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## From the Executive

Kelly Pitman, CCFA President



Hello friends.

Well, it's been an eventful two weeks.

On December 5, College administration met with union presidents to let us know that the province intended to cut \$2.5 million from the college's base budget. This would be in addition to an already anticipated \$2.5 million cut to deal with balancing increased costs against probable flat funding. That would be a \$5 million cut over all.

Since the new cut was tied to the withdrawal of federal funding for domestic ESL education, college administration then met with the ELD Department. Really, that withdrawal was old news, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) was still committed to funding ESL instruction, but would now give the money directly to institutions via a bidding process. College administration was informed by someone in the Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) that it seemed no colleges would be receiving that money. The CIC, however, had not yet announced which proposals would result in funding.

On Tuesday, I did a short interview for CBC's "On the Island." Then the news was out, resulting in several newspaper articles, some television coverage, a statement from AVED Minister Amrik Virk, and CBC interviews with Virk, CIC Minister Chris Alexander, NDP Advanced Education Critic David Eby, Camosun College Vice President Communications Advancement & Planning Joan Yates, and CCSS External Executive Simka Marshall. It seems that other colleges either were not informed at the same time or decided not to inform their unions of their situations. Not every institution has heard, so we do not yet know what the province-wide impacts will be.

The province is quoting the feds, who have insisted that ESL Education will be provided by some (as yet unnamed) agencies. What we fear, however, is that the federal money might go to some private institutions, meaning higher costs for this group of students, most of whom do not have money to burn. A year and a half ago, BC colleges stopped charging tuition for domestic ESL students because they were paying for something native speakers get for free, pre-college education. If the funding is allocated in such a way that it increases costs for students, that's unfair.

What we also fear is that the specialized and college-centred instruction that we currently provide will be lost. Developing English skills in a college setting, with clear and direct pathways into other programs is, according to Virk

himself, "the best model." Moving this education outside of colleges might limit the successful transition of students into post-secondary programs, and therefore enrollments over all. It would also be a sad loss of an important population at Camosun, a group of students who contribute a great deal to our diversity and therefore to the community we are.

And of course, it could mean jobs.

As you know, the CCFA Budget Committee recently sent a letter to administration regarding approaches to cuts at the college. If you have seen the Camnews announcement for Monday, December 16, you will know that the college has instituted a hiring freeze for the time being. That seems wise. I am even more encouraged that the college is willing to do a broad canvas as it prepares for the possibility of losing positions. Obviously, administration cannot promise to make cuts only in areas where people want to go, but a commitment to considering that information is a step forward.

In the meantime, FPSE and the Canadian Federation of Students-BC announced a provincial campaign to save ESL education in post-secondary institutions, but likely not much will happen until the new year. The CIC has stated it will announce the recipients of funding on January 8, and in mid-January, Kathryn Laurin will present our case to the federal Treasury Board, which must approve the withdrawal of funds from provincial management. I am keeping in touch with my provincial counterparts, and I know that instructors in our ELD Department are doing their best to communicate with students and to promote our cause.

Part of our message has got to be that we are already chronically underfunded and that it's time for the provincial government to align its actions with its words. That was the subject of the letter I sent to The Times Colonist and which they published last Saturday. You can read it below. It can also be found on the CCFA Website: <http://www.camosunfaculty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/TimesColonistDecember14.pdf>

Our conversations with administration, by the way, have been respectful and forthright on both sides. Kudos to Camosun for keeping us apprised—this has not been the case at the other colleges.

I imagine there's a lot of emotion out there, and maybe a lot of questions too. Remember that the union is here for advice and support if you need it.

## *B.C. Liberals should step into ESL Breach*

Times Colonist (Victoria)  
14-Dec-2013  
Page A13  
By Kelly Pitman

Re: "Camosun cuts could trigger layoffs," Dec. 11.

Since the B.C. Liberals came to power, colleges have struggled to get by on reduced resources. The latest blow, the province's failure to commit to funding advanced English-as-a-second-language education for domestic students at B.C. colleges, is devastating.

Advanced Education Minister Amrik Virk blames the federal government. Certainly the retraction of federal funding is a problem. Perhaps Virk is advocating on behalf of our students as we speak -I've heard nothing from him about that. In the meantime, I call upon the B.C. Liberals to step into the breach.

