

THE | PROFESSIONAL

September/October 2015 Volume 41 Issue 3

BC's Union for Professionals

SCHOLARSHIP AND BURSARY WINNERS

Ten young minds have been awarded scholarships for their essays this year.

Page 8

YOUR GUIDE TO THE FEDERAL ELECTION

Information on the Federal Election to make sure you're ready to vote on October 19.

Special Insert

WE'LL BE ASKING YOU TO VOTE YES

The PEA will be running a vote this Spring to affiliate permanently to the BCFED.

Page 4



A SOCIAL SUMMER

Page 12

UVic members Melana Mar and Janine Mayers at the UVic Pond Party in June.

THE PROFESSIONAL

CONTENTS

4 FEATURE

We'll be Asking you to vote Yes

Why permanent affiliation to the BCFED is what's needed for our union.

8 NEWS

Scholarship and Bursary Winners

For 23 years, the PEA has been providing scholarships and bursaries to members and their families. Find out who won this year and what the scholarship topic will be for 2016.

10 OPINION

Are Taxes Bad?

It's time to start examining our attitudes towards taxes and public services in BC.

14 PHOTOS

Social Summer at UVic

In June, 100 members of the UVic chapter gathered for the annual UVic Pond Party.

17 CHAPTER UPDATES

Chapter and Union Updates

Updates for all members about upcoming events and issues.

18 ANNOUNCEMENT

PEA wins two CALM Awards

The PEA won two awards at the Canadian Association of Labour Media Awards this year.

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As summer comes to an end and autumn brings its usual busy schedules and new beginnings, members will be faced with decisions. This issue of *The Professional* includes our Federal Election Guide. During this election we're doing more than ever before to help our members decide whom to vote for on October 19. We're doing this because our members want it. In a recent poll, three out of four members indicated they expect information from their union on the different party platforms. We've scoured the party websites, the public announcements and the voting records of the four political parties and put together an analysis of where each leader would take Canada should they earn your vote.

Election 2015 is an important one. Federal anti-union legislation that has a direct impact on the PEA was recently passed. Bill C-377 has imposed onerous new financial reporting rules that will dramatically increase the workloads of our staff. It will also result in fewer resources available to provide direct services to members. We can expect to see more of this type of legislation if the current government is re-elected. The impact of the federal election on the PEA is one issue among many that will factor into your ultimate decision. We recognize that voters must balance a number of issues when deciding how to cast their ballot; however, we think it is important for members to be aware of how this election will affect the PEA's ability to work on your behalf.

Beyond the immediate decision of how to vote on October 19, PEA members also have a decision to make on the future of our affiliation with the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED). In May 2013, members voted in favour of a three-year trial affiliation to the BCFED. Members will be asked in the spring of 2016 whether they wish to support an ongoing affiliation. In this issue, we will focus on some of the considerations and factors that will influence this decision. Look for ongoing communication about the BCFED affiliation vote throughout the fall and winter.

As we slip back into the busyness of the fall, please do take a few moments to think about how the decisions you make will impact you and your union.

Thank you,

Frank Kohlberger

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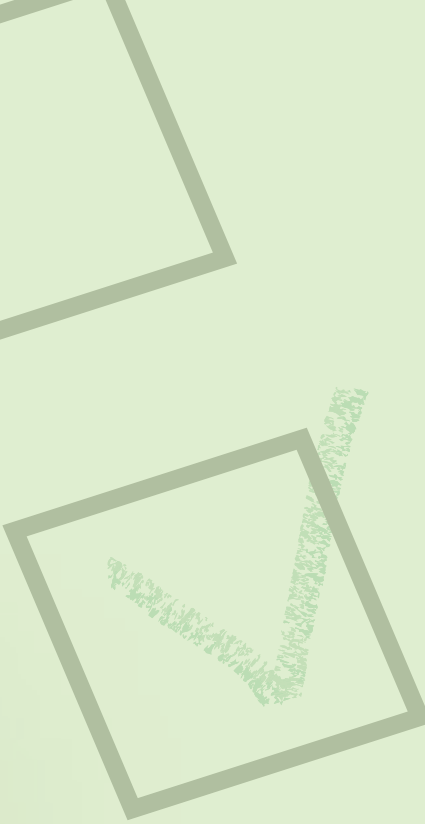
Aaron Lustch, Joshua Benson



