



## The Festive Season



Gilles Arsenault, President

**H**o! Ho! Ho!, It's jolly old Santa, oops no, it's me, Gilles, bringing you greetings as we enter this festive season. I keep forgetting that I am not Santa, even if sometimes I feel I fit the physical profile! I know I am not as generous as the big guy in red, but I truly hope he finds you and brings you lots of gifts and a new year full of health and happiness. I also hope he brings you a new contract with lots of goodies in it! The Provincial Government and Old Saint Nick are both dressed in red, so I trust that one will be just as generous as the other.

As I sit down to write this article, I can't stop thinking about how quickly time flies. It seems that not too long ago, it was the beginning of a new school year. Then came convention, Halloween and now already December and the Holiday Season is upon us. As we get a little older, time seems to be going faster and faster; still we have so many things we feel we want or have to do. Please don't forget to take time for yourself to do the things you enjoy doing with

family and friends.

Encore une fois, nous sommes rendus au temps des fêtes et c'est avec plaisir que je viens vous souhaiter une saison des fêtes remplies de temps passé en famille et avec amis ainsi qu'une nouvelle année remplie de bonheur et de santé. Que l'année 2015 soit une année pleine de succès.

As we stop and ponder about the year, we can be thankful for many things, but also be mindful of people that weren't so lucky this year. Just as some of our students face difficulties this time of year, many of our members go through difficult times, and we sometimes forget to lend a helping hand to those in need. We are in the business of helping people. As teachers, we understand this concept very well as we practice it every day with our students, but do we practice it enough with our colleagues? Don't forget you are part of a team, and sometimes your teammates need you, and sometimes you need to take one for the team.

We also take this time of year to reflect on our students whom some of them may not have all the desires and aspirations that this season should bring. Tough economic times, health issues, family breakups, and hardships of all kinds make this season difficult for some. May we count our blessings and may we be attentive to the needs of our students as the festive season should be just that for everyone, festive. I know teachers across the province are going above and beyond to assist those in their school communities in need of assistance this holiday season. Thank you.

At Federation house, I am very thankful for many things, especially the great players on my team. Shaun, Patrick, Michel, Chad, Sheila, Marion and Lisa are great teammates and, at this time of year, I want to wish them all the best for this festive season and a New Year filled with health and happiness.

As your President, it gives me great pleasure to continue to work for teachers in trying to make a difference in your world. I haven't said I was changing the world, but I am hoping to make a difference in the education world. I know that this time of year is stressful, and I am hopeful that the work we do together will benefit everyone in this profession.

À tous les enseignants : paix, joie, bonheur et santé pendant toute la nouvelle année.

To all teachers: peace, happiness and health for all of 2015.

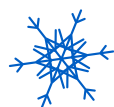
Take care and take one for the team! 🍀

***We are in the business of helping people. As teachers, we understand this concept very well as we practice it every day with our students, but do we practice it enough with our colleagues?***

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**2014**



**Federation  
Holiday Hours**

Federation House will close at 1:00 pm on Tuesday, December 23, 2014 for the holiday break. The office will re-open on Monday, January 5, 2015.



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# It's the Most Tiring Time of the Year

Editorial by Chad Gallant

**H**ere we are...December. The time of year when only the shopping bags teachers carry match the bags under their eyes as they struggle to balance family duties, holiday preparations and professional responsibilities. Some of you in the Progress Monitoring implementation have just completed report cards, and many of you are also working long hours beyond the time in classes to prepare for school Christmas celebrations. Thank you for fitting us into your schedule!

In preparing for our next public relations campaign, I believe it is important to communicate again, the realities of Island classrooms. In particular, how the working lives of teachers have changed; even just over the last two years. But being it is December, and we have a snow day under our belt; I tend to think about all the work that teachers do during this time of year that the public is not aware. I think about the work that teachers do behind the scenes without seeking the spotlight because it is in our nature to help students. This is no more prevalent than during the month of December.

