



surrey teachers' association

Bargaining Bulletin

www.surreyteachers.org

October 2011

President's Message

Thank You For "Staying the Course"

We want to thank all of you for maintaining the solidarity to "stay the course" in our current job action! We will be facing new challenges in the coming weeks and months and it is more important than ever for us to work together to meet them. Thank you for all of your efforts on behalf of our students, K-12 public education in British Columbia, and the teaching profession. Through your work we can continue to inspire and educate our future leaders to build a more just society!



Denise Moffatt
President

Job action is having an impact

Our Phase 1 job action is having an impact. The job action has been successful in putting pressure on administration. We are having an effect while maintaining positive relationships with parents. Across the province teachers are standing united and saying "no" to the bullying tactics of this government.

What needs to happen?

Clearly feeling the pinch, the Minister of Education, George Abbott, has hypothesized about back to work legislation, ironically while we are working! Instead of pushing around teachers, Minister Abbott should revise the government's mandate. In the meantime, BCPSEA has been left with nothing to bargain. They've delayed providing counter proposals, and wasted time questioning and re-questioning our bargaining team and getting caught up in technicalities. With no mandate to negotiate, there will be no deal. Teachers will not accept a sub-zero collective agreement.

Teachers are committed to getting a negotiated settlement at the table. It's time for government to stop wasting our time. We need a solution that is good for both teachers and students. Good working relationships, respect for teachers, working and learning conditions that support learning and local solutions to local problems are what is needed. We've waited long enough.

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Government's "net-zero" mandate has a chilling effect on bargaining

BCTF proposals

Salaries commensurate with other teachers in Canada, particularly Alberta

BC teachers' salaries are now the lowest in Western Canada and Ontario, despite the fact that BC has the highest cost of living and housing prices in the country. An experienced Vancouver teacher now makes \$20,000 less than a teacher with the same qualifications and experience in Lethbridge.

Improved benefit coverage

Teachers' benefits vary from district to district, but in all cases, there have been no improvements in almost 20 years.

25% preparation time for all teachers

Elementary teachers in Ontario have a minimum of 220 minutes of preparation time each week, and secondary teachers have 25%—double the amount that teachers in BC have. Many teachers in Manitoba and Saskatchewan also have 200 minutes of preparation time in contract.

Top up for EI Pregnancy/Parental and Compassionate Care leave benefits to 100% of salary

While almost all teachers have top up provisions for pregnancy leave, few teachers have top up provisions for parental leave. No teachers have top up provisions for the eight weeks of Employment Standards mandated compassionate care leave.

Ten days bereavement leave for death of a family member

Local provisions for bereavement leave vary, but five days is a common provision. When a spouse or child dies, five days of leave is often not enough.

Sick leave and guaranteed minimum salary for teachers teaching on call

Currently most teachers teaching on call do not earn sick leave credits for time worked and they are not guaranteed a minimum amount of work in a year, despite making themselves available on a daily basis.

Work-day limits for distributed learning (DL) teachers

Currently DL teachers have no limits on their work day. Many DL teachers work with students in the evenings and on weekends based on student needs. There needs to be limits to the long hours they work.

BCPSEA demands

No increases to salaries

Government's "net-zero" mandate has restricted BCPSEA's ability to bargain fairly with teachers. Despite fair increases negotiated with police officers, nurses, municipal, federal, and private sector employees, government has singled out provincial and school district employees for wage freezes.

No improvements to benefits

The government's "net-zero" mandate applies to improvements in benefits as well as salaries. This makes bargaining a fair collective agreement extremely difficult.

No increases in preparation time

The government's "net-zero" mandate means that BCPSEA is prevented from negotiating increased preparation time for teachers.

Filling of posted positions based on "suitability, performance, experience, and qualifications"

BCPSEA has demanded that teachers give up their rights to obtain posted positions based on their qualifications and seniority. Instead, they are insisting on giving administrators the right to fill vacant positions with teachers who they want.

