

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
MINUTES
OCTOBER 23, 2003
SHERWOOD COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

MEMBERS PRESENT: 236 members in attendance

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Jean Minifie (Chairperson), Lois Robb (Vice-Chair), Dorothy Hall, (Secretary-Treasurer), Laurie de Mille (Recording Secretary), Ann Craig, Fred Klestinec, Dorothy Galanov, Albert Herscovitch (Directors)

ALSO PRESENT: Bill Flookes (Manager)

ABSENT: Bryan Hicks, Cathy Evanochko (Directors)

1. **CHAIRPERSON'S CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Jean Minifie, Chairperson of the CBE Staff Association and adjourned for 15 minutes as a quorum was not present, as per Staff Association By-law 8.3.1.

2. **GREETING AND INTRODUCTIONS**

3. **APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 23, 2002 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**

4. **REPORTS:**

4.1 **Chairperson's Report - submitted by Jean Minifie, Chairperson:**

I have always tried with my opening remarks to express the positive activities that have been happening within Staff Association. This year, I can't seem to bring myself to say that things are OK with our membership. It is true that we've made some positive gains with our contact but so much has happened since we ratified in March that I find it very hard to be positive about anything that has happened since.

We have had hundreds and hundreds of our colleagues either laid off or accepting cuts in their hours. This year has been the worst for SA since I have been involved with the Staff Association and the Board. We have always talked about how we are finally (after so many years) getting some recognition and being part of the process of decision-making, only to have the door slammed in our faces.

Over the past couple of years decisions have been made that have had HUGE impacts on our members. There was neither communication nor consultation concerning these decisions and now the CBE is concerned about the relationship they have with SA. A process used to be in place whereby decisions that would affect

our members were discussed with us, and then both sides came to mutual agreement on the solution. This year, however, none of that happened, so we were forced, as a union, to choose a different approach and therefore filed about 8 or 9 grievances at the end of June. We even had CBE at the Labour Board offices to talk about the decision to cut our lunchroom supervisors by _ hr. Although we never won that case, the CBE did take notice that we were serious about the issues that affect our members. The Labour Board representative quoted, *"It seems to us inconsistent with the spirit of the Labour Relations Code, in consistent with the spirit of the 1997 Memorandum of Settlement and contrary to the good, consultative relationship that these parties proclaim they share, that the Union would have been left to guess that its members might have their hours cut back below the customary 2.0 hours. Bargaining agents should not have to guess at such things. It could surely have been done in a better way"*.

It used to be that you could have counted on one hand how many arbitrations that SA has had to have over the years. Now, with the filing of different and numerous grievances (some of which we won), the CBE is questioning the relationship they have with us. And so they should.

Our biggest issue now for our members is the workload imposed on many of our members in several job categories (most major problems have been identified in school offices and libraries). There has been a positive move on part of HR to come up with a solution to the problem, and it has been decided to focus first on the office workload area. A committee has been formed with representation from both the Staff Association and the CBE, and we have called a special meeting with a number of School Administrative secretaries so that they could ensure that the CBE knows what the overload problems in school offices are and why they are happening. We sincerely hope that these meetings will create some form of action. However, I remember sitting on a committee years ago called Wellness. We spent spending hours and hours of work to come up with solutions on how to help our staff adjust to increased workloads, but that was where it ended. There was no implementation; that is the most frustrating part. We hope history isn't going to repeat itself in this regard.

Staff Association members are known for taking great pride in the work they do and are also very proud to be working with the students of the Calgary Board of Education. Now, however, the workload is starting to weigh heavy on our shoulders. We are starting to crash - we are going on stress leaves, we are barely holding our heads above water, but the expectations have not been lowered to compensate for the struggle that we are all having.

We all know the resources from the government are not adequate to keep the system at the same level of excellence that we had in the past. Now is the time for us all to stand together and make the points that we are not working for free and we are tired of supporting CBE when we do not get an recognition from them in return.

