

# With no pay cheques in sight, Bowen Island teachers stand their ground



Tanya Kim and BC Teachers Federation President Jim Iker at a BC Federation of Labour rally to support the teachers.

Melanie Mason, photo

MERIBETH DEEN  
EDITOR

A vote by BC teachers to drop a contract clause about class size and composition and leave the dispute with the provincial government in the hands of a third party will not mean an end to the strike, whatever the outcome. Prior to the vote, Education Minister Peter Fassbender rejected the proposal for binding arbitration, outright. So, whichever way they voted, teachers continue to struggle financially, but still say class size and composition is a critical issue.

BICS teacher Shelley Courtney says that when the BC government talks about teachers' benefits, they are not just talking about medical or dental benefits.

"We have those things," she says, "But the benefits package also includes the salaries of education assistants, teacher-librarians, and special education teachers. When these benefits are cut, it's the kids who suffer."

Courtney says that in her 13-year career as a teacher, she's seen a big change in education.

"At the beginning of my career there were a lot of kids who got help who, today, would not get that help," she says. "And the range of kids we have in a classroom is a lot wider, in terms of needs, than it used to be. I've heard people say that when they went to school they had classes of thirty kids and they turned out fine. But I ask, where were the kids who had learning disabilities or other special needs? And the answer is that they were in a class down the hall. Now those kids are in my class, with their peers, where they should be, but it makes the job a lot harder, as a teacher."

Courtney's husband is also a teacher. "We're doing all right," she says. "We have savings and we have support from our families. And both of us believe in the reasons for this strike – it's about inclusion. As teachers I think that we know

more now than we used to about how to help kids with special needs, the various social and emotional struggles they bring into the classroom, but we cannot help them singlehandedly."

Tanya Kim teaches in a special resources classroom at Elsie Roy School, in Yaletown. She says that since starting her career with the Vancouver School Board in the year 2000, she's seen kids be cut off from special help from one year to the next.

"Kids who were diagnosed with Sensory Regulation Disorder – they have a really hard time coping at school because they struggle to regulate their body's responses to the environment, they've been cut off. Or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is another example; that diagnosis doesn't cut it anymore. Kids who are suffering because of this have to get tested and fit into a whole other category in order to be tested. Teachers in the regular classroom are doing whatever they can to cope."

Kim says that the BC Supreme Court ruling in January against the government on this issue is an assurance to her that what the teachers are doing is the right thing.

"Justice Susan Griffiths said the government goaded the teachers into a strike," says Kim. "And when people blame teachers for their kids not being in school, I tell them, this is no ordinary strike, it is about the government trying to get out of a court ruling. The only way they can is if the teachers release them by way of a new contract. I also say that if you don't like this situation, where some kids get to go to school because their parents can afford it and others can't, well, that's what this is about. If you don't like this situation, you've got to fight to protect our public schools."

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## INVITATION TO ATTEND PUBLIC MEETING

Saturday, September 20, 2014 (10:00 am to 1:00 pm), OR  
Thursday, September 25, 2014 (5:00 to 8:00 pm)  
at Cates Hill Chapel (661 Carter Road)

On September 8, 2014 Bowen Island Properties Limited Partnership made a presentation to Bowen Island Municipal Council to re-introduce two applications for rezoning:

- For the area referred to as **Parkview Slopes** on Cates Hill/Snug Cove (application made in May 2009), and
- For the area referred to as **Seymour Landing** on Cowan Point (application made in May 2014).

The application for rezoning at **PARKVIEW SLOPES** proposes:

- A broad variety of *alternative housing forms* in cottage-style homes, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, including:
  - Rental housing (a mix of 1-bedroom/studio, 2-bedroom, 3-bedroom units);
  - *Live/work areas* for trades, artisans, self-storage, small businesses, with rental accommodation above;
  - *Micro/eco homes* (some on *long-term land lease lots*).
- Theatre school use and other community uses next to the theatre school such as, daycare, assembly, etc.

The application for rezoning at **SEYMOUR LANDING** proposes:

- *Independent/Supportive Living* in rental housing and owner-occupied detached and attached homes (a range of services

provided, e.g. meals, housekeeping, laundry, regularly planned activities, shuttle bus service, assistance with shopping, trips on and off the island);

- An *expanded Inn* with associated *commercial guest accommodation*;
- A *passenger ferry dock* and a *widened waterfront park* at Seymour Bay.

Bowen Island Properties Limited Partnership will hold **Open Houses** (same content at both) to introduce the proposals in greater detail to the public. You are welcome to join us at Cates Hill Chapel (661 Carter Road) on Saturday, September 20, 2014 (10:00 am to 1:00 pm) or Thursday, September 25, 2014 (5:00 to 8:00 pm).

