

# CPEN NEWSLETTER

## *CHARTER for PUBLIC EDUCATION*

*October 2007*



## **NEW CPEN BOARD TAKES OFFICE**

The 2007-08 CPEN Board of Directors was elected at the Annual General Meeting held on September 6, 2007. In accordance with the constitution, the Board meeting of September 27 approved additional board volunteers.

The members of the new CPEN board are:

*President*, Mike Zlotnik  
*Vice-President*, Dileep Athaide  
*Treasurer*, Weldon Cowan  
*Secretary*, Zach Harper  
*Past President*, Linda Coyle

*Members at Large:*  
Kathy Whittam  
Paul Browning  
Sylvia McFadden  
Ruth Scher  
Peter Clayton  
Joe Badali  
Moira Mackenzie

Please consider us to advocate for public education and the principles of CPEN.  
For more information contact Mike Zlotnik, President, at [Michael.Zlotnik@telus.net](mailto:Michael.Zlotnik@telus.net) or 604-988-8631.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SETS GOALS**

The CPEN AGM provided the board with an invigorated mandate to set the course for 2007/08  
The goals for the upcoming year are:

- To improve two-way communications within the CPEN membership.
- To support building a CPEN network outside of the lower mainland
- To undertake forums and initiatives with other organizations to make the governance of public education more democratic and more supportive of students and teachers
- To be a public voice for the Charter principles

The CPEN board is eager to begin on these goals and involve members in the important work ahead.

[info@publiced.ca](mailto:info@publiced.ca) | [www.charter.publiced.ca](http://www.charter.publiced.ca)

We are a non-profit, non-partisan organization promoting the importance of universal, free, accessible public education.



## OFF TO A GOOD START - FORUM ON PUBLICATION A SUCCESS!

On September 6, CPEN hosted the first in a series of forums on public education. The event, "[Who sets the agenda in public education?](#)", drew a crowd of participants eager to hear the panel and ready to engage in the issues. The evening began with remarks from *Wayne Ross*, Faculty of Education, UBC, *Irene Lanzinger*, President, BCTF, *Mike Zlotnik*, President, Charter for Public Education Network, and *Cindy Oliver*, Federation of Post-Secondary Educators.

Following the presentation, participants met in small groups to discuss who should set the agenda in public education and propose concrete actions to lead the way forward.

**The CPEN board is interested in creating webcasts of future forums for those who aren't able to attend.**  
Please email your suggestions for future forum topics to [info@publiced.ca](mailto:info@publiced.ca)



## PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST – AN INSPIRATION!

Kathryn, [a Sooke teacher, was disciplined for refusing to administer a standardized test](#) to her grade three students. Teacher leaders from around the province rallied in Sooke on September 26, 2007 to show support for Kathryn. Teachers are very concerned about the impact of the exams on students, misuse of the results and increasing amounts of time spent on testing as opposed to learning.



## AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADVOCATE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

On October 15, the BC Legislative Assembly will begin sitting for the fall session. Contact your MLA to talk about [Charter for Public Education](#) education commitments and the need for quality public education for current students and generations of students to come.

Find out your MLA's email and phone contact information at <http://www.leg.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm>



## CFS – LOBBYING FOR ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

The Canadian Federation of Students is [lobbying provincial and federal politicians](#) to address the skyrocketing tuition costs and make post-secondary education more affordable and accessible to Canadians. The CFS concluded [that a grant system, not student loans, is the solution to promoting access](#). CFS reports that a comprehensive study in Britain showed the availability of grants was the most important factor in determining whether low-income students could finish their degrees.



## CHECK IT OUT

For organizing strategies and networking ideas, check out these valuable links:

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/>

**Community Toolbox** - An extensive resource for essential community-building skills

<http://www.advocacy.org/>

**Advocacy Institute** - Influencing decisions and creating positive social change

<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/>

**The Citizen's Handbook, Vancouver** - Guide to community organizing on the web

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# *CHARTER for PUBLIC EDUCATION*