If, as Virk stated, the current model is "the best model" and "the end goal is the students," why won't the provincial government properly invest in advanced language training? It's not as if colleges have been receiving their due. At Camosun, essentially flat funding has steadily eroded the value of our base budget. Even without this latest cut, we'd be cutting \$2.5 million in 2014-15. Now it's \$5 million. The Ministry Service Plan proclaims, "Investment in our post-secondary education is an investment in the future of British Columbia's communities." Prove it.

But if the province is going to keep cutting services to students, I invite Virk to come to the institutions himself and deliver the news. In January, our campuses will be teeming with learners, including new Canadians, who come to us to turn their dreams into action. I'm sure they'd love to hear directly from Virk about how much they matter.

Kelly Pitman, president Camosun College Faculty Association Victoria



I will be away from the college from December 18 to January 1. Mark Kunen will be acting president in my absence and can be reached at [kunen@camosun.bc.ca](mailto:kunen@camosun.bc.ca). I wish all of you a safe and restorative winter break.

## *Short Talk, Not Small Talk*

Mark Kunen

I run into people in the parking lot or hallways and often regret having to say, even to students, after a quick hello that I'm sorry; I'm on my way to a meeting, Let's talk soon, but soon tends not to come. Often I feel like the white rabbit in Alice in Wonderland. I can't stop to chat, can't stop to talk. I'm late. I'm late, I'm LATE!

Busyness abounds. Everyone has more to do than can be done, When the last item is scratched off the list, it's usually time to start a new list. What can get lost in this endless parade of tasks is time for us to just take each other in, to take a moment (or three) to let go of everything except recognition of each other's presence.

To address this reality, I sometimes approach someone I know and have missed contact with and invite that person to join me in a "three-minute conversation." Of course, people are free to decline the invitation, but I find that even the busiest people can let go for three minutes. What to talk about? Anything you want though I advise no gossip and little work talk. Even three minutes of silence could be a conversation of sorts. In my experience though I find the conversations run to topics that sparkle.

The idea is not exactly mine. It grew from remembering how my son, when he was about 3, would often say to me, "Let's have a conversation." I wish I could remember what we talked about, but I am sure we talked only of important things like trucks and railroad tracks, bubbles, bananas, and books. The conversations weren't timed, of course, but they were just a few minutes long, just enough for my son's objective to be achieved so that he could continue on

his way. As adults, we can aim for the same focus and intensity we experience when talking and listening to a child.



Of course, we have two or three minute conversations all the time as we cross paths or walk along with each other from place to place. But often these talks are circumscribed, careful. We're in the middle of or on the way to some business, so we just pass the time. We learn that each other is mostly fine though we know there are many gradations of fine, including not fine at all.

Instead of holding back because we have only a few minutes -- class is starting, a student is waiting, I'm behind on my email-- how about agreeing that, "We have three minutes!" Let's make good use of them. Right now a comet either did or did not survive its trip around (or into) the sun. Orcas are (I believe) composing poetry as we speak., and did you know that deer near Camosun cross streets at crosswalks? There's so much to talk about -- with each other.

The symbol of our age could be a person gazing at a screen. With all the media options, people can communicate with more people than ever before. Yet the Globe and Mail reports an epidemic of loneliness in Canada. An antidote to loneliness is shared focused attention of one person with another. Can that be achieved in three minutes?

It's worth a try.

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS :

**We want you to contribute to the Confluence: tell us about your groovy SD project, or the creative work you are doing with your students, or what you did on your summer holidays! The deadline is ongoing, so no pressure...**

Thanks.

This past weekend, I attended, on your behalf, a Workshop for Senior Grievance Officers put on by the CAUT (Canadian Association of University Teachers). One thing you may not have realized (I had not) is that membership in FPSE brings with it full membership in CAUT, with all the associated resources and experience. This workshop was a three-day affair, with topics ranging from concerns about the outsourcing of emails to academic freedom, from “respectful workplace” legislation to the dangers of the “right to work” movement.

As you can imagine, foremost in my own mind while I was there were the threatened cuts to domestic ESL. I took every possible advantage to spread the word and to ask advice. I was surprised that even other FPSE representatives there had not heard about it at that time (I think they have by now). While it is currently primarily a political concern, and thus not directly a relevant topic for the workshop, there will be implications for grievances down the road, depending on how things play out. Everyone was concerned and sympathetic, and I made contacts that may be useful in the future.

