

PEITF NEWSLETTER



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PEITF President Bethany MacLeod serves as M.C. at 2016 Women's Symposium.

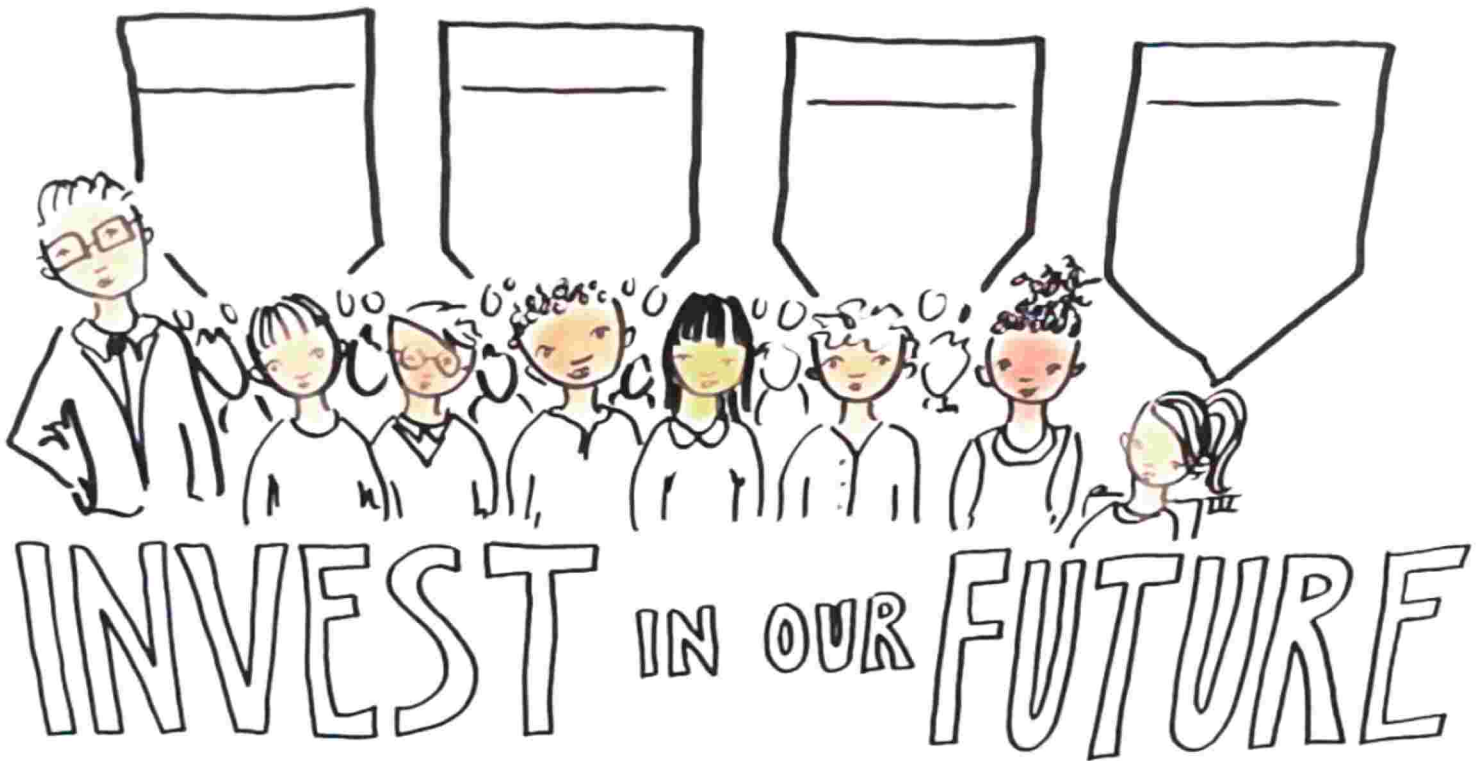


Illustration: PEITF commercial illustrates need for greater supports in education.

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The Only Constant Is Change

It is difficult to believe that April has arrived. Thankfully this winter season has not been a repeat of 2015! I trust that everyone had a relaxing March break, and you are rejuvenated to tackle the few busy months left in this school year.