WE'LL BE ASKING YOU TO VOTE YES

Why permanent affiliation to the
BCFED is what's needed for our union

WRITTEN BY SCOTT MCCANNELL



The PEA's three-year trial period for affiliation with the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) ends in May 2016. If we wish to continue with the BCFED, the PEA will also be required to affiliate with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The PEA staff and executive support ongoing affiliation with the BCFED and CLC because they believe our members' interests are best served with affiliation. This article provides an overview of the benefits the BCFED affiliation has provided the PEA over the last three years, along with some of the implications of ongoing affiliation.

WHO ARE THE BCFED AND CLC?

The Ottawa-based CLC brings together dozens of national and international unions, provincial and territorial federations of labour and community-based labour councils to represent 3.3 million workers. They advocate politically for policies and programs that improve the lives of all Canadians, such as better and more secure jobs, retirement security, a stronger public health care system and affordable and accessible child care. They provide union-education programs and top-notch research and analysis on important union and work issues.

The BCFED is the umbrella labour organization in BC, representing over

500,000 workers. It provides similar functions to the CLC in education, political advocacy and research. It also plays a critical role in coordinating bargaining strategies, job action and responses to government policy.

STRATEGIC AND INFORMED BARGAINING

The BCFED has a working group on bargaining that meets frequently while public sector bargaining, and bargaining preparations, are underway. This is the best defence available in the face of the government's omnipresent model of bargaining through PSEC (Public Sector Employers' Council), which gives government direct control over every nickel spent and every word agreed to in public sector bargaining.

The PEA has fully participated in this working group and has had the opportunity to shape bargaining goals and promote the concerns of unionized professionals. Being on the working group also given us access to inside, detailed, just-in-time information about bargaining developments across the public sector.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The PEA staff and executive support ongoing affiliation with the BCFED and CLC because they believe our members' interests are best served with affiliation.



Above left: In April, BCFED President Irene Lanzinger opened the PEA's Constitutional Convention. **Above right:** Hassan Yussuf, president of the Canadian Labour Council, was the keynote speaker at the PEA's Constitutional Convention in April. He was the first CLC President to attend a PEA Convention.

With our trial affiliation, the PEA has been able to access significant training opportunities. One highlight is the annual week-long CLC winter school in Harrison Hot Springs. PEA staff have honed their arbitration skills and knowledge through this experience and have also learned new techniques in co-facilitating bargaining training. PEA Executive members have attended to learn more about union and management thinking and how to be an effective local representative and advocate. Participants have found the level of relationship building with other unions available through this very low-cost training to be extremely valuable. Funding has been set aside to send non-executive PEA members in 2016.

The BCFED has, over the past couple of years, offered PEA-relevant workshops on topics such as union organizing, preserving public services and occupational health and safety. Union education programs are unique compared with corporate and management-based education, and the quality of BCFED and CLC training is not replicated elsewhere.

The CLC provided a free workshop for approximately 40 PEA members in 2013. The workshop focused on skills for engaging with members to inform them about the emerging threat of right-to-work laws (RTW). RTW laws make the payment of union dues optional while still requiring unions to provide all members the same services.

PROTECTION FROM RAIDING, DECERTIFICATION AND WORK JURISDICTION CONFLICTS

The BCFED takes a strong position against raiding, and the BC Nurses Union was recently expelled from the Federation because of their raiding of different unions in the health sector. The PEA was raided in 2011, prior to its affiliation with the BCFED, and lost hundreds of members who work in community health. Losing members diminishes our revenue base and affects service levels across all PEA chapters. When the BC Liberals introduced legislation to force the GLP chapter into the BCGEU in 2004, the PEA fought this off with a very costly public relations campaign. It is unlikely that either of these incidents would have occurred if the PEA had been affiliated. CLC affiliation provides a process for resolving disputes over work jurisdiction by having them settled through an umpire process. The CLC expressly prohibits members from raiding one another.