In relation to my own day-to-day work, the most interesting sessions for me were those on member-to-member conflict and issues around the new “respectful workplace” legislation. What was interesting with respect to the latter were warning bells rung about employers potentially using “respectful workplace” as an excuse to discipline members for basically not being nice to one another. I have not seen this here, but it is always good to be aware and vigilant about potential pitfalls. The speaker on member-to-member conflict was terrific, and I learned a lot from her.

FPSE’s own Weldon Cowan spoke about recent arbitrations related to maternity leaves for non-regular faculty, and reiterated FPSE’s commitment to expanding the rights of non-regulars. In another session, one of CAUT’s legal representatives talked about other recent arbitrations relating to the Charter “freedom to associate” and whether or not restrictions to bargaining rights were a breach of those Charter rights. There are several rulings on the books that could have implications for us in BC.

In another powerful session, David Hecker, Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers, spoke about the implications of the “right to work” movement and recent developments in the US. How can we continue to defend the collective agreement in a world where the Rand formula has been undermined?



Overall, it was all extremely valuable for me and a great learning experience: I asked a lot of questions, took lots of notes, met many people from across the country and, I hope, represented your interests.

### CALL FOR MEMBERS:

The Contract Management Committee would love to have a few more members, particularly from areas not currently represented. We would welcome a representative from each of Trades and Tech, Sports, Health and Human Services and from any non-teaching area such as the library, the Center for Excellence, counselling, DRC or CE/CT. We meet every two weeks for two hours, time and date to be determined by members’ schedules. The more members we have, the better we can fulfill our duties and the lesser the workload for individual members, especially those volunteering their time. If you are interested and have further questions, please contact me or any of the current CMC members (Patricia Gaudreault, Judith Hunt, Mark Kunen, and Kelly Pitman).



With the English Language Development Department in the spotlight due to the threat of major cuts, I thought it a good idea as a member of the department to explain what we do and who we serve.

The English Language Development Department delivers courses at basic and intermediate levels of English (ELD 032 to 064), and upper levels, (072 to 097), and is located at both campuses. The 07 levels give students the pre-requisites to get into trades courses and the regular Health Care Assistant (HCA) course, while the 09 levels provide students with a grade 12 English equivalent that they can use to get into first-year courses at the college. At the same time, we have an HCA course that is run specifically for ESL students and includes language support. Students can get into this program after completing the intermediate levels of ELD 052 and 054.

The ELD Department came into its present form in 2004 with Access renewal. Prior to that, there was an ESL Department, based mainly at Interurban, and upper-level college prep courses in the English Department in Arts and Science, based at Lansdowne. With the coming together of all the courses and faculty, a new department and a new name came into being.

In the past, approximately half of our students were immigrants or Canadian citizens and half international, but with the increase in international students, the number of immigrants and citizens in the program is now closer to 40%. While the international students tend to be young students fresh out of high school, the domestic students are of all ages and backgrounds. We serve students who are internationally trained professionals such as engineers, doctors, or accountants who need to better their English skills in order to get appropriate employment. We also provide English language training to young students who have gone through high school here but haven't managed to pass their grade 12 English. And we serve immigrants who have come to Canada without a lot of English who may be trying to get basic language skills while working in one or more survival jobs that will allow them to feed their families.

A large percentage of our students go into other programs in the college, whether it be university transfer or a course such as culinary arts training to get into the job market more quickly. Many students who start with very little English eventually complete their grade 12 equivalent and then continue further to complete an undergraduate or graduate degree, open a successful business in town, or get a job in the community – and sometimes at the college.

If we do indeed lose our capacity to serve these students, it's unclear how they will be able to get their language education. The Intercultural Association downtown is an excellent settlement agency that also provides ESL training, but it is already filled to capacity, and it isn't able to provide the same academic pathways, opportunities and courses that Camosun does. Students at Camosun can get credit in provincially articulated academic English courses while upgrading their math, science or computer skills, or while taking certain first-year courses, and they can also transfer to other BC colleges and universities. They have supports and opportunities at the college that simply aren't available in a settlement agency such as ICA which has a very different focus.