We need your help, not only to make a point to management but to also take care of ourselves!

We need you to:

- work only the FTE that you are paid for
- take your coffee and lunch breaks
- work only within your scope of duties
- don't take work home with you
- do take some time for your family life outside CBE

I hope that you will take this home with you and do some serious thinking about these issues. We, the Executive of your Association, are making a stand on your behalf, and we need your support. Thank you.

4.2 Manager's Report – submitted by Bill Flookes, Manager

Hearing our reports tonight and seeing what is happening out there in the CBE reminds me of a convocation speech given a number of years ago [and you have to imagine all those eager young faces seeking guidance, not unlike those I see before me]. "More than any other time in history, SA faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly."

Grievances: As many of you know the CBE as part of ASBA the provincial organization that represents school boards received a permit that allowed them to ignore minimum wage laws which are already the lowest in Canada. After many conversations and correspondence with the Provincial Government we had that permit revoked and as far as we know the CBE is the only school district in Alberta not included.

In June letters were issued to members who had their hours cut to .429 [15hrs/wk] that said although their Benefits continued they were cut off from Pension. We grieved and consequently Pension contributions only stop if your hours fall below 14 hrs/wk.

Benefits were denied a member with a young family who was on reduced hours because of the death of her husband. We grieved and she was given all her medical expenses for the last 2 years.

Start Up grievance over recall and lieu days and volunteers and students working has gone past the Chief Superintendent and is awaiting a date with the Arbitrator. The CBE did say they wanted to talk, we said yes, however, that was many weeks ago and nothing has happened so in the meantime the Arbitration goes ahead.

A member with 25 years of seniority who had been laid off in '99 and reinstated with the understanding of being given meaningful work was laid off again this year and we grieved and they were once again reinstated.

A member qualified for a job posting was denied the position even though she was the only applicant. We grieved and although this grievance was denied at the first two steps, the Chief Superintendent upheld the grievance two wks ago and as of this week she is in the position.

This is just a partial list of what the SA is doing in the legal area. We are working now on libraries, volunteers, Mat Leave, FOIP, WCB, and Violence in the Work Place among others and we are looking for information and help to proceed.

We continue on the perennial problem of " if you don't do your work we'll cut your hrs or find performance problems".

We continue to talk with the CBE whenever they wish to talk to us and on whatever they wish to talk about, however, we are acting to change the place of SA members within the CBE. We think there is another path. That path leads to respect for all people as persons. No more, certainly no less.

Benefits

No end in sight to the process for returning the LTD surplus and the demutualization money, even though I said last year that it would all be done by now.

Benefit costs for 2004; life down by 5%, AA&D no change, LTD no change, Sup Health up 4%, Dental down 8% [based on 2003 rates]

There is no more Benefit handbook but you can find all the updated information on the website and outlook.

4.3 Director & Committee Reports

Vice-Chairperson's Report – submitted by Lois Robb:

Good Evening - I am Lois Robb and currently I hold the position of Vice-Chair. For the past few years I have been involved in the Mutual Interest and Negotiation Committees. I work closely with Jean and Bill and help out where needed.

When I first became involved I was in awe of how well the Interest-Based Bargaining worked. It seemed like such a good process - with both sides working together to come to a mutual agreement which was beneficial to both sides. Staff Association and the Board made many gains through this style of bargaining and a bonus was that a good working relationship developed from it. Unfortunately, things have changed dramatically in the past couple of years. We have seen the relationship between Staff Association and the Board deteriorate to the point it is at now - which is at an all time low. We just don't know what to expect from them.

In our last round of negotiations there was no clear mandate as to the negotiation process we would use. The Board did not want to use the Interest Based process as they considered it to be too time consuming. That left us with the question of, "What method are we using"? The lack of a clear mandate around the process made negotiations extremely difficult. We jumped back and forth between processes. We are now facing a new round of negotiations in 2004 and still don't know what to expect. Our new contract has not even been signed off at this point because we are still waiting for the last items to be clarified by the CBE. In our view, this really is not an acceptable condition for our membership to be in.