*I think about the work that teachers do behind the scenes without seeking the spotlight because it is in our nature to help students.*

I bumped into a couple of former colleagues doing some Christmas shopping on the weekend. They had a long list and a large cart, but the contents of the cart didn't quite match with either of their family's demographics. To the general public, they looked like your average Christmas shoppers, but to those of us "from the inside" know that they were shopping for a family in need; probably using funds sourced primarily from donations of teachers.


Visit any school and ask administrators what is happening at their school. You will find, without fail, schools providing for needy families, raising money for turkey drives, collecting coats for kids, and contacting families to determine if they need a hand for the holidays.

Take Christmas concerts for example. The amount of time and effort that goes into a concert is staggering. Teachers are spending their lunch breaks (I almost said lunch hour...ha ha) and using any other opportunities during the day to make props

and practice with students. Teachers are designing costumes, practicing songs and choreographing dance routines for hours on top of their already busy schedules.

Unfortunately, teachers are not paid by the hour and are not compensated for putting in the above-outlined extra work. Teachers do not seek public recognition for this work; they do it because they care about children. They want children to feel good about themselves regardless of their family's socio-economic status. They want parents to well up with pride as their son or daughter performs his or her heart out at a school concert.

So, at some point over the month, even when your class goes "Zip" when it moves, and "Bop" when it stops, "Whirrr" when it stands still, take a minute and think of how the work you do makes a difference every day. Your work changes lives.

All the best to you and yours this holiday season. 

*continued from p. 8*


**The Staff:** The new faces keep coming, Santa, but things have settled out. I'm hopeful for better things as we move forward. As always, they have their hearts in the right place, Santa, so bringing them a bigger budget would allow them to do bigger and better things.

**School Boards:**

**Cynthia Fleet and Anne Bernard-Bourgeois:** Well Santa, if there is anyone out there looking for role models or mentors you should bring them to these two. They are impressive in their knowledge and desire in leading education in this province. They have different styles, Santa, but both are professional and easy to work with. The best gift you could give them Santa would be more resources from the province to allow these two to do their jobs effectively.

**Teachers:**

Not sure where to begin this year, Santa. It has been another year of teacher cuts, EA cuts, and cuts to supports. It seems like the only things that aren't being cut are the expectations for teachers. It is too depressing to list it all, Santa. In fact, I barely want to talk about it because it continues to fall on deaf ears. Yet, we're partly to blame. Teachers continue to go above and beyond to make sure kids get what they need educationally and otherwise, and our government and our society are taking advantage of that. It may be time to push back a little, but I'll leave that conversation for another day, Santa.

It's Christmas after all, a time for good cheer and celebration. It's meant to be a happy time. If we look past the commercialism, and the expectation that everyone is supposed to get gifts, and remember it's supposed to be about a beginning, we should all be at least a little happier. Christmas is about the arrival of something that will make life better for us all and whether you're a Christian or not; it is at the very least a great story of hope. Thus for each and all of you, I hope that you have a restful and happy holiday and that Santa finds you wherever you may be on Christmas morning. Be good to yourselves, your students, and your fellow teachers. 



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Contributions are welcomed and must be signed by and bear the address of the writer. Articles contained herein reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily express official policy of the PEITF.

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# Why I Am Still Teaching

By Lori Gard - Bloomfield Elementary

As published in *The Huffington Post*

**A**s a teacher, there are hard, challenging days in which I wonder whether I am making any difference at all. *There are those kind of days.* I have had many people tell me over the years that they could never do this job. Could never be a teacher. Could never do my job. I have had people tell me that they don't have the kind of patience it takes. Don't have the nerves for it. They say that it is too demanding in terms of the behaviors and complicated issues children present. Too hard on the head. Too taxing on the stress levels. (Never mind the additional stressful academic responsibilities that come with the job).

