



Prince Rupert District Teachers' Union

News for Members

October 2022

Understanding the Current Staffing Crisis

Despite the “talking points” coming from SD52 senior managers, the current staffing crisis is due to self-inflicted mistakes made by senior managers themselves. The combination of several years of teacher layoffs, errors in the adoption of this year’s budget, and the elimination of DI teachers has resulted in this year’s staffing crisis.

Here are some key facts to keep in mind when making sense of the current staffing crisis:

(1) **SD52 had solved its recruitment problem by hiring district itinerant (DI) teachers.**

DI teachers could cover temporary leaves, provide remedy support, and/or be teachers on call. The promise of a continuing job, while filling positions as needed by the district, was a draw that brought many teachers to our district. It gave SD52 a competitive edge on recruitment. And it gave SD52 flexibility in putting teachers where they were needed most. This was a win-win-win situation for teachers, students, and SD52. While the DI teacher position was effective at recruiting teachers and supporting students, it failed in terms of teacher retention because SD52 laid off most of its DI teachers two school years ago.

(2) **SD52 laid off nearly 10% of its teachers two school years ago and that contributed to over 60% of classes being overcapacity last year.**

That’s because DI teachers had been fully engaged covering positions throughout the district – meaning that there was no “fat” to cut. As you may recall, we reported the high level of overcapacity

classes after conducting a survey in the fall. Mass layoffs two school years ago reduced instructional supports. Contrary to what some Trustees said at the time, DI teachers were essential to providing students with teachers – especially those who needed extra support.

(3) **Last year, SD52 essentially eliminated the DI teacher position altogether.**

Once again, SD52 laid off teachers and cut the number of teaching positions – to finish the job of ending a successful staffing initiative that recruited teachers and provided staffing flexibility to get students the supports they need. The PRDTU warned SD52 that these cuts would result in a reduction of services for students. We are seeing this come true as many teaching positions go unfilled and as SD52 scrambles to recruit qualified teachers to provide educational supports for students.

(4) **There was never a real fiscal shortfall for this year’s budget. Instead, there was an accounting error and a projection error.**

SD52 was surprised when more students enrolled this year than it projected, but the PRDTU was not. We told SD52 that this was likely given the unfounded assumptions that this year’s budget is based on. There was no shortage of funds to avoid this staffing crisis – only a shortage of leadership and a lack of commitment to supporting students and their education. SD52 always had the enrollment levels to not lay off teachers, as we can see by the scramble to hire positions now.

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Note from PRDTU President Sage Davis

Today's staffing crisis is self-inflicted. Worse, it reflects another troubling trend. Once again, while SD52 cuts back on spending to support students directly, it expands the ranks of administration. With the addition of a full-time director of human resources and a new administrative position, SD52 once again prioritizes top-heavy management over teachers. Our students are paying the price for this.

When SD52 decided to lay off nearly 10% of its teachers two school years ago it put in place the conditions to cause the staffing crisis we face today. At the time of the mass layoffs, there were enough teachers to fill most positions. And there was enough flexibility, thanks to DI teachers, to shuffle teachers around to where they were needed most. SD52 and the PRDTU even worked together in the last round of bargaining to improve how the DI teacher position would work, reaching an agreement that added language to the collective agreement on DI teachers.

SD52's next move was to essentially eliminate the DI teacher position altogether, leading to the current staffing crisis. Schools throughout SD52 do not have enough teachers. There are many positions left unfilled, including learning resource teachers and other roles essential to support our most vulnerable students. Making matters worse, just after SD52 laid off many of its teachers, districts throughout BC are scrambling to fill postings. It's even harder now for SD52 to recruit qualified teachers to fill open positions.

This is a self-inflicted crisis caused by accounting errors, the personal agendas of some Trustees, and projection mistakes. SD52 senior management took away the DI position, an initiative that solved the problem of teacher shortages by improving recruitment and providing flexibility. Our students pay for this mistake with fewer learning supports.

Dear Colleague:

You've made it through another back-to-school September! From what I'm hearing, this has already been a tough year for many members. The staffing crisis is hitting many teachers hard, with teachers reporting no learning supports for their students, a shortage of education assistants, and not enough teachers on call to cover leaves. And it's only the first week of October!

The PRDTU is here to support you. We're working hard to let SD52 know how the staffing crisis is impacting teachers, schools, and students. And we'll keep doing whatever's required to make sure that senior managers know how their decisions to shift resources away from instruction to other priorities is impacting you and your students.

There are other ways we can support each other, too. Your union will always speak up for you. But we can do more, including by bringing everyone together for professional events that help us feel connected to each other as members of a profession that matters and makes a difference. Having fun together is one way we can support each other through tough times.

That's why I want to make this year be *The Year of Teacher Appreciation* – by holding events throughout the year that show our appreciation for each other. That starts with the **Social on World Teachers' Day** (thanks Anna Ashley for organizing this) from 4-7 PM on Oct. 5th at the Wheelhouse. But the fun won't stop there. We're planning a host of activities meant to bring us together as professionals. Please let me know of any ideas for fun "teacher appreciation" events that we can do together this year.

- Sage
lp52@bctf.ca

Celebrate World Teachers' Day
Wednesday Oct. 5th 4-7 PM
at the Wheelhouse
Free Drink Ticket, Pizza, and
Snacks Provided
All PRDTU Members Are Welcome

You Are Invited to the All-Candidates Forum *Prince Rupert Municipal Elections*



Tuesday October 4, 2022 @ 7 PM

Charles Hays Secondary School Multipurpose Room

Meet the Candidates for Mayor and City Council
Includes Audience Questions

This is a community event. Everyone is welcome.



North Coast Labour Council

In Unity There Is Strength

Learn more: NorthCoastLabour.ca

CELEBRATE WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

**FOR PRDTU
MEMBERS
ONLY**

WEDNESDAY OCT 5



**@ THE WHEELHOUSE
FROM 4-7 PM**



**FREE DRINK TICKET,
PIZZA & SNACKS
PROVIDED**

Scan the QR code for
a link to bargaining
updates .

Not signed up?
Ask your staff rep or
come to Wheelhouse
and find out how in
person.

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!
MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ARE COMING UP.
VOTING TAKES PLACE ON OCT 5, 12 AND 15TH
AT THE CIVIC CENTER FROM 8AM TO 8PM.