My first year as President has been eventful to say the least. Life in education is never dull, and this year has proven this fact over and over. In early November, the Government announced that the English Language School Board would be dissolved and a new crown corporation, governed by the Minister of Education, would be created. This change has created a lot of stress and concern for our members. No one seems to have the answers, and it has been a difficult time for all those involved. We have met with the Transition team and Government on numerous occasions, and we are hopeful that our requests are considered when decisions are made.

Just before Christmas break, the Board of Governors were presented with the final asking package of the ENA. Teachers unanimously voted to go to arbitration. Both parties have agreed upon an arbitrator, Bruce Outhouse, and arbitration dates have been set for May 16, 17 and 18. We are hopeful that the teaching profession will be respected and that teachers will be recognized for their hard work and continuous efforts to ensure that the needs of Island students are being met. Teachers have sacrificed far too long!

Advisory councils are a part of Government's "New Direction" in education, and we had hoped they would bring new voices and fresh perspectives to the table. Unfortunately,

“We are hopeful that the teaching profession will be respected and that teachers will be recognized for their hard work and continuous efforts to ensure that the needs of Island students are being met.”

to this point, Government has not welcomed the voices of teachers with a dedicated seat on these committees. It seems rather strange that teachers are not given the full opportunity to speak about what is right, what is wrong and what needs to

change in the education system on Prince Edward Island. The most balanced and comprehensive view of what is happening inside schools and inside classrooms must include parents, students, and TEACHERS. As I've said before, Government is completing a major overhaul to our educational system, but to a large extent, they are excluding the most integral people... teachers!

We had our first Learning Partners Advisory Council meeting in mid-February. There are representatives from various community and educational organizations. I have no doubt that great things can happen as a result of discussions and topics covered by the Learning Partners Advisory Council, but I believe we need a more directed approach and a plan of action. Teachers need help now, and the ever-increasing demands of classroom composition continue to be detrimental to PEI's educational system. We are scheduled to meet again in April, so I will keep you up to date on our progress.

“Teachers need help now, and the ever-increasing demands of classroom composition continue to be detrimental to PEI's educational system.”

I have had the pleasure of visiting many schools over the past few months, and I want to sincerely thank all teachers for all that you do. One only needs to walk into any of our Island classrooms to see first-hand all that teachers do on a daily basis. It makes me proud to represent such an amazing group of people who are dedicated and work tirelessly to provide the best possible learning environment for students. I will continue to be your voice and ensure Government is made aware of our classroom realities. Please do not hesitate to call me or email me with any of your concerns.

“A teacher presents the past, reveals the present, and creates the future”. *Anonymous*



Bethany MacLeod
President, PEITF

by Bethany MacLeod



Chad Gallant

Welcome to Teaching... Stretching Required

My oldest son, like many kids his age, is into superheroes. Routinely I will find him playing with his Lego figurines of Superman, Batman, Ironman, or the Hulk and having them create wild

adventures and defeating their enemies using their strength, skills and super powers. I wonder what he would think if I told him that he interacts with several superheroes each day, who are often powered by coffee and quick sandwiches?

The PEITF Provincial Public Relations Committee has put together a campaign that attempts to bring to light some of the realities of being the classroom superhero. Much thought went into what types of issues should be focused on in such a spot. We looked at issues in great detail such as emotional needs, social issues, learning challenges, mental health concerns along with other every day issues teachers are facing.

The trouble is, the reality of today's classroom is so complex, the PR Committee wondered if a typical television commercial medium would capture the realities we were looking to convey effectively.

The committee ultimately decided to look into a live drawing

production. The feeling was this type of commercial would allow for our message to be delivered in a way that is different, eye-catching, and engaging. There is so much to today's classroom that needs to be seen by the public about the needs that permeate today's classes, and the limited supports that are available to those in need. However, delivering that in a 30 second ad proved challenging.



There are so many needs in every Island classroom today that it is overwhelming and almost impossible for teachers to meet the needs for every student. While the commercial points out the challenges that four students are facing, careful consideration was given to ensure students depicted in the background have their own "bubble" to indicate that each student in a classroom has their own needs with various levels of intensity. If anything, we hope that this ad sparks a conversation, which includes teachers, about how to best support the needs in Island classrooms for the benefit of all students.

