

June 24, 2020

Dear Board of Trustees,

The Kamloops Thompson Teachers' Association was optimistic throughout the local bargaining process in the spring of 2019 and in this current year. The Association sees this round of local bargaining as an opportunity for building greater collaboration, cooperation, trust and improved teacher morale in School District No 73.

As the Board is surely aware, the employee engagement survey from February 2019 provided a very clear picture of the dismal and very troubling state of satisfaction among employee groups, including teachers. That finding was very concerning to the Association, but not a surprise. It has been important to the current Executive and Table Officers that the climate in the district improve for our teachers. To that end, we feel we have prioritized collaboration and problem solving and have made significant effort to establish a trusting and positive working relationship in all the work we do across the district. In case the Board is unaware, the Association:

- Brought forward a suggestion to the Superintendent for collaborative problem solving and initiated an opportunity for administrators and school professional development representatives to share perspectives and find meaningful solutions to professional development issues and concerns through a two-day facilitated process in October 2019;
- As part of the Joint District and KTTA Professional Development Committee initiated and has put significant time and effort into a collaboratively developed Joint Professional Development Handbook to support greater collaboration and problem-solving at the school level;
- Demonstrated good will and relationship building in recent local bargaining by agreeing to changes with minimal benefit to members that allowed district administrative processes to move forward more quickly;
- Has actively addressed the very real and documented shortage of Teachers Teaching on Call in our district, and supported the work of district staff to implement a tiered TTOC callout system to help address the numerous problems for teachers and the system that the TTOC shortage has created. Those problems include the reassignment of Learning Assistance Resource Teachers who were many times taken from their important support of vulnerable students to cover teacher absences that should have been covered by a TTOC or when teachers missed schedule preparation time because Prep Teachers were similarly redeployed to address the shortage;
- Engaged in good-faith bargaining to work from the previous Extended Spring Break Letter of Understanding No. 42 to create a proposal that would provide year-to-year predictability for families to schedule shared visitation, travel and/or childcare; was mindful of any impact to other employee groups; and did not add additional cost to the District.

# KAMLOOPS THOMPSON TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

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The Association and District staff put a great deal of time and consideration into the Extended Spring Break proposal presented to the Board of Trustees on May 25, 2020. It was put forward knowing that School District No. 73 had a Letter of Understanding in the 2014-15 to 2016-17 school years, which worked well. The KTTA was, therefore, highly disappointed that Board dismissed this new proposal without what the Association sees as fulsome consideration.

The calendar adjustment involved for the extended break was the opportunity for a much-needed mutual gain. Instructional minutes can be accommodated with a few minutes either taken from the lunch hour or added to the day. As stated previously, there is not financial cost to the District. Such a demonstration of appreciation by the Board would improve employee morale. Yet, here our members again find themselves, unable to rationalize the stark contrast between the Board's support of a much greater calendar change for a small group at Sun Peaks and their opposition to a highly desired change for the whole district. Rather than move toward employee engagement, the Board has dismissed this discussion at the time when a calendar change is far easier to implement and instead have passed it along to a new Superintendent.

It certainly does not demonstrate any appreciation for the work of teachers or courage on the Board's part to build trust and relationship with your teacher employees. The District's accomplishments are very much individual and collective teacher accomplishments. It is your teachers who work directly, day-in and day-out with students. Yet, the Board seems to want unnecessary concessions from teachers or to deny a calendar change, rather than take a meaningful step toward a healthy district culture and climate.

The dismissal of the Extended Spring Break proposal certainly does not show appreciation for the tremendous effort, commitment and success of teachers in recent months during the pandemic. The teachers and the Association have been flexible and accommodated District needs in these uncertain and unprecedented times. In a matter of just days, Kamloops-Thompson teachers spent countless hours outside of their usual employment to ensure that continuity of learning was provided for students. Your educators entirely retooled the way they taught, including supporting and teaching students and parents to connect and learn meaningfully in the midst of a period of uncertainty, stress and very real fear and health risks. Teachers did the work, above and beyond, to make it work. And students engaged.

