetings with P.E.I. Health Minister Doug Currie re: DECAP issues and at a

later date with the Deputy Minister of Health Michael Mayne updating him on the Teachers' Health Plan and RTA concerns on first pay premiums.

This month the Executive will be attending three socials with our retired teachers. Beginning on May 1st - Prince County Social in Summerside, then on to the Queens County on May 8th in Charlottetown and last but not least to Kings County on May 15th in Montague. These socials give us the opportunity to keep retired teachers abreast of pertinent issues and also as important to renew former friendships.

Our Executive recently had an important presentation from Terry Hogan on April 24th and we will share his information with everyone at our social functions.

This year is quickly coming to an end and we hope it has been a rewarding one for you as a teacher and educator and the P.E.I. Retired Teachers wish you all the best now and in your futures! 



Tips on How Teachers Achieve Work-Life Balance

1. Sort out your priorities. Make a list of the things that are important to you and decide when you are going to give them some time. This is not just a work list: your family life, your interests are all part of your priorities. This will help you to decide if it is more important to take your children to the cinema, or prepare a lesson in more detail because you are being monitored.
2. Tell people firmly and politely that you won't have time or be able to do something at work. This could be your Principal, or it could even be your class. Both of them will respect you for telling the truth. Principals are not impressed by someone who just says "yes" all the time, they are just grateful that someone is willing to do extra work. Saying no to something can be hard but if you know you are going to have to say no then practice what you will say beforehand and stick to your guns. The first time you do it will be the hardest and you can always offer to help out on another occasion.
3. Put aside some time every week where you can just be yourself. You don't have to do something active like go out for a run, (although that's good to get the endorphins working which help to make you feel good). You might like to meditate, read a book for an hour or simply just sit and stare.
4. Remember, you may enjoy it but school is work. It's great to enjoy your job, which means that at first you won't resent all the extra time you put into it. But if you keep on putting that extra effort in, you will start to resent it, and so will the people around you. Also if you put in lots of extra effort and don't put anything back into you then that is when you are at risk of burning out. Your brain is like a bank; withdraw too much from it without making the odd deposit and you will feel a deficit. Your body will tell you, you are stressed.
5. Swap your self-defeating internal script for a more positive one. You might say to yourself: "If I don't get this marking done, I won't be able to see my friends this weekend." Instead you could say: "I'll just finish this marking and then I'll contact my friends." Also if you have negative voices around you, take yourself away from them. People love to moan and sometimes we all need to let off steam but don't surround yourself with the perpetual moaners in the staffroom; they will bring you down.
6. Talk to people you trust about a particular situation or issue you are concerned with. There is almost always someone at work, it may be a teacher from another department, who will listen and give you some time, and will be on your side. Talking therapies are great if you can talk to the right sort of person. Often you don't need advice, just someone to listen to you. However, beware the victim mindset.
7. Step out of the victim mindset: it's your responsibility to live your life and how you work as a teacher. Decide what your choices are; people who see themselves as victims think they have no choices. Everyone always has choices, however dire the situation may appear to be in your school at that time. The first thing you need to do to get out of the victim mindset is to change your thinking from: "It's really unfair and I don't have the time," to, "What are my choices here?". It's often as simple as that to make yourself feel better about things. You have taken a positive step and that will be the first one of many.
8. Don't sweat about the small stuff. If the borders on your display are crooked – well so what? They won't actually stop the children from learning. Time is precious in teaching so make use of all the resources and tools that you have available to you. Share plans and resources, use stickers and stamps and make being in class as much fun as you can. Remember why you wanted to teach in the first place. Think back to your successes and the pupils you have had an impact on.
9. Steer clear of staff room politics and gossip. It wastes time and is often negative and unproductive. Be your own judge of character.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
 Tel: 902-368-5738
 Toll-free: 1-800-239-3826 



Shaun MacCormac

Thoughts and Comments

from the General Secretary

It was probably about ten years ago that my best friend's dad passed away from cancer. Both fortunately and unfortunately, it was a process that he fought for around five years. It was near the end of that battle that I gained a new appreciation of the Canadian Blood Services and its much needed blood collection services. With each transfusion of new blood, my buddy's dad gained newly found energy and seemed much brighter than before that transfusion. I found it amazing.

Needless to say, since then I have been a big supporter of the Canadian Blood Services. Well...sort of. I tell everyone, when the topic comes up, that it is a great and important service and that everyone should give blood. I often say that I am going to go to a blood clinic to donate myself. I sometimes think that I will donate money to help the service thrive and survive. I often...do nothing but talk. For the most part, despite my vocal support for the Canadian Blood Services, I have been of little benefit to its blood collection services.

Similar to my support of the Canadian Blood Services, the current Government is a supporter of education. When the topic comes up, the Government says how important education is and how much it supports education in this province. It says that education is one of its main priorities. Like my statements about the Canadian Blood Services, however, the problem with the statements from Government is that they are not being backed up by action.

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Actually, that isn't exactly true. This government did bring kindergarten into the public school system, which was an excellent decision that was expensive, but needed to be done.

Why successive Island governments took so long is a good question, however. PEI was the last province in Canada to do so, and made the move more than a decade after the ninth province, New Brunswick.

Since that bold move, I am at a bit of a loss to see what else this government has initiated that has had any major positive impact on education. It did close small schools, but any positive educational impact on that move is hard to judge.

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Parents were promised that their children's education would benefit from the offerings of larger schools; but then this Government started cutting teaching positions, education assistant positions, and abandoned a staffing model that helped provide support to children with special needs and those with learning difficulties.

This government did bring kindergarten into the public school system, which was an excellent decision that was expensive, but needed to be done. Why successive Island governments took so long is a good question, however. PEI was the last province in Canada to do so, and made the move more than a decade after the ninth province, New Brunswick.

The reality is; this Government has challenges on the fiscal side. There is no dispute over that. What can be disputed, however, is whether or not educational decisions, which have lasting effects on students, should be made based solely on a yearly budget process. Staffing of teachers and the resourcing of education should not solely depend on politicians sitting around the Cabinet table fighting over pieces of a pie, regardless of whether or not that is what Cabinet ministers are supposed to do.

The reality is; this Government has challenges on the fiscal side. There is no dispute over that. What can be disputed, however, is whether or not educational decisions, which have lasting effects on students, should be made based solely on a yearly budget process.

Education decisions are extremely important. Those decisions, budgetary or otherwise, need to be made with the help of sound policy and factual information that is generated within our education system. Ignoring that information and waiting for better fiscal times will do nothing to help our students.

Despite its talk about supporting education, this Government is now cutting back on teaching positions at a time when it continues to put added responsibility for our education system on the backs of teachers.

It is time that I finally make an appointment to donate blood and it is time for this Government to realize that PEI's education system needs its help, its commitment, and its money. Our teachers and students deserve better.

Be good to yourselves and each other. 