ACCESS TO CRITICAL AND TIMELY INFORMATION AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

With affiliation, the PEA has enjoyed access to critical information and improved relationships with other BC unions and key stakeholders. The PEA staff and executive



Above: Every two years the BCFED holds a Convention to make decisions on the direction of BC's largest labour organization. The PEA sent five delegates to the BCFED's Convention in November 2014 as part of our trial affiliation.

have been able to make connections with their counterparts in other unions and gain an in-depth understanding of labour issues and the strategies other unions are employing in response to them. We have had the chance to review other unions' agreements, contracts, research materials and other resources that help to broaden our awareness of legal trends, employer tactics, and communication strategies and tools. Strong relationships with other unions help a small union like the PEA make better-informed decisions and avoid having to re-invent the wheel.

The BCFED provides affiliate members with regular bulletins and updates on workplace disputes. They also coordinate meetings of unions whenever there is job action in BC so that union members don't show up at work and face an unexpected picket line. These updates and meetings helped PEA staff to effectively coordinate with our Prince George members when they supported BCTF picket lines in 2014.

The BCFED organizes an annual political lobby in Victoria in January. Members of the BC Legislature from all parties attend a reception, and key labour issues are brought forward to ministers in separate meetings. PEA participation in these events has enhanced our relationships with politicians of all stripes and made them aware of our members' issues and the solutions that would address them. This is important because government policy determines the terms and conditions of employment, service levels and the legal framework for public sector unions like the PEA.

THE COSTS

The cost of BCFED affiliation is about the same as the cost of two large lattes for each PEA member per year (77 cents per member per month), and CLC dues are similar. The PEA has funded BCFED dues from its investment earnings. The total annual cost has been less than 10 per cent of our annual average investment returns.

There is no panacea that will dramatically reverse our members' fortunes in these challenging times; however, there is no doubt that the PEA is a more effective, efficient and powerful union when it is affiliated. Through the BCFED we receive information on BC public sector bargaining at all stages and the best union education and training available. We gain protection against being raided by other unions, and doors are opened for us to establish strategic alliances with other unions and form relationships with decision makers with the ability to shape our members' work lives. We achieve all of this while still maintaining the PEA's autonomy with regard to job action, bargaining and governance.

PEA members will vote early in 2016 to determine whether we will continue to affiliate with the BCFED and join the CLC. We will be providing more details and hosting membership forums in the lead-up to the vote. Hopefully, this article gives members some context and a level of comfort in the idea of ongoing affiliation for the PEA.



DERYN DAVIES

"I will be attending Vancouver Island University this fall and taking part in the Sport Health and Physical Education program. I greatly appreciate this financial contribution as it will assist in achieving my educational goals."

EMMA FANNING

"I am currently working to complete a major in English, a minor in professional writing, and a certificate in Cultural Resource Management. It is my goal to obtain a MA in Museum Studies at the University of Toronto."

NICK BROCHEZ

"Thank you so much for selecting me as a recipient of a PEA scholarship and investing in my education. I will be entering my third year in the Biomedical Studies major at UNBC in the fall."

MEGHAN MULVIHILL

"I am currently enrolled at the University of Lethbridge in the Human Resources and Labour Relations Management program and will be graduating next year with my Bachelor of Management Degree."



NATASHA REIMER

"After graduating from Penticton Secondary school I will be going to Capilano University to study engineering and to play varsity basketball. The financial aid will help me greatly in these important years to come."

SCHOLARSHIP AND BURSARY WINNERS

WRITTEN BY BRETT HARPER

PEA members have a close connection to post-secondary education. One-third of our members work for the University of Victoria, and most members have come to their current careers through many years of college and university study. That's why the PEA has always valued scholarships and bursaries for members and their families. This is the 22nd year of the PEA's scholarship and bursary program. This year, we asked applicants to respond to the following essay topic: The PEA and many other unions emphasize member engagement and democratic participation as key objectives in efforts to serve members. Discuss opportunities, such as new technology or other initiatives, that would help achieve these goals.

The scholarship and bursary committee had a challenging task in narrowing down the 26 applicants to ten winners. All applicants provided excellent insight on the topic. All essays are evaluated without any identifiers.



