

Fear of a U.S.-owned Terasen

As deadlines loom for the sale of Terasen Gas to American energy company Kinder Morgan, more B.C. residents are voicing concern.



- Rob Kruyt, 24 hours

The possible sale of Terasen Gas to a U.S. company has many B.C. residents concerned.

Investment Canada Act until proper public consultation is done.

"Movement is happening, things are on the go to (sell Terasen) to a foreign company. It's absolutely horrendous there

hasn't been public input in this," said Davies.

But Terasen Gas spokesperson Dean Pelkey told *24 hours* that the public stands to benefit from the sale, since the majority of their shareholders are mutual funds and pension plans companies.

"All Canadians are going to see increased value and benefit from that," said Pelkey, adding Terasen's operations won't change, and rates will still be subjected to the same regulatory body, the BCUC.

Terasen shareholders are expected to approve the sale at a special general meeting next week. The BCUC is expected to reach a decision by mid-November and if the sale is approved, the deal could be sealed by the end of this year.

- Robyn Stubbs, 24 hours

Heating bills skyrocketing

How much can you afford to pay to keep warm this winter?

Terasen Gas raised the rate of natural gas by 13 per cent at the beginning of October, and between cold weather and recent natural world disasters putting high demand on our gas, it could get higher still, said Terasen Gas spokesperson Dean Pelkey.

Canadian homeowners are now paying 50 per cent more to heat their houses than they were five years ago, with the average bill now \$1,533, more than \$500 more than July 2000.

- Robyn Stubbs, 24 hours

**Michael
GEOGHEGAN**

GUEST SHOT

The three real issues behind the teachers' strike

When teachers walked off the job the day before the Thanksgiving Day long weekend many parents, including myself, assumed that we would see a one- or two-day strike and then teachers would return to work.

Here are the three main reasons why that has not happened:

Demographics:

Like in nearly every other job category, teachers are predominantly made up of aging baby boomers, who are now approaching retirement. So let's say you are 60 years old and have taught for 30 years and now decide to retire. Your pension income is set at 70 per cent of the average of your top five years of income.

This is where we get down to the crux of the issue. At the end of the provincial government's three-year 0, 0 and 0 contract, a teacher in B.C. with 30 years experience would make \$53,000 per year while a teacher in oil-rich Alberta would make \$71,000 per year. That wage gap is the difference between retiring on about \$3,000 per month versus \$4,000 per month pension income.

Working Conditions:

Back in 1990 during the last days of the Socred administration teachers took job action around working conditions. Limits on class sizes were put in place and special needs students, i.e. those with severe physical or mental disabilities were limited to no more than two per classroom.

Although it is debatable whether or not having a class of 30 students is that

much worse than having a class of 20, what is clear is that increasing the percentage of special needs kids, without increasing the number of teaching assistants, is leading to mayhem in the classrooms.

So why aren't the teachers making this a front-and-centre issue this time around? Because teachers figure that as classroom situations continue to deteriorate that sooner or later parents will squawk and that if enough of us do that then Victoria will provide more funding for teaching assistants.

Politics:

Over the last 20 years the leadership of the BCTF has become ever more closely aligned with that of the B.C. NDP. The BCTF openly campaigned on behalf of the NDP during the last provincial election and a former BCTF President, David Chudnovsky, even got himself elected as an NDP MLA.

This political alignment has been incredibly damaging to the BCTF in that it has created a thoroughly antagonistic relationship with the provincial government and has led to a situation where any of teachers' concerns, legitimate or otherwise, are dismissed as political posturing by the BCTF on behalf of the NDP.

The lesson to be learned here for teachers is that they are better off having a union that has the ability to negotiate with the provincial government regardless of which political party is in power.

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Bully book author to speak in Vancouver

Bullying happens in school, on sports teams, and in after-school clubs, and it's time for it to stop, says a best-selling American author.

"It's not normal, it's not natural and it's not a part of growing up," said Barbara Coloroso, author of

The Bully, The Bullied and the Bystander and keynote speaker at the About Face symposium tomorrow at Canada Place.

And out of the three kinds of bullying: Verbal, physical and relational, verbal bullying is by far the most common, she said.

"Boys and girls do it equally well

and it's a deadly combination, where we have bullicides (suicides because of bullying), and homicides," like the 1997 Reena Virk murder, said Coloroso yesterday.

To register for tomorrow's event, visit www.aboutfacesymposium.com.

- Robyn Stubbs, 24 hours

What's on your mind?

MORE WE WASTE too many valuable resources on a "flu pandemic" (*24 hours*, Oct 12) that may or may not materialize, let's get some practice by dealing with a real pandemic, one that would cost virtually nothing to eradicate. This pandemic preys upon teens and even pre-teens, worldwide, for decades, and there's no end in sight. The real pandemic? Tobacco, which currently kills about 5 million people each and every year. That toll is expected to climb rapidly as the nicotine cartel exploits Third World countries.

- Errol E. Povah, via e-mail

HAVE THE PARENTS OF B.C. gone totally insane? I am 23 and look into this dispute as a former student. The parents wanting compensation to find accommodation for their young while the teachers strike make me sick. These teachers are not "overpaid babysitters." Teachers develop the much-needed skills for survival in today's society. They teach not only math and science, but values of culture, discipline, respect, self worth and freedom. Thank you to all the teachers in BC for helping me develop from a student into an adult!

- Chris Corno, via e-mail

TO THE SPOILED TEACHERS here in Canada: If the teachers just work for their pocket, then I really feel ashamed for them. I was a teacher in China for over 10 years. Every day, I had to spend over four hours at home to prepare for class. What I was taught in the teacher's university is that teachers should not teach the students what are in the books but also devote love and enthusiasm in education to the classroom. Unfortunately, the teachers are just working for money, not for what they should be, as "soul engineers."

- Delia Liu, via e-mail

I FIND IT AMUSING that Erin Airton, in her last column, accuses the B.C. Teachers Federation of losing credibility for defying the Liberal regime's back-to-work order and imposed contract. Recent polls show the majority of British Columbians quite rightly supports the teachers on the issues of class size, wages and special-needs students. Obviously, people aren't as gullible as the Liberals and their corporate media cohorts, as Airton would like.

- Marco Procaccini, Vancouver

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