

Proroguing Parliament

For the second time in a year, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has asked the Governor General to prorogue Parliament, taking an “unofficial break” during the Vancouver-hosted Olympics, and resuming March 3 (instead of the originally planned January 25, 2010). An Angus Reid poll released January 7th showed that 53% of Canadians disagreed with Harper’s decision, while 19% agreed and 28% were undecided. However, momentum seems to be gathering for those against the Harper move. A Facebook page launched in early January - Canadians Against Proroguing Parliament - has enjoyed brisk traffic and huge growth. Condemnation has been national and international in scope. Most Canadians believe that Harper utilized this manoeuvre in order to avoid a probe of the treatment of Afghan prisoners. The suspension of the Parliament further results in the “dead-ending” of the existing 37 Bills currently on the order paper in the House of Commons. These bills would (re)start in March from scratch, wasting months of work (by all parties). Among the other “high profile” issues this affects are discussions on pension reform and questions about Canada’s involvement in the Copenhagen climate-change summit.



What Can Canadians Do?

For those that participate in social networking websites, they can join the grassroots Facebook Group (noted above).

Contact your MP, and signify you want them back at work (especially if you are in a Conservative riding outside of Toronto - there are no Conservative ridings within Toronto).

Attend the “**No Prorogue Rally**” in Toronto, (one of two dozen, and growing, organized across the country) to be held on Saturday, January 23, 2010, starting at 1:00; at Dundas Square (www.noprorogue.ca). There will be an ETT presence at this event.

“When a government starts trying to cancel dissent or avoid dissent is frankly when it’s rapidly losing its moral authority to govern.”

- Stephen Harper, *Canadian Press*, April 18, 2005

“A Soft Landing” - Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (Jan. 2010)

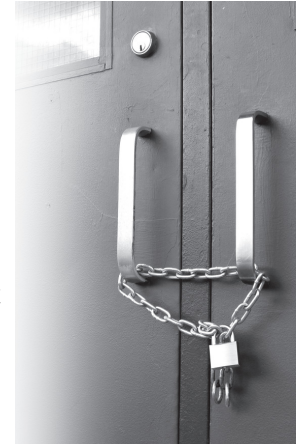
A report on executive compensation by the CCPA reveals that Canada's 100 highest paid CEOs earned an average \$7.3 M in 2008, the year the recession impacted the nation, and the rest of the world. “Canada’s top 100 CEOs earned 174 times more than the average Canadian wage,” according to economist Hugh Mackenzie. “To put that in perspective, Canadians will work full-time throughout the year to earn the national average of \$42,305. The top CEOs pocket that amount by 1:01 pm on January 4 - the first working day of the year.” Further, “between 1998 and 2008, Canada’s top 100 CEOs’ average compensation outpaced inflation by 70%. In contrast, Canadians earning the average income lost 6% over that period (previous decade).”

Attawapiskat - update

Information was provided several times last year about the ongoing situation in Attawapiskat, a remote Aboriginal reserve near James Bay. To update the situation, it now seems that their long ten year struggle to get a new elementary school may finally be near the end. The grounds of the (then) J.R. Nakogee school were poisoned by a massive diesel spill in 1979. The school was closed in May 2000 because of community concerns over the effects of contaminated soil and gas fumes. Ten portables were subsequently set up next to the old school site as a temporary measure. The community became convinced that the Indian and Northern Affairs ministry intended the portables to be a permanent solution instead of an actual new school building. For close to ten years the people of Attawapiskat have been fighting for a new school for their children. They inspired people from across the country to rally behind them, including support from school boards, faith communities, municipalities and business. Children in classrooms across Canada joined in, understanding the importance of a refurbished school building. Website pages, letter writing and fundraising campaigns were launched showing support. Eventually, early last month, came the announcement from Indian and Northern Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl that the Attawapiskat First Nation will finally get a new school - this will be on the ministry's list of new capital projects. For the next fiscal year (2010-11) the ministry has dedicated an amount of \$200,000 to assist the First Nation in updating its school capital planning study, and funding is also planned for the design and construction phases for subsequent years. It is not clear when construction on the school will actually begin, and there is still plenty of work ahead before it is finally completed, but the community is pleased that the announcement is a big step in achieving its ultimate goal.

“Better Schools Brighter Futures” (???)

Despite its utopian-sounding title, the process currently underway across the TDSB is trying to determine (more accurately) school closings through Accommodation Review Committees. The process is gathering heated derision, and building dissatisfaction with the Ministry/Board prescribed procedures, among engaged participants and even casual observers. (See previous ETT Express issue for more information.) For information about ongoing meetings refer to: www.campaignforpubliceducation.ca
The TDSB website also has information of scheduled meetings and results of previous meetings.



TDSB Student GuluWalk - advance notice

The third annual TDSB Student GuluWalk will be held on Thursday, April 29, 2010. Curriculum links for elementary and secondary students will be posted on TEL, and/or sent out upon registration. More information will be available as we approach the date.

Haiti - Earthquake Disaster Relief

Teachers, as well as all Canadians, are showing concern and compassion for residents of Haiti after the devastating earthquake. ETFO President Sam Hammond announced (Jan 14, 2010) that the Board of Directors for the ETFO Humanity Fund has approved the recommendation to donate \$10000 immediately to assist in the humanitarian work being conducted in Haiti. ETT will issue a separate announcement.