Our concerns also continue in other areas. The Mutual Interest Committee meetings have been going on for many years, and we are putting forward some of the same concerns today that we were putting forward 20 years ago. Jean and Bill went back through the minutes to 1981 and found a number of re-occurring themes;

lunch program, ESL, Ed. Assistants and Workload to name a few. Our last Mutual Interest meeting was a surprising one for us. We were told that there is concern over the TONE of the meetings (apparently the CBE did not feel that we were being very optimistic in our questions and statements), and that the mandate of the Mutual Interest needed to be clarified. Apparently, after all this time, some of the Mutual Interest Board members from the CBE did not have an understanding of what Mutual Interest was all about. To put it mildly, this was an amazing revelation for us, as we thought it was perfectly clear - does "Mutual Interest" not indicate that the committee was formed to deal with matters and concerns of mutual interest to the S.A. and the CBE?

These types of issues leaves the Staff Association very concerned and we're wondering what this is all about. Where do we go from here? Exactly where are we supposed to take our issues and concerns? Who is going to be accountable and deal with them. Last June and over the summer months we filed a number of grievances, some of which have gone to arbitration. We continue to file grievances now. Is this the road we need to travel on - is this the only way we can be heard? A meaningful working relationship is very important to us and we are always willing to sit down and discuss issues and concerns from both our perspective and the Board's. It's very difficult sometimes not to feel negative. The members we deal with on a daily basis call us with issues and concerns that are causing them a great deal of stress and are some issues are in direct violation of our Collective Agreement and we still can't get them addressed and have to move them forward through the grievance process. On occasion, we receive the "good news calls" but 99% of the time our calls are from people in need.

We need your help - we are continuously putting forward issues on your behalf because that is our job and we are here to help you if you need us. However, you must also learn to advocate for yourself if you can – we know there are some situations where you can't – but if you can, engage in conversation and build an awareness of your particular jobs with your principal and/or immediate supervisor.

We are open to any suggestions you may have around how to make the issues around workload for support staff more visible out in the workplace - whether you are in a school, downtown, at Highfield etc. We want to hear from you – good or bad. Thank you

Director Report – submitted by Cathy Evanochko – Area IV:

At the General Election Meeting in 2002, I was elected as a Director on the Board of Directors of the CBE Staff Association. The work of the Staff Association is very challenging and interesting work. Last year, I was assigned to work with the Staff Association members in CLC 1 schools.

I joined the Calgary Board of Education as a Lunchroom Supervisor in 1989. I worked in lunchroom for 4 years. Since then, I have been a School Assistant, Child Care Aide, Library Assistant, Circulation Clerk, Administrative Secretary, and I am currently the Administrative Assistant to the Director of Area V. I feel the variety of experiences in the schools help to bring an understanding of the demands of the many positions the Staff Association represents.

In the past year, in addition to attending Board of Directors meetings, I served on the following committees:

1. Mutual Interest – Discussion of “hot” topics of mutual interest to our board and the CBE administration.
2. Staff Development – overseeing the administration of the Staff Association staff development fund
3. Retirement – Planning and working at the Retirement Banquet for our retired colleagues.
4. By-Laws/Policies & Procedures – working to keep the Bylaws and Policies current and understandable.

I look forward to the many learning opportunities as I complete my term in the year ahead.

Director/Committee Report – Submitted by Dorothy Galanov, Area V:

As I continue in my role as a Director of the Staff Association I have been involved in the following committees, Retirement Banquet, Staff Development, Policies and Regulations, and Negotiations and I would like to report on the following:

The Staff Development Fund: The monies for the Staff Development Fund are made available through the CBE and Staff Association and enable our members to take courses to enhance their positions within the CBE.

Applying for funding were during the 2002/2003 year were: 445 applicants from the regular Support Staff fund, 11 applicants from the Professional Support Staff fund (for a total of 456 individual applicants) and 7 group applicants. The total amount paid out to cover the educational needs of these applicants was \$101,203.00.