HANNAH DAVIS

"My goal is to create short films, which reach out to individuals and inspire them to be involved in their community, inspire them to help and make a positive difference in other people's lives."

JORDAN SALM

"I would like to thank the PEA and its members for selecting me for their scholarship. I am a computer engineering student at the University of Victoria and hope to work one day in embedded software"

BRYAN PADRON

"My sincere thanks to the PEA membership; I am very appreciative of your organization's leadership role in supporting education and giving back to the community. I am in my final year at the SFU Beedie School of business"

LYNDEN MILLER

"I am looking forward to beginning my art history degree at the University of Victoria in the fall. My passion for art and painting, as well as my academic excellence, have led me towards this path of study."



DAVID JOSEY

"This scholarship allowed me to pursue my Masters in Human Security and Peace Building at Royal Roads University. I was able to utilize my learning recently in Cambodia researching the importance of 3D printing for amputee victims."



The role of technology was a prominent theme throughout the winning essays. "Mobile applications and outreach strategies built around mobile engagement will assume an increasingly vital role in the long-term growth of unions and labour organizations," said high school student Deryn Davies. Other students emphasized the message as the key to building engagement. "Any tools or strategies must include an emotional appeal to members and to the public to gain support," said high school student Natasha Reimer. Applicants also highlighted the need to push beyond basic union requirements and fight for social issues. "Going beyond open communication, unions also have a strong responsibility to uphold social responsibility within their organization, which can have effects that extend beyond it," said Emma Fanning.

To read the essays and view the full profiles of each winner, visit pea.org/ScholarshipWinners.

Every year the PEA also provides up to \$5,000 in bursaries to PEA members enrolled in a part-time post-secondary degree or diploma program. This year, SMS member Kathy Kegalj received a bursary to support studies toward an Educational Assistant Certificate.

The 2016 essay topic is: "The Conservative Government of Canada passed two bills, one that made it harder for unions to organize workers in Federal Jurisdictions (Bill C-525) and another that imposed stringent and unique public reporting requirements on trade unions in regard to their finances and expenditures (Bill C-377). The Conservatives' official party policy book states, 'We support right to work legislation to allow optional union membership including student unions.' Discuss the implications of the introduction of a Federal right-to-work regime in Canada." Essays are due March 15, 2016.



ARE TAXES BAD?

Examining our attitudes towards taxes and public services in BC

WRITTEN BY SCOTT MCCANNELL

Given that 92 per cent of PEA members work in the public sector for employers that are funded by taxpayers, it seems relevant to ask members to think about whether taxes are bad. Benjamin Franklin's famous quote that "In this world nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes," suggests that taxes, like death, are to be avoided if at all possible. In today's political and media environments, taxes are often demonized as harmful and counter-productive to society. There are a host of right-wing think tanks that relentlessly promote smaller government, lower taxes and deregulation as a means of achieving economic prosperity. Various provincial and federal governments have adopted these policies, and the public has in many cases seemed to accept them.

Many of our members are feeling the effects of reduced government

funding in the workplace. BC already has the leanest public sector in Canada on a per capita basis, and BC's public service (i.e., workers employed directly by the province) has been slashed repeatedly over the last decade and a half, resulting in 9,000 fewer public servants since 2001. In the university sector, funding reductions of \$50 million annually over three consecutive budget years have resulted in a number of PEA layoffs at the University of Victoria. At a time when post-secondary education is increasingly important, the number of student spaces in BC's advanced education institutions is projected to fall by 5,000 by 2016. In BC's public library system, government funding was reduced by 22 per cent between 2009 and 2011, while \$110 million was cut from school board budgets. Overall, a comparison of the ratio of public service expenditure to provincial GDP shows a decline

in public spending from 23 per cent of GDP in 2001/2002 to 19 per cent projected for 2016/2017.

In 2014, the PEA reported a 15 per cent reduction since 2009 in the number of licensed professionals in our GLP chapter who work directly for the province. In that publicly released report, we noted that the number of extreme climate events and disasters was on the increase while the capacity of our public service to steward BC's natural resource base was decreasing. Our warning proved to be prescient when the Mount Polley mine disaster captured the public's attention in August 2014. The Auditor General, the Forest Practices Board and the Office of the Ombudsman have all sounded the alarm over declining standards of practice in BC's management of its forests and lands. Lax and unenforced regulations, poor planning and oversight, and a hollowed out public service have been identified by these agencies as pressing concerns.