**Honestly, it isn't the easiest profession to be in, although I know every profession has its ups and downs. Even though I know that all professions have their strengths and weaknesses.**

True, teaching isn't the easiest calling to be drawn to. And it hasn't been the smoothest sailing I've ever known. There are many challenging days, many hurdles to jump. Many deep waters to traverse. There are many moments when I wonder myself if I am doing the right thing. Following the right path. That all because: *it is hard being there for people, day in and day out.* Hard staying the course when the ride gets bumpy. Hard work, plain and simple. And truth be told, the ride we embark on is very treacherous, full of pitfalls. And all because there are so many variables. So many children with so many stories. For in our classrooms, there are children who have seen things I might never know about in my lifetime. Who have heard things I might never hear. Watched things transpire that I can only envision in my worst nightmares. There are children in my classroom who have lived lives in their short years that I will never live, though I age to live a full life.

It isn't easy being a kid at the best of times. Try being one at the worst of times.

***And truth be told, the ride we embark on is very treacherous, full of pitfalls. And all because there are so many variables. So many children with so many stories.***

There are days when these same children come into the classroom and they just push buttons. They try your patience and test your resolve. They act out, cry, push, scream, whine, slap, punch and spit. They holler and run. They pull things off the walls and shove things on the floor. There are days when you just want to give up and walk out the door.

There are certainly days when you wonder why you ever thought teaching was a good idea in the first place.

But sometimes, there are different days. Days when everything comes together. When the pieces of the puzzle just FIT. When there is clarity and everything murky is finally made clear. Days when something happens and a door is opened: a view is granted into the inner sanctum of a child's private life. And you see for the very first time why it is that this child is angry, this child is hurting. Why it is this child is wounded,

***But sometimes, there are different days. Days when everything comes together. When the pieces of the puzzle just FIT. When there is clarity and everything murky is finally made clear.***

frustrated, broken and scared. And all of the moments that happened before- when you thought seriously about pulling out your hair and giving up - packing your bags: those moments are all but forgotten. All but a memory.

Because you've been given a privileged look at a child and seen them for who they truly are -- maybe for the very first time.

*Seen that their anger is just a disguise for pain.*

*Seen that their screaming hollers are sometimes a cry for help.*

*Seen that the physical aggression they exhibit is sometimes a response to what they know as familiar.*

*Seen that their hurtful words are just the everyday vernacular of their private world.*

***There are certainly days when you wonder why you ever thought teaching was a good idea in the first place.***


And in those moments of clarity, you realize: I am a safe haven. I am a lighthouse for him -- a beacon of hope for her. I am a soft landing for this child. And I am such so that when they come to school, when they come to my classroom -- they know they are loved. Know that they are protected, accepted, wanted, appreciated, valued, enjoyed, liked and seen and cared for. They know they don't have to be afraid. Know they don't have to fear.

***They know they don't have to be afraid. Know they don't have to fear.***

Because here...in this room, in this place, **they are safe.**

This is all I could ever really hope for as a teacher -- to be a safe haven and a soft landing for my students to fall on. Everything else is secondary. I strive to be a person my students know will be there for them, each day and every day, through all the moments, both shining and otherwise. There to be a caring, loving presence in their lives. Unwavering through the storms.

*As a teacher, it's all I really want to be.*

Follow Lori Gard on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/lori\\_gard](http://www.twitter.com/lori_gard) 



## Sierra Leone: So Much More Than Ebola

**T**his past summer, I had the experience of a lifetime while volunteering with Project Overseas in Sierra Leone. And although Ebola is now the first thing that people think of when they hear of this country, I am not going to focus on that. Sierra Leone is so much more than Ebola, and this horrific disease does not define it. The memories that I have from the people I encountered will last a lifetime. Some memories are positive; others difficult to speak of but eye opening, but nevertheless, all were learning experiences. The three things that will remain with me forever about the people of Sierra Leone is their passion for education, their kindness and their positivity. Although impossible to put into words, their stories will stay with me forever and are eternally etched into my heart.

