

Connie Denesiuk - BCSTA's New President



The British Columbia School Trustees Association proudly acclaimed the presidency of Connie Denesiuk during their 104th Annual General Meeting this past weekend in Vancouver.

President Denesiuk has also served on BCSTA's Finance Committee (two years as chair), Board liaison to the Education Committee, Ad Hoc Policy Review Committee chair, and representative to the Advisory Committee on the Provincial

Assessment and Certificate for School Management and Leadership (UVic) Advisory Committee.

With the Okanagan Skaha Board of Education, Connie's service includes being board chair and vice-chair, as well as extensive community leadership and involvement. A school trustee since 1992, Connie has been a business owner/partner with her husband Bob since 1980.

www.bcsta.org

Creating A World Without Bullying PrevNet's 3rd Annual Conference

Toronto - May 28 & 29, 2008. The sessions include: aboriginal ethical learning, a Senator Landon Pearson presentation about children's rights abroad and in Canada, Cyberbullying, the roots of aggression in teens, appropriate interventions for youth in trouble with the law, the role of parents, and youth in sports. Participants will hear practical advice for dealing with real life situations as well as have access to the leading researchers in the field.

PrevNet – Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence is a network of 42 national organizations and 44 outstanding Canadian researchers. The CSBA was one of the original partners that supported the creation of this network of experts and users.

www.prevnet.ca



*"Democracy is clumsy.
Democracy is burdensome.
Democracy is difficult.
However, it makes educational leadership try harder and care more. It makes leaders who are building great Canadian citizens, one student at a time"*

*President Tabachnick, BCSTA
AGM April 2-6 2008*

CSBA President Marcus Tabachnick's Speech to BCSTA's 104th AGM

I have the privilege of bringing you greetings from the Canadian School Boards Association; our member provincial associations and their member local school boards wish you success at this 104th Annual General Meeting and Conference.

There is a well-worn curse: *'May you live in interesting times'*. It seems that someone's curse has been directed at School Boards across this country.

..... Canada places among the top 5 countries in every category studied by the OECD and supported by our international rankings in the standardized PISA testing. This, to spite the fact that Canada faces some of the most daunting challenges of any of the 57 countries followed in the OECD studies.

"We have a larger geography, leading to a more dispersed population making it more difficult to deliver quality programming to all. But we deliver! We have a much more diverse population in terms of ethnicity, culture, religion, and language than other countries do.

"This requires us to find more new and innovative ways to accommodate and integrate students, while respecting their varied backgrounds. And we deliver! Not only am I not complaining about this challenge of diversity, I am wont to brag about how well we accomplish this.....

"It is the reasons for disappointment, misunderstanding, and endless negative discussion about what does not work that distresses me, that confounds me. We keep asking ourselves *Why?* Those of us who have chosen to serve our students, our staffs, our communities, and are so involved in public education grapple with this question every day.

"One answer, unfortunately, that keeps coming to mind is that we are, in part, to blame for this negative public perception. We tend to be too complacent about our well-being. we do very little, and in some parts of the country nothing, to counteract this movement against what should be regarded as the most crucial, and arguably the most successful, of all levels of local government.

"Allow me to cite some examples: The current Chair of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) is from a province that abolished School Boards, New Brunswick. He has stated that while he accepts the need for some local input he does not think that school boards work. And so, with a stroke of a pen, with less than two weeks notice, he has eliminated the early French immersion program from the N. B. curriculum, without discussion, consultation, or regard for those students already in the program. I dare you to try that in your district!



President Tabachnick - *continued*

"The Minister of Education of Nova Scotia professes her respect and understanding of the need for locally elected school boards and then strips 2 of the largest of their powers. The Halifax Regional Board will be without elected representation for almost 2 years by the time the next scheduled elections take place.

"In Quebec, there has been a 2 year debate on the future of school boards. The Quebec government will be depositing legislation before the end of the month revamping the school board structures, as we know them. We may well see the end of universal suffrage as a means to electing school boards.