Teachers are calling on their superpowers to support their students in our classrooms. Teachers are stretched like Plastic Man trying to be all things to all people, and attempt to move with the speed of the Flash to meet the needs of all students. We tried to reflect this in the commercial. The goal is that those who see the commercial will realize that the continuous cuts to education are not sustainable and have impacted negatively on the learning environments for Island students; even with teachers playing the role of superhero in Island Education. After all, Plasticman can only stretch so far, The Flash can get tired and even Superman had to deal with Kryptonite.



**PEITF
Newsletter**

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by Chad Gallant

Canadian Teachers' Federation Project Overseas - Summer 2015

This summer I had the privilege of traveling to Togo, West Africa with three colleagues as the PEI delegate for the Project Overseas. With our Togolese co-instructors, we collaborated and planned two and a half weeks of professional development for 120 teachers and consultants (primary, elementary and secondary) in numeracy, literacy, physical education, in addition to leading discussions and providing information on gender equity, AIDS and Ebola.

Our team consisted of Simon, Jean-François, Simone (superb team leader), and Lise. All with grey hair, and a combined total of 95 years of teaching experience. We were seasoned travellers with strong interpersonal skills, open minds, and a willingness to work as a team - it doesn't get any better than this!

Simone had travelled to Togo as a team leader during the

summer of 2014. She returned in April to set the groundwork and negotiate a schedule that would include literacy and more active participation from the Canadian team. Her experience, tact, and diplomacy paved the way to successful collaboration with room to grow in the years to come.

The president, Mr. Ounsimé, treasurer, Mme. Odile, and secretary Célestine of the Fesen (local federation) greeted us at the airport and became our loyal companions, guides and counsellors to navigate our way through the Togolese culture throughout the project.

Three days later, after planning the sessions with our co-instructors, we all travelled together, seven passengers in an eight passenger van with two heavy pieces of luggage each, no roof rack to Kpalime (four hours trip to the interior). During our trip, it became apparent that at any given moment we could have someone sitting on our lap, including the driver! Singing helped to pass the drive, as did the scenery, tropical lush forests and light conversation.

Participants from all over the country attended our first week of programming, some from up to eight hours away. They consisted of Kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers, mostly women, dressed in impeccably tailored colorful dresses. We were curious about each other's culture. We shared meals and stories. No question was left unanswered in a safe and convivial atmosphere punctuated by song and dance. We shared in the teachers' sincerity, generosity and vulnerability, while recognizing their insatiable thirst for knowledge. We were all moved by the closeness we felt. We listened carefully, and modeled interactive discussions. We learned about tenacity, determination, tolerance, lucidity and hope and became one big hearted family.

Our second week of programming was geared towards secondary teachers; 34 men and 2 women. They loved our Canadian guys and squealed with delight when they arrived every day. The multiple intelligence workshop and math with card games were a big hit. Inspector Pere and Saba led the math and physics workshops with brio, implementing Glasser's pyramid. The discussion on gender equity was so honest. We learned some more about the various areas of the country and the specific traditions, more stories and questions were shared. At night we debriefed in a



*Lise Morin with a
Kindergarten teacher from
the Kara region, Togo.*



*CTF Project Overseas
Togo delegation*

beautiful garden beside our hotel under a canopy of trees with French music playing in the background and delicious fresh food.

The last three days, we returned to Lome to co-lead sessions for consultants and inspectors. The legacy of a traditional French system: a single consultant would have up to fifty schools to supervise and evaluate. One consultant from the very north had 200, he would visit all of them during the school year. We shared the information we had given to the previous groups so they could support them in the implementation of the new strategies. These colleagues were very interested to compare our respective systems and expressed their appreciation for the relaxed and open discussions.

The Harsh Reality

- Teachers have from 80 to 120 students per class.
- Schools lack material, books, and paper.
- School administrations operate with a minimal budget.
- 4000 more teachers are needed to diminish class sizes.
- People from all walks of life are becoming teachers with little or no training as elementary school is now free.
- There are fees for secondary education. Consequently 4 boys for 1 girl attend secondary school.
- High drop out rate for girls.
- Major gender equity issues.
- Monthly earning for primary and elementary \$120.00 a month.



Elementary teachers and officials in Kpalime, Togo.

The Last Words

We asked many colleagues: How do you keep going under such circumstances? They answered: "We do it for the next generation, because our parents taught us work ethic. We have to hold on to hope. Do not abandon us, your support helps us to keep going".