The fund has increased to \$130,000 so members are now eligible for \$400.00 per year (instead of \$400.00 every two years) and hope our members will continue to utilize the Staff Development Fund to benefit them in their present positions or to improve their skill to allow them to apply for other positions within the CBE. The guidelines and application forms are available on public folders.

Retirement Banquet: The CBE Support Staff Retirement Banquet was held this year on Friday, March 14 at the ATCO Centre, Canada Olympic Park. This year the CBE covered the whole cost of the banquet. In the past the CBE and the various unions divided the cost.

Sixty-one retirees were acknowledged and thirty retirees attended the banquet (Staff Association, Trades, and CUPE retirees were represented). Each retiree received a gift; either a watch or a clock depending on their years of service from the CBE. Staff Association retirees also received a crystal Staff Association logo.

Retirees were given the opportunity to win various door prizes, which the union groups donated. Each retiree had their photo taken to commemorate their special evening.

The meal as usual was excellent and the entertainment, which was provided by "Standing Room Only", was most enjoyable. It gives us an opportunity when we attend the banquet to show our appreciation to our members who gave many years of service to the CBE.

Director/Committee Report – Submitted by Fred Klestinec, Highfield:

Good evening – my name is Fred Klestinec, and I am the Director responsible for our members located at Highfield. I have been with the Calgary Board of Education since 1978, and have worked as a Journeyman Carpenter, Carpenter Foreman, Environmental Services Specialist and am currently the Design and Construction Coordinator. I am the "new kid on the block" when it comes to the Staff Association – I have been with them less than one year, so am still learning the ropes. As such, I have no report for this meeting.

Director/Committee Report – Submitted by Ann Craig, Education Centre:

First, a bit of information about myself. I started with the CBE as a Lunchroom Supervisor, progressed to a School Assistant, the Child Care Aid, Educational Assistant and finally to a Library Assistant. This route has taken me 18 years, and I'm still loving it!

Convention Committee: We are once again in the process of putting the 2004 convention together. We will have the convention programs in your schools in the first week of December, with the registration starting on January 12 to the 23rd. We are using Lester B. Pearson again this year because it is the only school big enough for us. The other big school, Lord Beaverbrook, is used every year on the Thursday of our convention by the Business/ Highfield group.

In answer to the inevitable question about using two schools, one north and one south, we would need at the very least 25 members on our convention committee. Organizing two schools and setting up for all the sessions takes a lot of time and work....maybe another year we can do it. All our usual extras will be there again this convention: door prizes, food bank, and many displays.

Please give some thought to being a host at a session --the form for hosts will be included in the convention program. See you at the convention!

Director/Committee Report – Submitted by Albert Herscovitch, Parkdale/PSS:

Hi, my name is Albert Herscovitch, and I am one of the Directors. I have been a psychologist with CBE for 27 years and have worked in over 100 schools within the system. I currently coordinate a school-based

community resource project out of Rosscarrock School. This is my 8th year on the Board of Directors of the Staff Association. I will keep my comments brief.

Negotiations Committee: First, some comments on the previously-concluded negotiations. As you know, these were completed in February 2003. The Collective Agreement was ratified by our membership in March, and then ratified by the Trustees. You may have noticed that you have not yet received a copy of the new Collective Agreement. That is because it has yet to be officially signed. Following the ratification by both sides, we realized that although we had agreed to the wording, our understanding on several of the articles were not the same. We have since reconciled those differences and we hope that the official signing can take place in the next couple of weeks. The Collective Agreement will then be printed and copies sent out.

In these negotiations, we made some very good strides in some areas, while in other areas, although we made some headway, we did not accomplish our goals. An example is the reduction of the base FTE required for benefits. The base was reduced from .5 to .429. However, what we were not able to achieve is a similar reduction in the eligibility for pension, which remains at .5. The exception to this is for Staff Association members who were part of the pension plan and have had their hours reduced to 14 hours or more. Interests like this one that were not resolved to our satisfaction will go on to our proposals for the next set of negotiations.