Understandably, the Association needs for its members an explanation as to why the Board continues to privilege and prioritize one small group of students and families and ignore the others. For that reason, we ask that Board of Trustees provide a formal response to the following questions:

Question 1: Why is the Board willing to accommodate a lengthened day for elementary students and teachers at Sun Peaks but is unwilling to accommodate a lengthened day for a stakeholder-supported extended spring break in other Kamloops-Thompson schools?

Question 2: Why has the Board demonstrated little concern or urgency to address the lack of a formal agreement for the four-day week at Sun Peaks elementary and accommodated teachers there working outside of the Collective Agreement, but simultaneously suggested that a calendar adjustment for a two-week Spring Break is not feasible due to the contract?

### Question 3:

Since the Board's support of a four-day week would indicate that it is an educationally sound option for students and an appropriate work schedule for elementary teachers at Sun Peaks, will the Board agree to a four-day model for other district schools who wish to have an alternate school calendar as provided for in the collective agreement? If this is not something open to other schools, please provide the rationale for that position.

### Questions 4:

It is the Association's understanding that the Board has decided to sideline the bargaining process and suggested that an active bargaining item should be discussed with other employee and parent groups. Why is the Board attempting to circumvent the bargaining process? On what basis has the Board determined that other groups should be involved in KTTA contractual matters and processes? Please provide examples of when the public and/or other bargaining units have been invited into negotiations during CUPE or Principal/Vice Principal bargaining as has been suggested for this matter.

### Questions 5:

The majority of parents and employees supported the continuation of the Extended Spring Break Letter of Understanding that expired in 2017, but the Board refused to renew it. If the majority parents and employee groups demonstrate support for an extended Spring Break, will the Board agree to a calendar change this time? If the Board is unwilling to accept and address the wishes of the majority on this matter, please provide the rationale for why that the Board gives so much more weight to the wants of a small group of families at Sun Peaks and would ignore the majority of other parents and employee groups in the district who have consistently supported a two-week March break.

### Question 6:

Chair Karpuk stated in the media on June 17, 2020\* that the four-day week at Sun Peaks for secondary students could not be accommodated because the KTTA was unwilling to engage in those conversations as part of bargaining. Was Chair Karpuk's comment a deliberate attempt to place responsibility for the Board's decision, one notably unpopular with Sun Peaks parents, onto the KTTA by misrepresenting and oversimplifying the situation, or was the Chair simply unaware that the Board has NOT indicated to the KTTA that the Board is indeed in favour of a four-day week for secondary and would like to engage in that discussion through the local bargaining process? If the Chair and Board are unaware, why are such statements being made publicly?

\* Radio NL <https://www.radionl.com/2020/06/17/62697/>)

### Question 7:

By all indications, the Board expects (unnecessary and arguably detrimental) concessions from teachers in order to consider a school calendar change for a two week spring break. What role does the Board see themselves having in improving the employee morale and in bettering the relationship between the District and the Board with all its employee groups? How does the Board's collective position, and individual trustee's positions, on this matter serve to improve that relationship?

Assistant Superintendent Hamblett asked the Association on June 12, 2020 if we had concerns about a four-day week for the secondary program at Sun Peaks. The Association has concerns and detailed

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those. The Association was not, however, asked to address the four-day week for the secondary program at Sun Peaks through the bargaining process. In any bargaining situation, concerns can be addressed through negotiations. The Association is entirely open to discussing a four-day week for the Sun Peaks secondary program if the District and Board would like to initiate that in this current mid-contract modification process. The Association does not feel the mid-contract modification items listed in the Letter of Intent to be limiting. Additional school calendar matters can certainly be brought to bargaining. Please, however, expect that the extended Spring Break matter would necessarily be a part of those. These are both school calendar issues, need to be addressed as such, and need to be considered together to ensure equity for all.

The Kamloops Thompson Teachers' Association and its members looks forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Laurel Macpherson  
KTTA President

Darcy Martin,  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President/Bargaining Chair