



BC CONFEDERATION OF PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

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Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
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It has been brought to the attention of the BCCPAC Board of Directors that a document has been circulated within SD 61, Greater Victoria, entitled "Report on VCPAC Activities with BCCPAC" We understand that a copy of this report was sent to all SD 61 PACs and that it is posted on the VCPAC website. This document is dated November 2011, but only came to our attention on December 13th when a copy was e-mailed to each BCCPAC Director.

This timing is unfortunate as the deadline for BCCPAC memberships to vote in our upcoming Annual General Meeting was December 15th and time did not allow us to gather the necessary information to correct the many errors and omissions that the document circulated by VCPAC contains. Many former Victoria BCCPAC members may have been misled into believing that this report listed the only benefits of being a member of BCCPAC, or that BCCPAC does not support the PACs of SD 61. This conclusion is incorrect and may have resulted in many Victoria PACs losing their voting privileges at our upcoming AGM.

Our response only addresses a small number of the activities that BCCPAC has engaged in on behalf of the parents of Victoria and BC. It focuses exclusively on resolutions coming out of Victoria and ignores other resolutions and activities that benefit all BC parents including Victoria parents.

What follows is clarification of the activities that BCCPAC has undertaken and the benefits that Victoria parents have gained. There are also corrections to the information contained in the VCPAC report and inclusion of information that was somehow overlooked in that document. This document will reference the headings listed in the Victoria document.

"For the fiscal year-ends from 2006 to 2011, VCPAC spent:

- \$53,725.02 sending delegates to BCCPAC conferences
- A total of 23 different delegates represented VCPAC
- 39% of VCPAC attendees were not VCPAC Executives"

It is unclear if the figure \$53,725.02 is net of the BCCPAC travel subsidies that were available to VCPAC to attend these events as no VCPAC financial statements are available on the VCPAC website dated after 2008. Assuming these subsidies are included, the average cost per attendee representing VCPAC per conference is about \$940.00 including conference fees.

The total number of VCPAC delegates to the eleven conferences and AGMs that BCCPAC has held since 2006 is 57. Of these delegates, 46 registrations were for VCPAC executive members or about 81%. The difference between the 23 attendee figure quoted by VCPAC and the actual figure of 57 can be accounted for by some attendees being at more than one conference. Delegates who have represented VCPAC at BCCPAC conferences and AGMs since 2006 are as follows:

- John Bird and Karen Coleman each attended ten of the eleven events.
- Vicki White, and Paul Grieg each attended five events
- Wendy Joyce attended four events
- Alana Muir attended three events
- Cheryl Killam, Ellen Beisiegel, Steve Perks and Ted Weick each attended two events
- Fran Nemeth, Jim Rawling, Kate Evans, Kirsten Smestad, Lisa Hewitt, Margaret Hantiuk, Marianne Pillion, Pam Wiersma, Dave Collyer, Thor Wishart, Audrey Smith, and Ann Whiteaker each attended one event. Several of these attendees only attended one day of the three day event.

Heidi Darroch, Debbie Walasek, and Peter Milne from SD 61 also attended one conference each, but covered their own costs as did Paul Grieg on one occasion.

Of the 23 people who have attended BCCPAC conferences on VCPAC's behalf, more than one half of the registrations were used by just four people.

Before turning to the resolutions submitted by VCPAC, a better understanding is required of what resolutions actually are and some information around them.

- Resolutions can be submitted by any voting member. Currently there are about 270 passed resolutions active within BCCPAC. (This excludes amendments to the BCCPAC Constitution and Bylaws).
- Resolutions are instructions and guidance to our organization and are non-binding.
- Many resolutions are directed to other groups or organizations that need not implement or accede to them. Just because BCCPAC has passed a resolution does not mean it is binding on, for example, the Ministry of Education or a Board of Education. The best that BCCPAC can achieve in these instances is lobby the necessary party to make the requested change.
- Resolutions, once passed, do not become the sole responsibility of BCCPAC to achieve. The member(s) putting forward the applicable resolution are expected to continue their efforts and provide or suggest a passionate volunteer to the BCCPAC standing resolution committee that the passed resolution is assigned to. This volunteer will assist the committee with lobbying for the realization of the resolution.
- VCPAC has submitted other resolutions as well as those mentioned, and has supported the resolutions brought forward by other members through their endorsement and votes.
- The rationale that accompanies any resolution does not accompany the resolution. The resolution itself, and only the resolution, is what the members vote on and pass.