As you know, our current Collective Agreement expires on August 31, 2004. Your negotiations team wants you to know that we have already started our preparations for the upcoming negotiations, which we expect to start in May 2004. The first step in this process is to elicit your feedback and your priorities. We want you to guide our proposals. We have, therefore, prepared a survey that will be sent out to all members within the next week. Please take this seriously, send us your comments and give us your feedback. Let us know what your issues are, what improvements you would like to see, and any new and creative ideas you may have.

Lastly, we are planning on holding meetings for "families" or groups such as the cooks, the lunchroom supervisors, "C" Secretaries, etc. We will be conducting one meeting a month and those dates and groups will be announced. The first meeting will be for PSS (Professional Support Staff) on November 17th at Sherwood.

Director/Committee Report – Submitted by Laurie de Mille, Area II:

I have been employed by the Calgary Board of Education for fifteen years. I started my career with the CBE as a Lunchroom Supervisor, then progressed to being a School Assistant for 160 ECS students, before I finally realized that I really didn't like working directly with children and did a much better job organizing the teachers and volunteers! I transferred into the office at the school I was employed at and became a "C" Secretary, before finally arriving as a School Administrative Secretary – a position I hold now. I have been a Director with the Staff Association for almost seven years, and hold the position of Recording Secretary, as well as being the Chairperson of the Public Relations Committee, the Editor of the S.A. newsletter, and a member of the Mutual Interest Board.

Public Relations/Communications Committee: As Chairperson of the Public Relations Committee, I feel that our main focus is to help ensure that our members understand what it means to be part of the Staff Association and what benefits are available to them as Staff Association members. We strive to provide the knowledge so that our members fully understand their rights as both a Staff Association member and an employee of the Calgary Board of Education. The newsletter (published bi-monthly over the school year) is the main tool to ensure that this understanding is available to all our members. I am in my sixth year as editor of the newsletter, and from feedback received, it appears that a great number of our employees follow this publication. We also attempt to cover emergent issues via our FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) emails that go out when the need arises. The Staff Association also publishes the "New Members Brochure" which is distributed to all new employees covered by the Staff Association umbrella.

We strive very hard to ensure that our members are kept up to date on both their rights and responsibilities as Staff Association members, and on current issues, but this proves to be a very difficult task due to the wide-spread nature of our employment and the number of locations we are employed at. We have been working hard to develop alternate means of communication between the elected Executive and our members, and are

very excited to introduce a newly-formed group of “communicators”. With that, please welcome Hilary Smith, who will outline this new endeavour:

K.I.T. TEAM: Hi, my name is Hilary Smith and I tonight I am acting as the spokesperson for the newly organized volunteer team for the Staff Association ~ the KIT Team. KIT stands for “Keeping In Touch”.

This team currently consists of 4 people who have volunteered their time to help the Staff Association Directorship. Our current members are Carolyn Freund, Shelly Walper, Sherry Vaskovics and myself.

What does the KIT Team do?

- We act as an extra communication link between the Staff Association Directors and membership.
- We are a "hands on" means of support and help to the Directors.
- We attend Board of Directors meeting every second month as a means of training and keeping in touch.
- We help with calculating survey results.
- We are the “extra hands” to help with membership meetings and the convention.
- To sum it up, we are a team of volunteers available to call upon when extra hands are needed.

We are such a new committee that our guidelines and duties are still a work in process. At this point in time, we do not have a theme or motto, but if we did, it would sound similar to "United We Stand". We are hoping this team will grow as more and more members take an active role and assume ownership in the Association ~ "Many hands make light work".

Our vision is that eventually we would have a Staff Association representative from each school, unit and department ~ just like the ATA has a representative from each location.

Please watch the newsletters for more information about us. And... feel free to contact any of us if you'd like to find out more or would like to join our KIT Team.