While the importance of educating people to contribute fully to our society and economy should in itself be ample reason to continue funding immigrant language training at the college, the loss of immigrants and citizens in the ELD program could also have negative effects on our ability to attract international students. These students, who tend to be from a limited group of countries, profit greatly from having a mix of language groups, backgrounds, and cultures in their classes and have come to Canada precisely because they want to learn in a multilingual environment. With the province relying so heavily on international student dollars to help balance the books, and with their concern over the skills gap and a lack of trained workers, cutting our immigrants' access to language education will surely result in the province cutting its own financial throat. Clearly the loss of our immigrant students at Camosun would be a loss for us all.

## Confessions of a Boycotter

Kelly Pitman,



It's almost Christmas, and the mass shopping expedition of the western world is at its peak. I like giving gifts, but December is relatively peaceful for me because I have crossed many stores off my list, meaning I avoid malls. If I do pass through one, I am quickly overwhelmed. Who knew there were so many t-shirts, so many cell-phone covers, so many scarves and purses and shoes? It's a wonderland, but so full of ethical pitfalls that I quail at the complexity.

Yes, I am one of those people who don't buy from certain merchants on principle. When someone tells me I should check out the sale at such-and-such or buy a so-and-so, I often respond with a murmured oh, I don't shop there because . . . (insert damaging practices here). I shrug, half in apology, for though I do not press others to follow my lead, some people seem to take my reluctance as criticism of their own shopping. Indeed, people sometimes get defensive or even offensive. Here are the primary protestations.

*But it's so expensive! I can't afford to buy fair trade/organic/local.*

I know. It is. I am lucky to have a pretty good income. My own decisions not to shop at the dollar store or to indulge in the Chilean grapes are not meant to be condemnation of those who don't follow suit. Who am I to judge, especially when so many people are trying to get by on limited means? It is one of the tragedies of corporate capitalist culture that the poor are forced to exploit the even poorer. As someone who, though hardly wealthy, earns a decent wage, I hope that my preference for fair-trade and organic products will help stimulate competition and make prices for those products go down. Remember when "organic" or "fair trade" wasn't a selling point? It is now, and this has resulted in more choices. I try to put my money where I think it will do the most good. I don't ask others where they put theirs. And sometimes, I give in. Last week, I bought a box of mandarin oranges, certainly not organic, and picked and packaged under who knows what conditions? I wanted them so much. Which raises the next protestation . . .

*Well, you don't shop/eat at X, but you sometimes shop/eat at Y. Where do you think that tea is from? You don't think they're without blame, right?*

I agree that hypocrisy erodes credibility. And I haven't always done the research. And sometimes I don't know the right thing to do. Or I cave into convenience. And maybe that's inconsistent, and maybe I should be taken to task for it. On the other hand, there's an expression that goes "the perfect is the enemy of the good." Interestingly, this protestation often leads not to a call for me to try harder, but to a dismissal of trying at all. It suggests that, in a world of contradictory information and structural confusion, why bother? Why do anything, when you can't do everything? For me, that way madness lies. It may be that I don't always live up to my own principles. But if I decide that there's no point, I'm no better off than I was to start with. I have to make decisions moment by moment. I do my best because this is one of the ways I take stock of myself. Others have their own ways.

*But what's the point? Really, when you get down to it, everything is owned by a few companies.*

This is also a way of asking, why bother? Yes, it may be that Coca-Cola owns everything and I am fooling myself. I try to do the research and can wander the interwebs for hours, reading one horrific condemnation after another. There is so much more to learn. Am I to wait until I know everything before distributing my pennies? What can I do but work with the knowledge I have and try to learn more while I'm at it? Locally made furniture, but who made the fabric? Organic rice, but what is the parent company? It's not possible to know everything, so I have to decide based on what I know. I veto this. I veto that. I try to align my actions with my knowledge. Because the goal is not just to try not to hurt the world and its inhabitants too much, but also to act in accordance with my own principles.

For me that is the key. I am trying not to poison the world, not to torture the non-human animals, not to condemn my fellow human beings to servitude. I don't always succeed, that is true. But I have to try to live what I believe, for I have been entrusted with a conscience, all my own. Not with anyone else's. Just mine.

## A Taxing Christmas Carol

*Mahesh Kumar offers some seasonal advice for anyone planning a New Year tax review, with a little help from Charles Dickens.*

It was Christmas Eve and Ebenezer Scrooge was as cold as the ice on the end of his nose.

“Bah humbug!” he screamed to the carol singers who wished him a Merry Christmas.