Regarding the resolutions in question:

“Between 2006 and 2010 – VCPAC put forward numerous resolutions including the following which were related to education matters and were passed by the assembly:

- Ensuring the Rights of All Students
- Increased Direct Access Funds for Some PACs
- Consultation Period for School Closure
- Question Period for Public School Board Meetings
- Student Records

In addition, VCPAC assisted two local PACs in getting the following resolutions approved:

- Prohibition on Asbestos Removal
- Construction Guidelines for Occupied Schools

No substantive progress has been reported by BCCPAC on any of these initiatives.”

While it may be true that BCCPAC may not have adequately reported progress on these resolutions directly to VCPAC, it is not the case that no substantive progress has been made on these resolutions as can be shown by the correspondence included in the VCPAC report.

Ensuring the Rights of All Students reads:

That BCCPAC advise all education partners that limiting the number of students in classrooms based on designations or labels is discriminatory and as such, legislation or employee contracts must not contain wording that promotes or creates such limits.

This resolution instructing BCCPAC to advise the education partners and Minister was achieved by the letter sent on May 9, 2006 to Minister Bond and copied to all the education partners by President Kim Howland. We are confused as to why VCPAC feels that no substantive progress or reports have been made on it especially as a copy of this letter was included with the report that was circulated.

For the basis of the case of discrimination, while this may be discriminatory, it is likely not discriminatory on prohibited grounds. This is because the reason for the discrimination likely gains an exemption under Section 15(2)

of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that permits affirmative action programs. The Charter can be found here: http://www.laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/Charter/CHART_E.pdf. We suggest VCPAC engage legal council with expertise in such matters to investigate this possibility before proceeding further in your efforts on this subject.

Increased Direct Access Funds for Some PACs which reads:

That BCCPAC lobby the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General to increase the amount of funds that some PACs are eligible for based on the percentage of students from families with low income as defined by Statistics Canada.

This resolution was brought to the attention of the Solicitor General John van Dongan and received a reply that was also included in the VCPAC report. Unfortunately the government was not willing to implement this proposal at this time as the Solicitor General outlines. BCCPAC has continued to bring this and other resolutions relating to PAC funding to the attention of the Minister and other members of the opposition and government as time and opportunity allows.

Consultation Period for School Closure reads:

That BCCPAC requests the Minister of Education to amend Ministerial Order 320/02, School Opening and Closure Order, to require school boards to give a minimum of 120 days notice of intent to close a specific school prior to the decision being made.

This resolution has been partially achieved. Ministerial Order 320/02 was repealed and replaced with Ministerial Order 194/08 on September 3, 2008. The new order can be found here:

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw/e/m194-08.pdf> and includes this section:

5. (1) The public consultation process must include:
 - (a) a fair consideration of the community's input and adequate opportunity for the community to respond to a board's proposal to close the school permanently;

Doubtless given the timing of this order the efforts of BCCPAC regarding this resolution met with a receptive ear and action on the part of the Minister.

It appears that the GVSD has not modified their policies to incorporate this Ministerial order. This should be taken up with the SD 61 Board of Education.

Question Period for Public School Board Meetings reads:

That BCCPAC request the Minister of Education to propose an amendment to the School Act making it mandatory for School Boards to have a question period during regularly scheduled public board meetings and to have those questions and responses recorded in school board minutes.

A letter would have been sent to the Minister as with all passed resolutions. This resolution too has been achieved. For actual implementation of the request, this resolution will be raised again as we understand that changes to the School Act are pending.