The policy choices of the provincial government have a direct impact on our members' work lives and on the quality of services provided to the public. BC has one of the lowest corporate tax rates in Canada, at 11 per cent. The cumulative revenue impact of corporate tax cuts since 2001 in BC is projected to reach \$15 billion by 2015. In the February 2015 budget, the government removed a tax on high-income earners (above \$150,000) that will result in \$200 million less per year in tax revenues. The recent announcement that MSP premiums will increase by four per cent this year hits some PEA members in the

pocketbook, where their employers have refused to pay MSP premiums.

The result of this regressive low-tax structure that exists in BC is that there is simply not enough revenue to support an effective public sector. Lay-offs, stingy sub-inflation wage increases, and pressure to do more with fewer resources have become the common experience of many PEA members. Following the Mount Polley incident, we learned that no geotechnical inspections of the site were conducted in the three years leading up to the accident. How many more disasters are looming because of lack of government oversight?

The BC labour movement, through the BC Federation of Labour, is promoting a public conversation about fair and progressive taxes. They point out that working people in BC have been hit with a variety of user fee increases (to BC Ferries, BC Hydro, provincial parks, MSP premiums, and others) that offset the reductions in personal tax rates. They also point out that the rates of poverty and child poverty in BC are the highest in Canada, while, at the same time, the province has the highest concentration of residents who count themselves among the wealthiest 10 per cent of the population in Canada. I encourage members to think about the impacts of government policies on taxation and public services. Perhaps a fairer and more progressive tax system, and re-investment in the public service, would lead to improvements in work environments and in the standard of living in BC. Perhaps taxes that are fair and progressive are not so much like death after all.



FAST FACTS ON THE CURRENT TAX SYSTEM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

- If BC collected the same amount in tax revenues as a share of the economy (GDP) as we did in 2000, we would have had \$3.5 billion more in public funds in 2013 alone.
- Provincial tax cuts since 2000 have delivered the lion's share of benefits to the richest. The richest 1% of BC households have seen their taxes cut by an average of \$41,000 per year. That's more than the average income for the poorest 30% of households.
- If BC collected the same amount of personal income tax (as a share of GDP) as the average for other Canadian provinces, we'd have an additional \$2.4 billion in revenues. (This includes BC's MSP premiums, which no other province uses).

Source: Iglia Ivanova and Seth Klein, *Progressive Tax Options for BC*, January 2013, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

A SOCIAL SUMMER

In June, 100 members of the UVic chapter gathered for the annual UVic Pond Party. This event was a great opportunity to meet colleagues, find out information about the PEA and celebrate the accomplishments of the year. The event is hosted twice a year by the UVic chapter executive.

Do you and your coworkers have a PEA event you'd like to share with readers of *The Professional*? Get in touch with the PEA via email at bharper@pea.org.





FAMILY MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

Pension Update

The Public Service Pension Plan application will be heard by the Pension Board on their next meeting on September 23. This is expected to be a formality in which case it will take effect October 1. The employer will contact staff regarding paperwork once the FMEP has been officially accepted into the plan.

GOVERNMENT LICENSED PROFESSIONALS

Grants and Donations

Do you know you may be eligible for a GLP Grant or Donation?

GLP members can submit requests for funding of up to \$100 for an activity or event to the GLP Grants and Donations Committee. Grants and donations are administered by the GLP Executive based on their consistency with the chapter's strategic plan or promotion of the Association and GLP Chapter.

For the full eligibility considerations and policy, visit pea.org/glp-executive-policies.html. All grant and donation requests shall be submitted via the online GLP Grants and Donations form also available on the PEA website at pea.org/glp-executive-policies.html. The Grants and Donations Committee meets several times a year to review requests and make recommendations to the GLP Executive for approval.

Remember to submit your online request early and prior to December 2015 for year-end events!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Resolutions can have a direct impact on the membership and on how the GLP Chapter operates. Any GLP member may submit a resolution for consideration. Resolutions must be signed by at least two chapter members and received by the PEA Victoria office or to membership@pea.org by October 12. For a guide to resolutions visit pea.org/glpagm.