Right to force transfer teachers for educational, financial, or "administrative reasons"

BCPSEA has demanded that a teacher give up her or his rights to a position whenever the administrator wants someone new for the job. We go into bargaining to make things better for our members, not worse.

Yearly evaluation through a new "performance review" process

BCPSEA has demanded that teachers give up the current fair evaluation procedures for a simplified administrator conducted "performance review."

Right to dismiss a teacher after one unsatisfactory "performance review"

BCPSEA has demanded that a principal have the right to terminate a teacher's employment based on a single "performance review" of the teacher's "planning, collaboration, instructional techniques, and assessment and reporting practices."

Mandatory professional development requirements determined by administration

BCPSEA is demanding that principals have the right to dictate individual professional improvement plans for teachers, including mandatory requirements for specific professional development activities.

STA Proposals

- Replacement of all teachers on first day of absence
- Increase professional development funding
- Yearly transit pass payroll deduction with one month incentive for joining
- Recognition of related work experience for salary grid placement
- Seniority rights upon re-hire
- Improvements to health and safety standards
- First aid allowance
- Seniority based transfer
- Reimbursement for expenses associated with extracurricular activities
- Child care spaces in daycares located in Surrey schools
- Equivalent collective agreement rights for adult educators and summer school teachers
- Sunset clause for personnel matters
- Employment equity for aboriginal teachers
- School based team meetings during the instructional day
- Improvements to class size, composition and specialist ratios
- Housekeeping items

Surrey School Board Proposals

- Fix type errors

Fill These Shoes

On World Teachers' Day, Wednesday October 5, Surrey teachers gathered in front of DEC to demand government fill the empty shoes of 346 teachers missing from Surrey schools. 262 of those teachers would be working in specialist positions, including librarians, counselors, and learning support teachers. These teachers would be working with students today, if government had remedied the unconstitutional Bills 27 and 28, which illegally stripped class size and composition language from our collective agreement. To symbolize the impact of these cuts, nearly 300 pairs of shoes, donated from Surrey teachers, were lined up on the grass outside of DEC, along with multi-coloured cutouts, labeled with the requests for teachers from schools throughout the district.



STA President Denise Moffatt addressed the crowd and explained that these teachers would cost government \$33 million, roughly a 5% increase in Surrey's budget. Specialist teachers spoke about the impact these cuts have had in their schools and the impact this has on student learning. For a more detailed account please visit http://www.bcclocalnews.com/surrey_area/surreyleader/news/131183918.html

What Happened Last Time We Took Job Action?

Here is a list of the benefits that flowed to members from the 2005 strike and the benefits that flowed to members from the 2006 negotiations with BCPSEA.

1. \$40 million for grid harmonization
2. \$40 million to BCTF SIF for SIP "rebate"
3. \$20 million paid into Inflation Adjustment Account of the Teachers' Pension Plan
4. \$20 million to hire 570 FTE teachers for class size and composition
5. \$190/day for TOCs (up from \$165)
6. 2009 -10 fiscal dividend
7. 2% SIP allowance
8. Commitment to employment equity for Aboriginal teachers
9. Compassionate care leave provision
10. EHB unlimited lifetime maximum
11. Elimination of categories 2 and 3
12. Establishment of the round table
13. Grid, allowance, and TOC salary increases of 2.5%, 2.5%, 2.5%, 2.5%, 2.0%
14. Harmonization to the top step of each scale
15. Industrial Inquiry Commission on teacher bargaining structures
16. Joint study of benefits
17. Mileage rate increases
18. Minimum of 90 minutes prep time per week for elementary teachers
19. Negotiation/arbitration for alternate school calendars
20. Negotiation/arbitration for middle school provisions
21. Optional 12-month pay plan
22. Portability of up to 10 years' seniority for members who move districts
23. Portability of up to 60 days of sick leave for members who move districts
24. Provincial category 5+
25. Recruitment and retention 3.0% lift and annual allowance of \$2,200 in remote districts
26. Reimbursement for costs related to ferries and water taxis
27. Reimbursement for up to \$600 for vehicle loss or damage
28. Reimbursement for up to \$150 for professional materials loss or damage
29. Scale placement for TOCs on 4th consecutive day of work
30. Seniority accumulation for temporary or term contract teachers
31. Seniority accumulation for TOCs working on scale
32. Signing incentive of \$4,000 per FTE member



A Profound Answer

The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life.