Project Overseas is the largest international program through CTF, and it has been sending teachers to developing countries to provide professional development for 52 years following the teachers helping teachers model.

PEITF and other provincial organizations, along with CTF, helped fund the participants who volunteer their time and expertise during the months of July and August. Each project is unique because every individual country has its

own specific needs, so just like the classroom, no two projects or years are alike.

Project Sierra Leone was a bit different this year since we were going into a country where Ebola was, at that point, slowly on the rise. This added more uncertainty than normal and led to a lot of discussions on how to remain safe. However, I had the best team possible, and little did I know how important that would be when doing a project such as this. Our team leader, Mike from Ontario, made me feel at ease the minute I met him. His calm spirit and experience made for a smooth and virtually worry free experience. He was my “in-country Dad” and he will be in my heart forever. Diane from Ontario, Nate from Saskatchewan and I made up the rest of our amazing team. We all balanced one another perfectly: Nate and I were full of energy, very social and brought a lot of humour to the group, while Mike and Diane brought experience, empathy and grounded the group. We were the perfect balance and without them, my experience would not have been the same!

The project in Sierra Leone was organized in a three-week block that began in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The first week was spent in meetings with representatives from SLTU (Sierra Leone Teacher’s Union), ourselves, and our host Co-Tutors. We discussed the progress and setbacks that the country encountered the previous year after Project Overseas and what they saw as the project necessities for summer of 2014. During the next two weeks, PD was delivered to over 200 teachers from all across the country. We operated on a gradual release of responsibility model and by the end of week three; PD was given solely by teachers of Sierra Leone with our support and feedback to encourage them.

From the moment we arrived in Sierra Leone; our schedule was extremely busy. Our first official day in the country, we began by visiting an area called Songo. It was the most overwhelming and touching day of our whole trip. Teachers and students from about six schools, along with community members who were motivated to meet us, greeted us. We had an almost celebrity status, which was extremely difficult to comprehend, but a true reflection of the impact Project Overseas is having around the world.

As we drove up to one of the schools, we were greeted by adults and children singing their welcome song, which will always remain imprinted in my mind. They held signs with peaceful messages written on them; they gave us gifts, and we were all overwhelmed by emotion!

Our presence brought them comfort and hope for a better life and future for



their children and their country. Their presence brought me tears of joy and appreciation. They, a small community in Western Africa, were the “change they wished to see in the world” (Gandhi). I learned very quickly that my life as a teacher would be changed forever. I would not be the same teacher, nor did I want to be the same teacher. Later that very day, we visited a school that was the complete opposite of what we saw in Songo. This was often the case in Sierra Leone; we would see very positive things followed by equally negative things. This school was not part of the project. This school was inner city and not peaceful. Their playground was a basically a landfill, and their soccer ball was a water bottle. They were trying their best and wanting to better their surroundings, but they didn’t know how. They were doing the best that they could with what knowledge they had. That was tough for me to remember when I saw a little boy get flogged for not posing like a statue for one of our pictures we were taking. His face went from happy and carefree to sad and guarded in a matter of seconds.

This was very hard for me to absorb until Mike said to me, “Remember Lacey, you have a small circle of influence and focus on that!” This focus was probably the most difficult thing for me to do. I wanted to change the world. I wanted to fix all “problems” that I encountered, but what I realized is that is impossible. They are Sierra Leone, and they are amazing, diverse and unique. They are not Canada, nor do they want to be. I had to focus on this for the rest of my trip and put aside my Westernized views of what society should look like.

*Our presence brought them comfort and hope for a better life and future for their children and their country.*

Sierra Leone will always remain close to my heart, and it pains me to see the turmoil that they are going through with this disease that is halting their nation. When returning to Canada, our team tried to continue our small circle of influence and as a team fundraised \$2,200 to aid our friends in Songo. Although the funds will not fix their situation, the gratitude they felt was evident by all of their comments they sent us via email. Although it is impossible for us to fix the problems of the nation, we did help to make a few lives a bit easier during an extremely difficult time!

