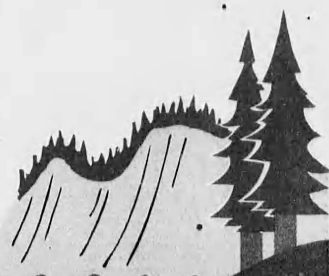


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Teachers reduce deal cost: Davie

by PAUL STRICKLAND
Citizen staff

The B.C. Teachers' Federation will present its new contract offer to the B.C. Public School Employers' Association Tuesday morning, says a local union official.

BCTF local presidents and bargaining chairs met in committee Saturday to review the proposed new contract offer, said Sandra Davie, president of the Prince George District Teachers' Association.

Davie said that, since the proposed new BCTF offer was revealed in committee, she was not at liberty to release details before its presentation to BCPSEA Tuesday.

"We've made modifications that will bring the cost of our package down but still not compromise the working and learning conditions in the classroom," Davie said Sunday. "We're hopeful that



SANDRA DAVIE

it will fit the needs of teachers and students, and that we can get a contract

that satisfies everyone."

Since the middle of last fall, teachers have been asking for a 22% salary increase over three years. They also want improvements in the ratio of non-enrolling teachers like counsellors and librarians to the number of students in each school.

BCPSEA has consistently said it has no money beyond \$300 million to cover an average 7.5% increase in teachers' salaries provincewide. It wants greater flexibility to assign non-enrolling teachers to schools according to need and to vary class-size limits slightly so long as contract limits are met by class-size averages over a whole school.

"The BCPSEA is prepared to meet with the BCTF as soon as possible," said Ken Denike, BCPSEA chair. Denike said he was responding to Premier Gordon Campbell's statements Friday

that BCPSEA and the BCTF have until the end of next week to resolve their labour dispute.

BCPSEA is the accredited bargaining agent for the province's 60 public school boards.

"The BCTF had previously announced that they will make significant movement on their proposals," Denike said. "In view of the fact that the parties are so far apart, the BCTF is going to need to make a big move if they want to achieve an agreement before the premier's deadline."

"For example, BCPSEA has \$300 million available for compensation while the BCTF's salary demand would cost \$1.2 billion," he said. "When you add all the BCTF proposals together, they total \$3.7 billion. We just don't have that kind of money."

Davie disagreed. "The other side has been absolutely inflexible," she said.

"What's at stake is learning conditions in the classroom," Davie said. "They want to roll back many of the things we've gained in the last decades."

"We're doing what we can to protect education, and that's the purpose of our offer," she said. "We hope it's enough."

Of Campbell's deadline to which Denike referred, she said, "An imposition (of a legislated contract) would not solve the needs of anyone."

Denike said, "We understand that this labour dispute is testing the patience of students, parents and government."

The BCTF promised to present their new offer to BCPSEA negotiators early this week, he said during the weekend.

"We believe that the urgency of the situation requires that we meet sooner," Denike said. "The premier's comments only add to that urgency."

TODAY COMMUNITY



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Burns honoured

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Blaze destroys airport hanger in Vanderhoof

by PAUL STRICKLAND
Citizen staff

Fire destroyed the main hangar and offices at the Vanderhoof airport early Saturday afternoon, said Vanderhoof RCMP Const. W.G. Flewelling.

Damage was estimated at more than \$500,000.

A mechanic working on an airplane suffered smoke inhalation and was admitted to St. John Hospital, where he spent the night, said Vanderhoof fire chief Jim Hurtado. No firefighters were injured, he said.

In addition to consuming the Vanderhoof Flying Service Ltd. Hangar, the fire destroyed four airplanes inside — two belonging to the company and two privately owned, Hurtado said Sunday.

"It was roughly a half million with the planes in there alone," Hurtado said. "The insurance company will fine-tune estimates."

It was at 1:25 p.m. that the Vanderhoof Fire Department and Vanderhoof RCMP were called to the fire. The 10,000-square-foot hangar, which held four aircraft at the time, was engulfed in flames when emergency crews arrived.

Police said the fire started in a section of the building where the owner had been spray-painting one of the aircraft. A can of solvent is believed to have been knocked over, and it came in contact with a nearby high-intensity light, which caused the solvent to ignite, Const. Flewelling said.

"It was a pure accident," Hurtado said. "It was just one of those things."

There is another hangar for storage of aircraft as well as a third building at the airport that escaped damage from the fire, he said.

"But this (Vanderhoof Flying Service Hangar) is the one that houses the flight school and offices," Hurtado said.

For the moment, because of the fire, little servicing of visiting aircraft can be provided. The destroyed hangar housed the mechanical repair shop. In addition, while fuel pumps, located outside, were not damaged in the fire, the blaze cut the power lines that went through the building to the pumps.

"B.C. Hydro will have to deal with that shortly," Hurtado said.

The Vanderhoof Fire Department and the RCMP continue to investigate the matter, Flewelling said.

Liberals put money into Northern roads

The provincial government is increasing funding for northern road maintenance and rehabilitation by \$10 million this year, local MLAs said on the weekend.

The Ministry of Transportation announced it was reducing staffing levels throughout B.C., with many of the cuts coming in the capital expansion program. The government also said it expected further savings through increased efficiencies.

However, in its New Era document, the B.C. Liberal government made a commitment to improve resources for northern transportation routes, and it is keeping that promise, said MLA Shirley Bond (Prince George-Mount Robson).

"The government is going through a difficult period of restructuring, but we also recognize the need for a strong road system in the North," said Bond, who also serves as advanced education minister.

"A healthy road system is a key com-

ponent in building our competitive advantage," she said.

The provincial government is not sacrificing safety on the highways as it seeks greater efficiencies in the expenditure of public monies, said MLA Paul Nettleton (Liberal, Prince George-Omineca).

"The Highways Ministry is maintaining the current levels of highway maintenance, but, as we all know, weather and heavy traffic can wreak havoc on northern roads, so we are getting an extra \$10 million," Nettleton said.

MLA Pat Bell (Liberal, Prince George North) said that, while the Ministry is looking for new ways to deliver some services, there will be no actual office closures.

"We believe it is important the ministry maintain a presence in the 36 communities it serves, and that British Columbians are able to reach the Ministry with any concerns," Bell said.



Citizen photo by Dave Milne

HOME DAD — Steve Switzman took his daughter Liza, 5, on a little cross-country skiing excursion on the Otway Nordic Ski Centre trails on Saturday. It seems they might have travelled a little too far, as the return trip came on dad's shoulders.



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