One man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?"

To stress his point he said to another guest, "You're a teacher, Bonnie. Be honest. What do you make?"

Bonnie, who had a reputation for honesty and frankness replied, "You want to know what I make?" She paused for a second, then began...

"Well, I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could.

"I make kids sit through 40 minutes of class time when their parents can't make them sit for 5 without an Ipad, Playstation or Netflix.

"You want to know what I make?" She paused again and looked at each and every person at the table.

"I make kids wonder.

"I make them question.

"I make them apologize and mean it.

"I make them have respect and take responsibility for their actions.

"I teach them to write and then I make them write. Keyboarding isn't everything.

"I make them read, read, read.

"I make them show all their work in math.

"I make my students from other countries learn everything they need to know about English while preserving their unique cultural identity.

"I make my classroom a place where all my students feel safe.

"Finally, I make them understand that if they use the gifts they were given, work hard, and follow their hearts, they can succeed in life." Bonnie paused one last time and then continued.

"Then, when people try to judge me by what I make, with me knowing money isn't everything, I can hold my head up high and pay no attention because they are ignorant. You want to know what I make? I MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

"What do you make Mr. CEO?"

His jaw dropped, he went silent.

Teaching is... the profession that makes all other professions possible!

(from re-circulated email — unknown author)

BCTF rejects sub-zero

The BCTF bargaining team continues to stand firm in the face of the government's and BCPSEA's (British Columbia Public School Employers' Association) empty-handed, concession-seeking position.

Accepting zero on salaries would put BC teachers even further behind teachers in many other provinces and is made worse by inflation and the ever-increasing cost of living in one of the most expensive provinces in which to live.

Teachers working in Alberta and Ontario already earn \$11,000 to \$16,000 more than BC teachers on comparable scales with equivalent training and experience. If BC teachers receive no salary increase for 2011-12, a teacher in Edmonton with equivalent years of experience and education will earn \$95,354 compared to \$74,353 in Vancouver. The earnings gap will widen from \$16,860 to \$21,001.

As BCTF president Susan Lambert has said, "Paying decent salaries to teachers is an investment that will pay off in preserving a system that is one of the best. Satisfaction in teaching comes from a combination of good conditions for the work and fair and reasonable salaries."

This provincial government has given tax breaks to business, built stadium roofs, given payouts for corporations, and increased their own pay ahead of fair treatment, and is expecting lower- and middle-income earners, and public services, to pick up the cost. It's time for this government to demonstrate respect for teachers and a commitment to public education at the bargaining table.

Other provinces support fair compensation for teachers

All provinces in Canada are dealing with the effects of a global economic crisis yet only the BC government is imposing a sub-zero freeze on teacher salaries. Ontario teachers in Toronto and Ottawa are scheduled to receive a 3% salary increase as of September 2011. In February 2011, Alberta government budget documents show a 4.4% salary increase for teachers for 2011-12. A recent mediator's report recommended salary increases for Saskatchewan teachers of up to 10.51% over three years depending where teachers are on the salary scale. This report also shows that the minimum and maximum average annual teacher salary in British Columbia is the lowest of all the Western provinces. Why is it the BC government has no money for teachers when other provinces are able and willing to provide funding for reasonable salary increases?

Local solutions are needed for local conditions

Local bargaining enabled teachers to negotiate provisions in collective agreements that addressed the unique and varied conditions that exist from one district to another throughout the province. This ability was largely curtailed with the introduction of provincial bargaining in 1994. In those first rounds of provincial bargaining, the government and BCPSEA were successful in restricting the consideration of local issues by arguing that nearly everything had a cost impact and could therefore only be negotiated at the provincial level. The upshot, known as the split of issues, has become enshrined in the provincial agreement, and provides for only a few, minor items, such as the use of bulletin boards to be negotiated at the local level.