We saw a country with immense potential, in agriculture, aquaculture, natural resources, and export with a natural international port. We saw hard working people making the best of what they have; they were tolerant, discerning and so welcoming. We have to continue to be a voice for our colleagues. The Canadian Teachers' Federation remains committed to reach out and build bridges of support, expertise and solidarity and has done so over the last four decades. L'union fait la force. Together we can create a new world.

Lise Morin
Literacy mentor

More Bridge Information

In my last article, I examined the concept of the bridge benefit and its origin. It would be helpful if you reviewed that article before reading this article where I will attempt to demonstrate the financial implications of the bridge.

As I explained in my last article, the Teachers' Superannuation Fund and the Canada Pension Plan were integrated in 1972. That decision had implications both on the contributions and benefits sides.

On the contributions side, while the percentage has changed over the years, presently teachers contribute to the TSF and CPP as follows:

- A. On the portion of the salary up to the amount of the year's maximum pensionable earnings (YMPE), 4.95% to the CPP and 8.3% to the TSF.
- B. On the portion of the salary that exceeds the YMPE, 10% to the TSF.

The YMPE is the portion of your salary that is subject to CPP contributions. For 2016, the YMPE is \$54,900., therefore any earnings above this amount is not subject to CPP contributions. Because the plan is integrated, a teacher pays less in the TSF while contributing to the CPP, 8.3% as opposed

to 10% or a savings of 1.7% on the portion of the salary up to the YMPE.

On the benefits side, because the TSF and CPP are integrated, a teacher receives a lifetime benefit and a bridge benefit from the TSF. The bridge benefit stops at age 65 which is the normal starting date for the CPP.

A teacher accrues pension benefits at the rate of 2% a year, part of which is a lifetime benefit and part of which is a bridge benefit payable until age 65 only. The breakdown is as follows: 1.3% for the lifetime benefit and 0.7% for the bridge benefit on the portion of the salary up to the YMPE.

In other words, a teacher accrues a 1.3% a year lifetime benefits on the portion of the salary up to the YMPE and a full 2% a year lifetime benefit on the portion of the salary above the YMPE.

Hopefully, the last two articles have provided you with a better understanding of the bridge benefit.



Michel Plamondon

by Michel Plamondon



RTA CORNER

by Joyce McCardle
President, Retired Teachers' Association

A belated happy New Year to all you busy active teachers out there. It is a privilege to write a greeting from the retired teachers of PEI. Most of us follow the news in the education world, and we are all behind you 100%. Your education challenges look very large to those of us on the sidelines. Perhaps when our age group entered the field, the retired teachers of the time said the same.

As you may know, we have been struggling to keep as much of our health insurance as possible for the 65+ group. We had a very positive meeting with Minister Currie in December. Our primary goal at this time was dealing with

the issue of the 30 vs 90 day prescriptions. Since then, we have a new Health Minister; we will have to wait and see on this issue. Hopefully it will be given the consideration Minister Currie promised.

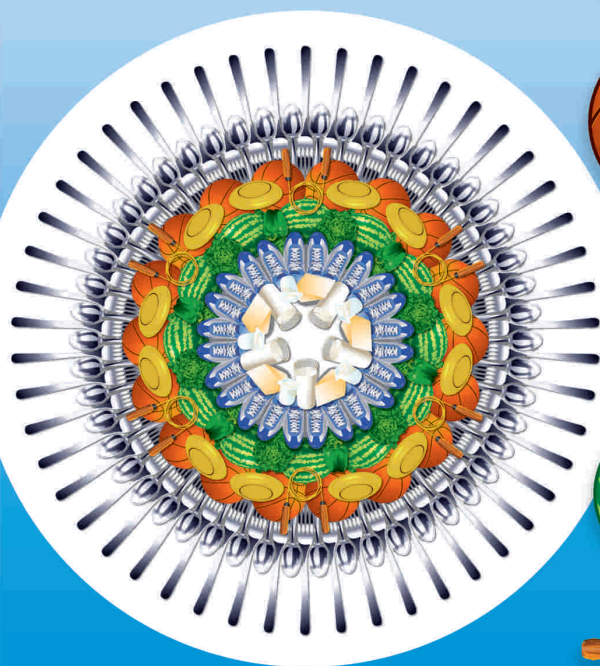
I want to reiterate the thanks of previous RTA Executives for the help and support of your president and staff at PEITE. It is a central and extremely comfortable place to have our meetings, and the staff treats us so well.