All in all, Project Overseas 2014 is something I will never forget. I learned from it. I became better because of it. I was completely changed by it. And after much reflection time, I realized I learned as much, or more, from the citizens and teachers of Sierra Leone and the staff of SLTU than they did from me. A truly humbling experience for the energetic girl who thought she was off to change the world and ironically, that very world ended up changing her.

I would encourage anyone and everyone with any interest in Project Overseas to apply. It is something that will change your life forever, and you will keep it with you for years to come. I would be more than happy to speak with anyone interested in Project Overseas or to share my experiences with others.

Thanks so much to PEITF, its members, and CTF for choosing me to be the PEI representative for Project Overseas in 2014. I am eternally grateful and forever changed!



Lacey Gallant, French Immersion Teacher  
at Spring Park Elementary llgallant@edu.pe.ca







Patrick MacFadyen  
Deputy General Secretary

## There is Work Still to be Done on Pension!

It has been roughly a year since we saw the major changes to the Teachers' Superannuation Act, which is the teachers' pension plan. There were several presentations delivered to PEITF members to explain the changes and the impact those changes will have on retirement. Hopefully now, teachers have a good understanding of the impacts.

While the PEITF was not in support of the changes to the plan, we were able to convince the Government to fund our plan at the 122% level. This is up significantly from the 117% original proposal. This increase in funding means tens of millions of dollars more in the plan that, in return, means more secure indexing for active members and retirees for a longer time. The exact amount of extra contribution will not be known until our Actuaries complete the final valuation from the old plan. This valuation will not be finished prior to the newsletter going to print.

One major change and part of the reason it is taking so long is the plan will now have an updated mortality table. A mortality table shows the rates of death occurring in a defined population. The last table did not have an accurate reflection of how long our members are living, which meant that prediction of the true cost of the plan was not accurate. It was vital that we use an updated mortality table before the Government topped the plan up to make sure we were truly at 122% of base funding (not including indexing). Not only were we able to get a new table, we were able to get a mortality table based on Canadian public service that has some influence by teachers on PEI. This change was important because teachers in general live longer than the average Canadian.


While most people would think that all the important work was done at that time, the truth is that the Federation was still working with Government to change the structure of the

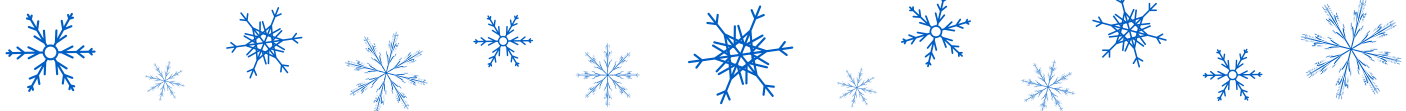
governance of the plan. Two separate groups run the plan. One group is the Teachers' Superannuation Commission, who advises the Minister on plan issues. This group makes recommendations on the governance of the plan. There is also a separate group called the Master Trust that looks after the investments of the plan. These two groups did have some commonality of members, but there was a definite disconnect. The Government is still ultimately responsible for the plan as there are requirements for the Government to top the plan up if it falls below 100% funding for an extended period.

In the past, although the Federation owned roughly one-third of the assets of the plan, we only had one seat at the Master Trust table for the decision-making around the assets (investments). The lack of seats was not a huge issue for us, because regardless on how the plan performed, the Government would always top the plan up to 90% after each valuation. In short, the investments did not matter much, but this has now changed.

In this new world of pensions, the investments are omnipotent, and the Federation has demanded more seats at the investment table. We now have increased skin in the game, and we need to ensure that the assets of the plan continue to be looked after accordingly. Through the changes, we were able to secure a much greater representation on the investment side through the Master Trust.

The Master Trust hires professionals to look after the investments, but the trustees still influence the types and mix of investments that the fund will utilize as well as the hiring of proper managers and other professionals. These changes to the governance that give the PEITF more control were legislated during the fall sitting of the legislature.