An arbitrator has ruled recently in favour of the BCTF that the "split of issues" can be renegotiated. This ruling opened the door to meaningful bargaining.

We need more local bargaining. Districts vary enormously in regard to many factors—urban/rural, dispersion, and economic and demographic makeup. Local bargaining would enable teachers and boards to be more responsive to the needs of local communities.

Members want class size and composition back in contract

The BCTF is demanding that government and BCPSEA acknowledge the full impact of the Supreme Court ruling declaring Bills 27 and 28 (that stripped collective agreements of working/learning conditions language in 2002) illegal and unconstitutional. In our view the language that was lost should be reinstated and open for negotiation in the current round of bargaining. In remarking on the impact of Bills 27 and 28 the Justice said: "The legislation undoubtedly was seen by teachers as evidence that the government did not respect them to be valued contributors to the education system, having excluded them from any freedom to associate to influence their working conditions. This was a seriously deleterious effect of the legislation, one adversely disproportionate to any salutary effects revealed by the evidence."

So far the provincial government has given no indication that it is prepared to honour the ruling and respect the right of teachers to influence their working conditions through collective bargaining. In so many ways this round of bargaining is about insisting that the employer show respect for the profession and value the critical contribution teachers make to the prosperity, preservation, and well-being of a democratic, civil society.

Teachers are protective of autonomy and professional development

A key provision in collective agreements is the recognition of teacher autonomy in regard to practice and to the appropriate professional development. Autonomous practice is critical if we are to tailor instruction and assessment to the needs of individual students. Effective professional development is embedded in practice and built on individual self reflection.

BCPSEA wants to go in another direction. They see teachers as employees who are to be increasingly directed by the employer. This push to de-professionalize teachers is evident in what they are presenting at the bargaining table. BCPSEA has proposed deleting all collective agreement provisions on evaluation and discipline and dismissal. Instead teachers could be evaluated yearly through a subjective performance review free from any obligation for objective transparency or fair process.

Principals could require mandatory professional development activities.

The proposals would effectively end professional autonomy and leave members unprotected from arbitrary dismissal. They fly in the face of what the research and experience on effective professional development has to offer. This government needs to look at ways to support professional learning in a manner that respects teacher autonomy.



Advocating for Public Education

What do I say when parents or the public ask:

What about report cards?

I will communicate with you about your child's progress. If I have a concern, I might send you a note or give you a call. If you have questions, you can send a note in the planner, drop by after school, or give me a call.

Aren't you being unreasonable in your bargaining demands?

We have to maintain and recruit a highly educated and competent teaching force, and competitive salaries and benefits are part of that equation. Other groups have received increases (police and nurses) and so should teachers. We are the eighth lowest-paid teachers in Canada and live in the province with the highest cost of living.

(See page 2 "Government's 'net-zero' has a chilling effect on bargaining" and the BCTF website)

We are bargaining for better teaching conditions like limits on class size, guarantees there will be learning specialist teachers to help our neediest students, and librarian teachers to staff our libraries. We are trying to ensure success for ourselves and a quality education for our students. When we bargain it into the collective agreement, we have the tools to make sure that boards and the government live up to that agreement. We know that the public supports collective agreements that protect learning conditions (<https://www.bctf.ca/myBCTF/content.aspx?id=23807>).



When they say there's no money...

In fact, BC spends a smaller part of the provincial budget on education than most other provinces. It is fourth lowest in spending on education as a part of its GDP. We know from our polling that 70% of British Columbians think spending on education is too low.

(<https://www.bctf.ca/mybctf/default.aspx>) We have money for stadium roofs and highways. Investing in education is a prudent economic strategy. It is a matter of political will. It's also not fair that schools and students should be paying for a deficit that was created through an economic crisis caused by bankers and Wall Street. BC is not in a recession and there is tax room to raise money for schools. It's a matter of political will.



Questions/Feedback: contact bargaining@surreyteachers.org