"What all of these examples have in common is the lack of outcry by current elected school board members. Who better to defend, no explain, our system than those who know it best? The message here is simple, if we do nothing, we deserve what we get, and we get what we deserve. We need a concerted effort on the part of all Trustees and School Board members to get the message out, to stop worrying about what part of what we say is only "provincial jurisdiction" so we shouldn't talk about it nationally. We need you, the local boards, to speak loudly locally and to send a clear message to your provincial association leadership that this is an issue for all provinces to work on, together.

"It is not a matter of saving our jobs. It is certainly not a matter of the "glory and the wealth" that comes with this job. It is a matter of preserving and continuing to improve what is recognized elsewhere as one of the best, if not the best, system of public education in the world.

"The key to Canada's success is right here in this room - locally elected, locally-accountable trustees. There's nothing like a neighbour asking you why the school down the street isn't doing so well to make you try harder.

"Democracy is clumsy. Democracy is burdensome. Democracy is difficult. However, it makes educational leadership try harder and care more. It makes leaders who are building great Canadian citizens, one student at a time. It makes leaders who need to give every student the opportunity to succeed, because we are accountable every day in the grocery store, or the hockey rink, or at the swim meet. It certainly makes us accountable every three or four years at the ballot box!

"Our willingness to learn from others is also inspirational – it is part of the national culture that CSBA is trying to build to ensure that we learn, share and grow together. It's one of the reasons for the incredible efficiency of our system compared to other countries.

"This country has many great educational leaders. I want to single out one today. Your outgoing President Penny Tees is a model for commitment, determination, and practical Canadian wisdom.

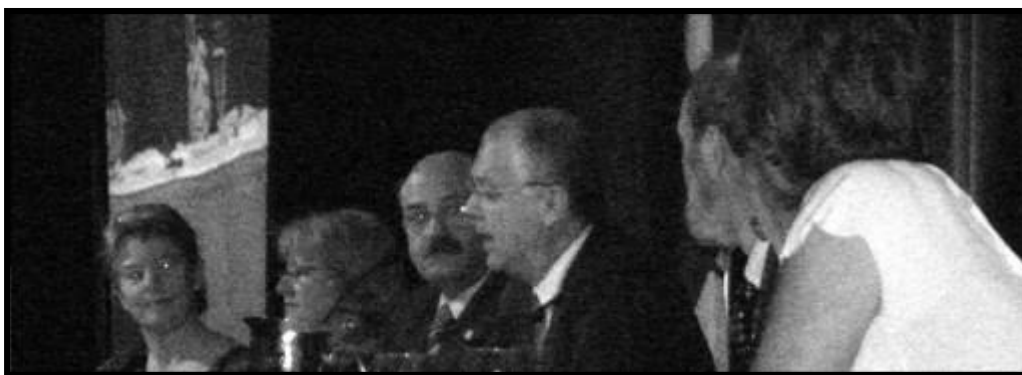


*Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association President Nada Borden congratulates Connie Denesiuk, newly acclaimed President of the British Columbia School Trustees Association
BCSTA AGM April 2-6 2008*

"Penny has made a valued and valuable contribution not only to BC public education, but also to public education across the country. CSBA relied heavily on Penny during the remaking of our association over the past few years and we are eternally grateful. Thank you, Penny. We wish you much success in your future endeavours.

".....Have pride in what we do and do not be afraid to say so. Go out there and sing the praises of our successes. Don't hide from our failures and make sure that everyone knows how much we all care about the students and learners of all ages who we serve every day. Make it your mission. Make it our mission. We can, must, and will raise the profile of public education across this country.

"On behalf of CSBA and our members from coast to coast, we wish you a great conference. Bon congres! Thank you."



l-r. Penny Tees, Immediate Past President, BCSTA; Nada Borden, President, Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association, Marcus Tabachnick, CSBA President, Rick Johnson, CSBA VP; Elliott Payzant, President Nova Scotia School Boards Association; Sandi Urban Hall, Vice-President, Saskatchewan School Boards Association

*CSBA Presidents' Panel
BCSTA AGM April 2-6 2008*

*April 9 2008
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