Scrooge didn't believe in Christmas or in giving presents. His pleasures in life were accumulating wealth and avoiding taxes. The only reason he was content to grow old was so that he could claim the additional annual age credit of \$1,028 and receive Old Age Security.

That night, Scrooge was woken from his slumber to see the ghost of his old auditor, who had died the previous year after seeing what Scrooge wanted to claim as allowable business expenses.

“I am the Ghost of Christmas Past,” laughed the ghost as he showed Scrooge scenes of his childhood and his friendly mother. “Look how she cared for you,” he said. “Yet this year she will die of hypothermia while her nursing home saves up to pay 5% GST on heating. Why don't you give the nursing home a donation this Christmas?”

“Bah humbug!” Scrooge replied.

“It could have tax advantages for you,” said the ghost.

Scrooge smiled. “What do you mean?” he said.

“If you donate to a housing corporation in Canada consisting exclusively to provide low-cost housing for the aged, you can claim a tax credit of 15% on the first \$200 and 29% on any amounts in excess of \$200.”

Scrooge's smile grew broader.

A few hours later he was woken again, this time by the Ghost of Christmas Present. The phantom led the cheapskate to the ghostly queue at his local tax office where he was shown a vision of his young grandchildren, in tears because they had no presents.

“Why don't you give them something this season of goodwill?” asked the ghost. “There could be a tax advantage.”

Scrooge's eyes sparkled. “What do you mean?” he said.

“Give them some money to save. Any interest will be covered by their basic personal credit of \$1,656. Better yet, invest the money for them in a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) to fund their post-secondary education. The Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG) means the government will contribute up to \$500 to the plan annually based on your contributions and the Canada Learning Bond (CLB) means they will also contribute up to \$2,000 over 15 years.”

Scrooge smiled again.

He was woken for a third time in the dim morning. “I am the ghost of Christmas Yet to Come,” said the visitor, who promptly pulled Scrooge off to his own funeral. Scrooge was terrified, not at the severe lack of mourners but at the size of his final tax bill.

“Why didn't you give presents each Christmas to avoid having such a large tax bill when you die?”

“Tell me more,” came the reply, as

Scrooge beamed another smile.

“All of your investments are deemed to be disposed when you die, so any accrued income they have earned is subject to tax on your final return. It is best to give these investments to your heirs over time to spread the gains over multiple tax years and stay in a lower tax bracket.”

On Christmas morning Scrooge carried out all his tax saving plans and even organized a Christmas party for his family and friends in celebration of lower tax charges.

But Scrooge did not survive to see the benefits of his plans. He died that night, taken from this world because he gave presents for tax purposes rather than out of kindness. Even in his final moments, however, he was said to be smiling, because he discovered that his estate would receive a one-time CPP death benefit of up to \$2,500, his wife would receive a survivor's pension based on his contributions, and his wife could apply for an Allowance for a Survivor at age 60 if her income was under \$22,488 and she had not remarried.

It's exactly how he would have wanted to go.

## The Best Thing (About My Work at Camosun)

The best thing about the work I do here at Camosun is that I get to continuously learn and be a part of learning in the lives of students. Creating positive, meaningful connections that helps move students forward towards their own goals while exploring the field of psychology is an

amazing privilege I enjoy. I love finding psychology in the everyday and making it relevant for all of us. (Denise Iaobucci, Psychology)

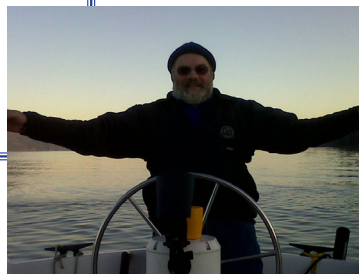


The best thing about the work I do at Camosun College is building positive, and fun, relationships with my students. I really love working with them, especially in one-on-one office visits, to help develop scientific minds;

that tangible, magical moment when the lights are going on in their understanding really makes my day. (Larry Anthony, Biology)



The best thing is the people I work with. It sounds clichéd, but it's true. The BSN faculty and staff are dedicated to supporting students to become caring, competent, confident nurses and it shows every day in the extra mile they go to support student success. (Stephen Bishop, Nursing)



“The best thing about the work I do at Camosun College is having the privilege to be a part of students’ journeys of life changing learning. Our vision is not just a bumper sticker to me but is a reality that I get to witness and participate in every day. Our students are truly inspiring to me!” (Martha McAllister, CFCS)