*“WHO SETS THE AGENDA IN PUBLIC EDUCATION?”*

*September 2007 Forum Review*



## **Summary of the Sept 6, 2007 Panel Presentations**

Cindy Oliver spoke about affordability and access. She noted that Geoff Plant's Campus 2020 report on post secondary education suggests a type of governance model in post secondary that is modeled on health authorities, which have not been too successful. He toured the province and gained a great deal of public, student and faculty input, but his report doesn't accurately address issues of affordability and accessibility. She noted skyrocketing tuition and other fee increases. As the cost of education goes up it begins to favour the children of wealthy parents and only those who can afford the high fees end up enrolling. She opposed stripping colleges of degree granting authority as this would decrease access in so many communities around the province. She noted that the deregulated approach to private colleges has been a disaster and that Campus 2020 should have taken a tougher stance on private colleges. The failures of some private colleges to provide value for their students has undermined the reputation of all post secondary education in British Columbia. She called on government to hold off on implementing Campus 2020 until after they have fully consulted with students, teachers and citizens about the proposed changes. She called for increases in per-student funding.

A very modest 10% of the province's \$2 B surplus, or \$200M would begin to address some of the affordability and access issues. This infusion of money would bring post secondary funding rates back to 2001 levels.

Wayne Ross, a professor in the Department of Curriculum Studies in the Faculty of Education at UBC, set out a broad context for the kinds of changes being implemented by the B.C. government in education. He noted that in the United States there are now annual \$1 trillion shifts from the middle class Americans to corporations and the wealthy. In British Columbia we see a booming economy and cuts to education. Professor Ross contrasted a market company associated with UBC that is doing very very well while the educational aspects of UBC are suffering from budget cuts. He noted that the province has been pushing school boards to develop businesses, for example selling education services to foreign students. Generally, these businesses lose money. He observed that and neoliberal agenda is directing education policy making in British Columbia. This agenda calls for turning education into a commodity. Government run universities are pushed to undertake a revenue-generating initiatives. In the United States, EMOs (Education Management Organizations) are being developed following the model for private health care

in the United States through HMOs (Health Management Organizations). Closing school libraries, increasing class sizes, standardizing curriculum, holding students and teachers accountable to remote central authorities are all part of this neoliberal agenda for education. Professor Ross cited Sandra Mathison who said it does no good to establish standards unless they are met. With the No Child Left behind legislation in the United States, distant authorities apply coercive consequences to schools. For example, a school in an inner-city community serving difficult students that does not measure up to the improvement standards set by the political authority has funding taken away from it and if it fails to improve is turned into a charter school and then public funds go into private educational enterprises. Professor Ross suggested that Bill 20 which establishes Superintendents of Achievement is moving British Columbia in the same neoliberal direction.

Irene Lanzinger, President of the B.C. Teachers' Federation, observed that the combined effect of Bills 20, 21 and 22 is opening up dangers of privatization of public education, is increasing inequity, undermining local authority and finding ways around the Supreme Court decision that struck down the legality of charging fees for necessary public school activities. Special academies can be set up which allow for fees to be charged and these have the potential to become a kind of voucher system. She objected to establishing provincial schools outside the public system and the excessive focus on testing. She contrasted the government's agenda with the principles articulated in the charter for public education. She noted that grade 10 and 11 examinations are largely multiple-choice and thus do not appropriately assess many of the understandings and skills schools should be teaching. (Irene, I think you had a couple of examples or illustrations that I missed in my notes.)

Mike Zlotnik, President of CPEN, quarrelled with the implicit promise of the government's social capital agenda that tells students if they become highly literate, develop advanced skills in mathematics and sciences and become critical and creative thinkers, good jobs will be plentiful, they will make good money, have prestige and respect, and life will be wonderful. This conception of education discounts education for living and preparing future citizens to govern their communities and society. There are many highly educated people in British Columbia, for example medical doctors, nurses college, institute and university teachers, public school teachers, social workers and many others who are not enjoying the promises of this social capital agenda. Their perspectives and interests are largely ignored in government policy making. The new digital economy is not producing prosperity for workers and tends to favour compliant, rule-following employees instead of creative and critical thinking workers.

In contrast, the promises in the Charter for Public Education, representing a broad consensus of British Columbians call for students to play an active role together with others in the educational community in developing their goals and activities for learning. However, centralization of control over assessment and curriculum is contrary to the fundamental principles in the Charter for Public Education. He called for citizens committed to a democratic future to attack the social capital agenda, discredit its false promise of prosperity through acquiring social capital, foster a commitment to political action to establish humane and enlightening conditions of work, resist centralized testing and accountability, shift administrative authority back from the province to local school boards and support pedagogical practices based on students playing an active role in their own education.