TFEU presentation to EC re Lesson Aids April 23, 2009

Thanks for the opportunity to talk to you today. I'll introduce the four staff people who work in Lesson Aids presently:

Sandy Drummond has worked in Lesson Aids for 35 years
Alison Gignac has worked at the Federation for 25 years (17 in LA)
Jean McDermott has worked part-time in LA for 10 years, and
Moneca Vance has worked at the Federation for 16 years (8 in LA)

I'm not sure when you are voting on the question of whether to maintain a lesson aids service but we have been led to believe the outcome of that vote is clear, and we are not going to try to change your minds, and I won't argue that it is your right to make those decisions.

I'm sure you are aware of how valuable the lesson aids service has been for your members over the years and I'm sure it could be again, perhaps as a hybrid model of BCTF-evaluated text and online resources. We know the culture of communication is changing—paper vs computer screens—and we want the BCTF to be run in an efficient and economical way.

- Besides being a place for new and beginning teachers to obtain lesson plan ideas; for PSAs to produce and provide resources economically; for retired teachers to share their expertise; it has been a positive face for the BCTF not only at the AGM, our own PSA conferences, but at conferences with your education partners and at colleges and universities for education students.

- I think that wherever the BCTF leaves a positive impression, it is a good thing. We see this as a missed opportunity to provide a direct and visual professional link to the members to support their daily work in the classrooms. Already this year, the service has been at 34 conferences, and in fact, Lesson Aids is attending two conferences in Surrey for elementary and secondary teachers on May 1.

- There have already been memos and e-mails from people concerned about ending the service.

Process
We are concerned about the process and the effects of your decisions on our members. TFEU was given notice of organizational change but with no indication of what that change might look like on January 26.

Although you may have known that this was going to happen—we did not. The union gets these notifications of organizational change with absolutely no details attached but with assurance that consultation will take place. A meeting with one member of Lesson Aids, the director of PSID, the HR Personnel director, and the executive director took place on January 13, but there was no union representation. Prior to this date, information was solicited from PSID admin staff, PSA Council, and PIAC, but the support staff was not consulted formally. (One staff member with three management people) Incidentally, to our

knowledge, there was no canvassing of the general membership or frequent users of the service for their input.

We were first alerted in a real way when someone at the AGM approached a Lesson Aids staffperson and said, "So I guess there won't be any Lesson Aids next year!"
Rob Taylor's "brief" review of the service and Sandy Drummond's minimal input into that review does not constitute consultation—particularly because the exact nature of the intention of the review was unknown. In fact, the staff were excited to think finally there was some hope for renewing the service.

I'd just like to say that we have a much different view of consultation—it is "the view of consultation" that we learned here working for the teachers of BC.

In fact, in the new brochure we received this week on page 3 it says: *A respectful workplace is an environment of mutual support and respect. Examples of some of the many characteristics of a respectful workplace include:*

- *Input is sought from individuals who will be affected by decisions.*

If your intentions had been made clear to the union earlier, we may have been able to make a presentation today to address the reasons that the LA service has not been able to survive and perhaps come up with some suggestions about a newer, more efficient, online service for BCTF members. The only thing I can come up with right now is this analogy:

If you plant a tree expecting it to bear fruit for years and years, and you don't water it, and you don't fertilize it, and you don't prune it, and nurture and care for it – it dies. That is what has happened to the BCTF Lesson Aids Service.

The people

Now, we have four people, who tried to do a good job on the dying branches of that tree, who have no idea where they are going to be working on July 1. They have identified themselves for years as Lesson Aids staff. As employees, we pour a lot of who we are into our positions and when that is taken away, we need time to adjust – it is like snatching our identity away. The other sad result of this cutting 2.66 staff from our bargaining unit means that the young people who are at the bottom of the ladder, the young women who we have been mentoring and teaching to take over some of the positions, will be lost to us.

Up until we met with the Executive Director on March 26, we had no idea the service was being cut completely. We thought there may be a different model and that the staff would be consulted about a possible new service. But, finally, on April 16 we received a memo that clearly stated the intention to discontinue the service.

I am asking that in future, if we—as your support staff—are brought into the consultative process in a meaningful way—the TFEU members who work every day at the BCTF—will definitely have something positive to contribute. We don't like being invisible.

– Kathleen Smith, TFEU president