Local Victoria Members are Invited! RSVPs are required from local members planning to attend the AGM, and for entry to the dinner. If you would like to join your fellow members at the AGM, please email membership@pea.org by October 12.

Attend Online

Want to attend the GLP AGM on Monday, October 26 from 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. from the comfort of your own home? Visit pea.org/glpagm to find the Livestream registration, or call us for assistance.

HEALTH SCIENCES PROFESSIONALS

Fraser Health Authority 37.5 hour Arbitration

The 37.5 hour Fraser Health Authority arbitration was heard on September 23. The PEA will update all members when the results are made available.

Professional Development Money

During the last two rounds of bargaining through the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA), the PEA received Professional Development Fund money. To maximize the number of members who can access this money, the HSP chapter executive developed an application process and funding criteria. The PEA will reimburse the cost of tuition, fees, books and related expenses to a maximum of \$250 for courses by HSP members until the funding has been exhausted.

More details about the application process, funding criteria and deadlines can be found at pea.org/hsp.

LAW SOCIETY LAWYERS BARGAINING UPDATES

Bargaining dates with the Law Society have been set for September through to December. Members of the bargaining team include

- Camille Karlicki
- John Nalleweg
- Marlon Song
- Trevor Kaatz



Priorities for the union include a defined benefits pension plan and increased wages and benefits.

OKANAGAN REGIONAL LIBRARIANS

PEA attends joint standing meeting

The PEA attended a joint standing meeting with the employer on September 28 and received updates on the new service model in Salmon Arm, the UBCO project, the ORL strategic plan and general updates relating to the FAMA report. Members will be updated by email.

ST. MARGARET'S SCHOOL Annual General Meeting

All members are invited to the AGM on November 18 at 3:30 p.m. Pizza and refreshments will be provided.

Upcoming Initiatives

Members are encouraged to watch for several new initiatives including a new members welcome session, an SMS member newsletter and information on refreshed PEA bulletin boards.

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA Annual General Meeting

All members are invited to attend the UVic chapter Annual General Meeting. Arbutus/Queenswood Room
Cadboro Commons
Thursday, November 12
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

THE PROFESSIONAL WAS THE WINNER OF THE
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF LABOUR MEDIA AWARD
FOR EXCELLENCE IN PRINT LAYOUT



"The PEA previously won for print layout in 2013, and they continue to set the standard for excellence in union print materials. Professional photography, member-focused content, great typography, attention to details in the layout. Each page has a unified feel, and yet each page has a unique approach whether it's creating historical timelines or integrating historical imagery. The PEA balances visuals with an excellent longer-form layout to make articles engaging: for example, the recent issue includes an original report on the decline of science researchers in the public service. Fantastic work communicating to PEA members."

- CALM Judge

The PEA also won The Morden Lazarus Prize for best editorial, column, or opinion piece that thoughtfully argues labour's position on an issue for "Provincial Government sheds scientists, but needs more"

"Harper writes a spirited defense of science, the public interest, and the workers who serve both these things. The op-ed disrupts government spin on a specific environmental disaster by making great use of the union's research on the subject. While industry officials talk about tragedy and accidents, Harper makes the story about how policy decisions and staffing levels make the difference in preventing environmental disaster."

- CALM Judge

SCHOLARSHIPS & BURSARIES FOR PEA MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The 2016 scholarship essay topic

"The Conservative Government of Canada passed two bills, one that made it harder for unions to organize workers in Federal Jurisdictions (Bill C-525) and another that imposed stringent and unique public reporting requirements on trade unions in regard to their finances and expenditures (Bill C-377). The Conservatives' official party policy book states, 'We support right to work legislation to allow optional union membership including student unions.' Discuss the implications of the introduction of a Federal right-to-work regime in Canada."



Up to \$5,000 in bursaries for PEA members and up to \$10,000 in scholarships for PEA members' and their families are available

DEADLINE TO APPLY IS MARCH 15, 2016
FULL DETAILS AT PEA.ORG/SCHOLARSHIPS

P|E|A

BC's Union for Professionals