The pension plan will continue to evolve, and while the major changes are done, there is still more to do around governance. The Federation and the Teachers' Superannuation Commission will continue to update you on the changes taking place. 




## Bethany MacLeod Named PEITF President-Elect

*A Message From PEITF President Gilles Arsenault*

At the PEITF Semi-Annual Meeting on Saturday, November 15th, Bethany MacLeod from Montague High School was elected as the next President of the PEITF. I am confident she will be an excellent advocate on your behalf and on behalf of Island Education. Also at this meeting, Blaine Bernard and Aldene Smallman were named as Vice-Presidents of the PEITF.

These terms will commence on July 1, 2015. I would

like to publicly congratulate Bethany, Blaine, and Aldene on their appointments and would like to thank all those who let their name stand for these positions. The remainder of the executive positions will be filled during the Area Associations' business meetings in May.

A special thank you to all Board of Governor Members and also to Kent Avery, Chairperson of the PEITF Nomination Committee, for their time and effort in this important process. 



## Ten Ways to Keep Your Cool Over the Holidays

Tis the season to be jolly, but let's face it: winter holidays do not always make our spirits bright. With calendars chock-a-block with parties, volunteer commitments, shopping and fancy dinners to prepare, it's no wonder many of us are inwardly groaning, "I won't get a break till the new year." Here are ten ways to keep holiday stress at bay.

- 1 Set clear intentions by asking yourself, "What do I most need and desire over the holidays?" The answer may be relaxation, spiritual renewal, reconnecting with loved ones or being of service to people in need. "But it's not about doing all those things."
- 2 Reduce the pressure of creating a "perfect Christmas." Ask yourself what a "good enough" holiday would look like.
- 3 Combat "Christmas amnesia" - the kind that makes you forget how overwhelmed you were last year - keep track of all the holiday tasks and activities you do and which activities gave you the most joy or causes the most stress. Keep this list for next year.
- 4 Consider alternating holiday traditions, such as making a gingerbread house one year and Christmas pudding the next, instead of trying to do all of them each year.
- 5 Reduce your Christmas gift list by reaching out to friends and family who have everything they need. Ask if they'd like to plan an outing instead of gift buying.
- 6 Book downtime for your family before filling your precious vacation days with everything else. It's really ok to say you can't partake in every invitation you receive.
- 7 Schedule activities in nature, such as snowshoeing or tobogganing, to give your family a break from the holiday hubbub.
- 8 Make sure to exercise...a walk or even a short skate with your family.
- 9 Don't stay up late gift wrapping, do the gift wrapping ahead of time, especially if you know your kids will wake up early on Christmas morning.
- 10 Balance holiday indulgence with healthy habits. Managing your food and alcohol intake helps regulate moods, and you won't face the stress of having to atone for weight gain and over-drinking in the new year.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS • Staff of EAP**

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Shaun MacCormac

## Thoughts and Comments

from the General Secretary

### Dear Santa

I hope this letter finds you well. This is my eighth letter to you Santa, and already I don't know how you find something different for everyone every year. It is a tough task to come up with a gift list for other people let alone do

it year after year, but I'll try my best.

As I say each year, my requests to you are all with good intent, Santa, I know that all of the following people work hard and do the best that they can for the children of this province.

I'll start, as usual, with the folks here at Federation House. We have a small group of people here Santa, but they are talented, dedicated and a pleasure to work with. They make it enjoyable to come to work, and that says a lot given the challenges we, and teachers, face each and every day. So, without any further ado, here are my requests:

**President Gilles Arsenault:** A Florida Panthers jersey to start. Gerard Gallant was so good to Gilles when he was with the Canadiens it only seems right that Gilles change the team he cheers for Santa. What's that Santa? When hell freezes over? You're probably right. How about a trip to Disney for him and his family instead? That may be the closest he will get to be a fan of the Panthers.

