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See inside for details...



### School strike threat

The district's educational assistants are preparing to enact job action, after failing to come to agreement in the wake of protracted contract negotiations. **3**

### Rabbit island escape

A businessman is considering setting up a remote safe haven for the booming colony of rabbits that inhabit the green spaces in and around Richmond Auto Mall.

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FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2013

# Richmond News

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## Tapping into political waters

Just as fish don't know what water is, many Richmondites take for granted the abundance and quality of this precious resource — but that's changing. Young people, as well as city hall, are turning off the tap to waste, while activists question the commodification of what they believe should be a human right. See pages 10 & 11.

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# Upfront



## City workers rescue 'family-of-four'

BY ALAN CAMPBELL  
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A City of Richmond public works crew took like ducks to water to save a trapped Richmond "family."

The crew, along with bylaw officers, came to the rescue after worried residents called the city about a noisy family of ducklings who'd fallen through a storm grate and were trapped.

However, whenever anyone tried to rescue them from the sewer in the townhouse complex on Williams Road, the frightened ducklings ran further down the steep, dark drain.

The workers opened a manhole connecting the complex to the city system and two ducklings immediately waddled out.

But the noise from people gathered around the opening scared the other little ducklings away.

The only way to get the ducklings to the

manhole was to run water down a pipe to float them towards the manhole.

The residents then chipped in to loan their garden hoses to city staff to feed water into the manhole. This produced two more ducklings, but one was quite waterlogged by the time it made its way to the manhole.

City worker Zach Wilkinson then took the ducklings under his wing and placed them in a bucket and into the city truck where he blow-dried them at the truck's defrost vent.

He then towed off the soggy duck with a rag and held it by the vent to give it a little extra attention as it was soaked through.

And, just when the bylaw officers were preparing to take the ducklings to an animal shelter, residents directed them to the ducklings' concerned mother and another duckling in the next yard.

City staff placed them on the ground in front of her and she happily waddled off with her reunited family.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

City worker Zach Wilkinson tends to one of the ducklings that got trapped in a sewer drain. Wilkinson held it under his truck's defrost vent to dry it off.

## School EAs poised to strike

CUPE job action at year end imminent as contract talks stall

BY PHILIP RAPHAEL  
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Expect limited job action by CUPE workers in Richmond schools before the summer holidays begin.

That's the message from a union official who represents about 1,000 local workers employed as education assistants and non-teaching staff in the district.

June Kaiser, president of CUPE 716, said the action is designed to try and re-start negotiations with the employer which have been stalled since April, the last time the two sides met. At that time CUPE was told there was no money available for any wage increases.

"It won't be disruptive," Kaiser said of the pending strike. "We won't be disrupting any tests, or whatever. It will basically be an information picket line."

Kaiser would not reveal exactly when the action will take place, although the school district will be given 72 hours notice.

She added the government's claim of no funds for any increases does not wash given the recent salary increases for ministerial aids.

Kaiser estimated that some of those pay hikes amounted to more than what some of her members take home annually.

"We want what's fair and reasonable," Kaiser said.

"Basically, we want what the other public service unions have settled for."

She added it would mean a raise of around two per cent. Currently, CUPE 716 workers in Richmond earn from around \$19 an hour for custodial staff, to \$30 an hour for trades workers.

Richmond School Board Chair, Donna Sargent, said the district does not have any "spare money lying around."

"All boards across B.C. really said the same thing," Sargent said. "We don't have money for this, so if there is a negotiated settlement and there is an increase in wages, that would have to come from the government."

If the province downloads the cost of a wage increase on Richmond and other school districts around the province, the only way to handle the situation would be through staffing cuts, Sargent said.

It's not a road Richmond wants to go down.

"It just can't happen," Sargent said.

If the two sides fail to reach an agreement over the summer, further, full-blown strike action after the holidays could be a reality, Kaiser said.

"Come September, if we are not presented with a fair and reasonable increase, we won't have any choice but to do a full-scale strike," she said.

## Mall cop delivers baby in shopping centre

Aberdeen Centre retailers want to shower mystery mom with gifts

BY ALAN CAMPBELL  
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If ever the phrase "born to shop" was to be coined, a new arrival at Aberdeen Centre can lay claim.

On Saturday afternoon, with no warning other than water breaking near a second floor escalator, a woman, who was with her sister, went into labour.

However, such was the rush for the baby to get shopping, and with firefighters and paramedics still en route, one of the centre's security guards proceeded with the 45-minute delivery, with the help of a 911 operator.

Joey Kwan, Aberdeen's spokeswoman, said by the time

firefighters arrived, so had the baby — a healthy boy.

According to Kwan, one of the first firefighters on the scene ended up cutting the baby's umbilical cord.

Now, a whole host of mall merchants are stepping forward to shower the new mom and baby with gifts, dinners and even a birthday cake every year for the boy until he hits 18.

There's only one snag, in the rush to make sure mom and child were safe and secure, no one took her name.

If you are the mom, or you know who she is, or you know the hero security guard, email *The News* at acampbell@richmond-news.com.

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