Enjoy the rest of your school year; lean on each other for support; take time for yourself. Above all else remember: be kind to your students and each other.

MULTIZONE

What is Multizone?

Multizone is an educational activity that engages children as they work together in teams to solve nutrition questions while participating in fun physical challenges. The constant movement of this game keeps children excited and interested in the learning experience. At the same time, the team component motivates everyone to do their best!



Multizone brings to the table an impressive fusion of fun, nutrition knowledge and activity that children of all ages will enjoy.



Get in the "Zones"!

There are five energizing zones to this game. Each zone is tailored specifically for kindergarten to grade 6 students, providing age appropriate questions and activities that keep children motivated and entertained.



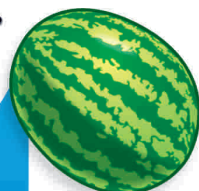
What Do I Need?

A member from our nutrition team brings everything required for the game. All you need is a gymnasium, approximately 45 minutes of time per classroom, and a teacher or coordinator to help assist with the game.



Who Can Apply?

Multizone is now available to all elementary schools throughout New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

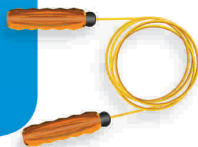


What is the Cost?

This program is free of charge.

How Can I Register my School?

Don't delay! Schools will be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. Contact our dietitians today at 1-800-465-2697 (ext. 2) or e-mail us at infonutrition@dfc-plc.ca.



NUTRITION + PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



NUTRITION
DAIRY FARMERS OF CANADA

TeachNutrition.ca

Created by Registered Dietitians for Maritime Educators

Thoughts and Comments from the General Secretary

Public education in Prince Edward Island now seems stuck in two realities: One being at the school level and the other being at the educational management level.

Thankfully, education at the school level is fairly consistent and constant, despite today's many challenges. This consistent and constant delivery of education stabilizes the learning environment for students and helps create an atmosphere conducive for learning, and helps provide a routine that is very helpful for many students.

Rightfully so, I doubt that there would be many Island students that could identify any major changes within our education system, and I'm not sure they could identify what impact those changes have had on them. I would credit teachers and administrators for shielding students, as much as possible, from these realities. The fact that students couldn't identify them, however, does not mean that major changes have not occurred in a number of areas, or that there has been an impact. I could point to several major changes, including the increasing number of split/combined grade classes, but I'll leave those for another article.

The purpose of this article is to point out the significant changes that have occurred at the upper levels of our education system, and that there needs to be an end to those types of changes.

It is understandable, if not traditional, that each new government wants to make its mark on education. In that light, there always seems to be changes when a new government takes power (including incumbent governments with new leaders - obviously). I believe that teachers are used to these changes and they usually don't occur very often.

What teachers are not used to is the number and significance of the changes that our education system has gone through in the past four years. Here goes:

Since late 2012, we've gone from three school boards, to two school boards, to one school board and a soon to be crown

entity. Through that stretch, we have had eight different superintendents and soon will have some sort of head of the new education entity.

We've had two different Premiers, three (technically four) different Ministers of Education, and two (technically 3) different Deputy Ministers of Education.

We have gone from one appointed Trustee and two elected Board of Trustees, to an appointed Board of Trustees and an elected Board of Trustees, to an appointed Trustee and an elected Board of Trustees, to a system of "advisory councils" and an elected Board of Trustees.

At this point, if you are reading this and you are not from PEI, you are excused from not being able to keep up or understand. I am sure there are many Islanders who share in your confusion.

To think that all of this has not added instability and uncertainty into our education system would be ridiculous. Everyone employed in education, including teachers, are fearful for their jobs and only the bravest would consider applying for leadership positions in this province. The current atmosphere is not conducive for moving education forward and it is not conducive for encouraging buy-in from those who are delivering it.

Government has undertaken yet another crack at restructuring how our education system is organized. It's the second major shake-up in three years. Time will tell if this change is any better than the last, but if anything will come in the near future, it better be a realization by government(s) that change should be mostly about learning, not cost savings. Our students and our teachers deserve that.

Be good to yourselves and each other.



Shaun MacCormac

by Shaun MacCormac

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