**Patrick MacFadyen:** A lifetime supply of cheesecake, Santa. I know there isn't enough cream cheese in the world to fulfill this request, Santa, but give it your best shot. He deserves it, and there isn't anyone who loves cheesecake more than Patrick. Some downtime at Christmas too, Santa, he has been full out this year as usual.

**Michel Plamondon:** Santa, you need to give RDS \$5.3 billion. That would allow them to outbid Rogers for an NHL deal and would put Michel's beloved Hab's games back on the French network where they belong. Watching the Canadiens on this French channel was not just an event, Santa, it was part of a cultural identity. Or, maybe he'd take the Florida jersey? Nah.

**Chad Gallant:** A welcome mat, Santa. Chad is the newest member of our team. He isn't new, though, Santa. He has actually been with us for about a year now. It is scary to see how fast that time has gone by. He has done an excellent job, Santa, and he has been a great addition. I would have asked that you bring him an Edmonton Oilers jersey, but since I like you to bring things of value, I changed my mind.

**Sheila, Marion, Lisa and Larry:** For those who deserve everything, any suggestion of mine would be too small, but I'll try. You visited Sheila early this year Santa. Bringing her the older of her two great children home was a gift that can't be beat. I can't ask for anything better than that other than a great Christmas break for her and her family. For Marion and Larry, a condo in Florida, Santa. That would be perfect for their annual vacation and eventual retirement. They definitely deserve it. For Lisa, an invitation to run in the Boston Marathon. She's done great at becoming a distance runner, Santa. I'm sure you know that takes a lot of dedication and hard work, all while

raising two wonderful girls and being a great wife too, eh John Michael? We're proud of her.

#### *For the Provincial Government:*

**Hon. Robert Ghiz:** How about a positive legacy, Santa. Although times in education are tougher in PEI than I think they ever have been, his government did bring kindergarten into the public school system. This was a huge cost to bear, and something all his predecessors failed to do. All in all, I believe he was a friend to teachers, Santa, and for that I am grateful. I wish him all the best in his future, and I think if his dad were alive today, he would have understood the current constraints and would have been proud of the job Robert did under the circumstances.

**Wade MacLauchlan:** A new name on my list Santa, and one that may be premature, but it still seems appropriate. I don't know Wade well Santa, but I do know he is an educator and an intelligent man. I'm sure if anyone knows the value of education it would be him, for many reasons. I am hopeful that will lead to a new focus on education in this province, and a new commitment to a positive working relationship with teachers. Give him what he needs, Santa, to increase the supports needed in our education system in this province.

**Hon. Alan McIsaac:** Well Santa, I'm not sure there is ever a need for a saddle in dairy farming, but in the world of politics, it's a different story. Alan, like all of his political colleagues, will have to hold onto something as we all ride into two major leadership changes and a possible spring election. We wish him a calm Christmas break prior to all that whirlwind activity.

**Hon. Wes Sheridan:** As Minister of Finance, he is the poster boy for ever-tightening provincial purse strings. He has overseen the significant changes to the two largest public sector pension plans, and he has introduced the HST to PEI, probably more out of need than desire. Despite all of that, it is hard not to like this guy, Santa. As I've said before, he is a positive, upbeat man who has a tough job, but I feel he tries his best. How about any party but the Conservatives in the next federal election? Those guys are killing us.

**The Official Opposition:** A complete reboot, Santa. The current members are no friends of teachers, Santa, and they won't even meet with the Teachers' Federation. I've heard of governments ignoring unions, but opposition parties?? Give them a quality leader from outside the sitting MLAs Santa, and make it quick.

#### *The Department of Education:*

**Dr. Sandy MacDonald:** A reality check for his political masters, Santa. They have the Deputy ramping up assessments when everyone else is ramping them down. All the while, they are cutting the teachers and the supports he needs. It feels like they are the owners of the Titanic who are bragging how great their ship is, and they are telling Sandy to sail on despite the forecast of ice. On second thought, Santa, add on a survival suit to that request.

*continued on p. 2*