The resolution entitled Student Records also had a letter sent to the Minister and requires changes to legislation. Again, this will be brought forward to the Minister in the future as amendments to the School Act are considered.

The ***Prohibition on Asbestos Removal*** resolution was achieved before it was passed. Worksafe BC regulations regarding Asbestos removal already cover this. These regulations are summarized here:

http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/health_and_safety/by_topic/assets/pdf/asbestos.pdf

Construction Guidelines reads:

That BCCPAC advocate for the Ministry of Education to develop guidelines for construction during periods when students occupy a school.

Construction of schools is the responsibility of Boards of Education, not the Ministry. Regardless, the Minister would have been advised of this resolution when it passed. It is our understanding that most boards have ceased to undertake major construction in school buildings while school is in session.

The resolution calling for a BCCPAC Members' Council is redundant (and had a timeline which has now passed). BCCPAC already has a group enshrined in the Bylaws that fulfills these tasks: the Board of Directors. To usurp these powers is thus a violation of our bylaws.

BCCPAC Governance Process resolution was fully implemented with the creation of Governance audit committee (GAC) and later Governance Audit Implementation Committee (GAIC). There followed a lengthy consultation process engaging all the members. The resulting amended Constitution and Bylaws were presented at the 2010 AGM and deferred by a motion from SD 61 members to an Extra-ordinary General Meeting in the fall of 2010 where it was narrowly defeated. VCPAC delegates lobbied members aggressively against the motion to approve the new Constitution and Bylaws. BCCPAC has spent more resources and time on this particular resolution than any other, to the exclusion of other important BCCPAC activities. To claim that, "successive BCCPAC Boards have declined to activate them." is completely and utterly false.

While not all of the resolutions mentioned have been achieved, significant progress has been made on the majority of the resolutions that the VCPAC report mentions and in one case at great financial expense to BCCPAC.

We now turn to the last assertion of the report:

"BCCPAC Membership is in decline. The number of PACs represented has dropped from 64% at the May 2008 AGM to 47% at the May 2011 AGM. The PAC membership is currently at 29% although this is expected to increase by December 15, 2011 which is the deadline for being eligible to vote at the 2012 AGM."

The number of PACs represented at the AGM's has historically been fairly consistent with at least a third of the membership exercising their right to vote. While it is true that membership numbers fluctuate from year to year for various reasons, membership was high in 2008 due to the fact that in order to qualify for the BCCPAC playground grant, membership in BCCPAC was required. Thus many PACs became members to become eligible for this grant. It should be noted that 2008 was the highest membership year in the past ten years. The number of members represented at the 2008 AGM was 31%. Some other factors that are reflected in membership numbers over the years are: Gaming removed parent conferences and BCCPAC membership fees as an eligible use of funds, 440b funding (funded parent education based on a per school base amount and number of students) was rolled into the per pupil funding formula. Over time many PACs/DPACs have lost this funding allocation from Boards of Education, many schools have closed, budget cuts and gaming grant reductions have presented added financial stresses to PACs.

The purpose of the VCPAC report appears to be to question the benefit that members receive from being a member of BCCPAC. It is useful at this point to summarize a few of the accomplishments of BCCPAC.

- BCCPAC is the recognized voice of parents in BC by government, the Ministry of Education, education partners and the media
- BCCPAC has frequent and meaningful meetings with senior Ministry of Education staff, the Minister of Education and other Ministries.
- BCCPAC constantly champions the viewpoint of parents in the media and to government.
- BCCPAC advocates for resolutions as time, resources and opportunity permits with a good success rate.
- BCCPAC provides current information, advice and support to members.

Here are some major BCCPAC financial successes:

- The BCCPAC playground grant resulted in three Victoria elementary schools receiving a total of \$47,500 in money to buy playground equipment. Subsequent playground grants directly from the government have and will further increase this total.
- Continued lobbying for the multiple resolutions involving seismic upgrades of school buildings lead to the creation of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) concept. Victoria has two schools upgraded so far in seismic upgrades under seismic mitigation and two in process to become an NLC. These initiated capital projects alone total over \$40 million with more expected over the next few years.

- Reestablishment of the \$20 gaming grant after it was reduced to \$10 prior to other groups having any funding restored. This reinstatement was worth an extra \$190,000 to Victoria area PACs every year. The additional \$5 per student one time grant announced in Spring 2011 added a further \$95,000 to Victoria PAC treasuries this past school year.

Any one of these items more than covers the \$75 BCCPAC membership fees which total \$3,900 annually for all 51 Victoria PACs and VCPAC.

Here are some of the critical education issues BCCPAC has been dealing with recently to the benefit of all BC parents. This advocacy is guided as always by Member Resolutions.

- Consultation on the BC College of Teachers. Many meetings were held on the subject with Minister Abbott and senior ministry staff. This resulted in significant improvements to the final version of the new Teachers' Act, now law.
- BCCPAC was invited to a private meeting with Skip Triplett to discuss his commission on Community Gaming Grants. The outcome was the report that was released last week that preserved the \$20 per student grant.
- Continual discussion of further revisions to the BCCPAC bylaws as requested by the VCPAC resolution mentioned above.
- The undermining of the Central Okanagan PAC's (COPAC, Okanagan DPAC) right to be consulted by their Board of Education on matters concerning the education system. This is an undermining of DPAC authority and should be a serious concern for all DPACs in the province.
- Creation of a resource for parents providing accurate information about the Foundational Skills Assessment. We note this resource appears to be the foundation for VCPAC's similar document.
- Revisions and updates to Leadership modules; Parent Involvement – Basic Principals, Roles Responsibilities and Accountability of PAC and DPAC Executives, Contagious Enthusiasm – How to get parents involved. Revisions are nearing completion on additional modules and will be released in the near future.
- Lengthy investigation into the issues of seatbelts on school busses and Wifi in the classroom.
- Creation of a new website to more fully and completely track the activities of BCCPAC, provide more timely information to members, and to better collect member opinion and input.
- Continual monitoring of the progress of negotiations between the BCTF and BCPSEA to make sure the issues that matter to parents and students are firmly at the table.
- Lobbying for special needs qualification and training programs for pre-service teachers
- Investigation and discussions regarding Section 177 of the School Act and the misuse of the section to remove the rights of parents in schools.
- Ongoing discussions regarding personalized learning, the BC Ed Plan, BCeSIS, bullying in our schools, aboriginal education, parent complaint process concerns and many other issues as they arise
- Ongoing discussions regarding the absence of mental health resources in schools to support teachers, students and families
- Creation of member outreach programs to engage and support more parents across the province.

Here are some specific benefits VCPAC and SD61 PACs have gained through their affiliation with BCCPAC in recent years:

- A meeting between John Bird and Ministry was arranged by BCCPAC President Ann Whiteaker to discuss aspects of Worksafe BC regulations that classified a student as a "work hazard"
- VCPAC has numerous documents on their website that either link to BCCPAC documents or copy large portions of them without proper citation. We request that the citations in these documents be included to correctly credit the source. We also wish to advise you at this time that the links in these documents

may cease to function after we update our website in the next few months. Countless Victoria parents and PACs have accessed the printed resources developed by BCCPAC

- Victoria area parents have made use of the advocacy support provided through BCCPAC on numerous occasions.
- Attending the conference provides parent education and networking opportunities for those from Victoria who have attended.
- Dissemination of current information affecting education.
- Access to the BCCPAC listserv and members only section of the BCCPAC website.

We trust the above paints a much clearer picture of the true scope of activities between VCPAC and BCCPAC and the many benefits of membership in BCCPAC. Unfortunately it is still an incomplete picture as a true recount would take countless hours and span many pages. Hopefully our new website will assist with providing this information.

We look forward to the continued involvement of Victoria area PACs and VCPAC in the important work that BCCPAC does. We are much stronger together than we are apart.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A. Whiteaker".

Ann Whiteaker, BCCPAC President