

Where is the love?



No Love

As many of you have heard, the government has been making increasingly belligerent noises about our job action. Such vocal opposition suggests that we have been successful so far in making it clear that improvements in public education are sorely needed. However, the government has also been increasingly bold in its threats to legislate an end to Phase 1.

A lot will be happening in the coming few weeks. Teachers need to be clear on where things stand, on both sides of the bargaining table, in preparation to potentially voting on how we will respond to any imposed legislation. Please share this with all of your colleagues.



STATE OF BARGAINING

On February 3rd, BCPSEA chose not to attend a scheduled bargaining session. There was no prior notice, no subsequent explanation, and they refused to discuss other bargaining dates for February. Our provincial bargaining team has made it clear to BCPSEA that they believe there is much to negotiate, that a settlement is achievable, and that they are ready to bargain. BCPSEA, under government direction, have chosen to force an impasse.



OUR PRIORITIES AT THE BARGAINING TABLE

Over the past decade, funding for public education has plummeted from 25% of our provincial budget to 15%. By comparison, Alberta devotes 30% of its provincial budget to education. Our government must adjust its priorities if we are to sustain our high quality of public education.

Class Size and Composition: stripped from the contract by legislation in 2002, we would like articles of class size and composition returned to the bargaining table. Since that time, this has been the paramount priority for teachers, and continues to be so. Class size and composition is far and away the number one issue for teachers across the province.

The following, additional priorities are in no particular order.

Support For Special Needs: Over the past decade we have lost over 700 non-enrolling teachers. In each of our schools, we've seen a tragic decline in supports for our students with special needs.

Preparation Time: Our elementary teachers have the least amount of preparation time in the country.

Salary: The government's imposition of its "net-zero mandate at the bargaining table will result in net loss of salary. With the cost of living increasing by 2.5 – 3% per year, we are falling even further behind our colleagues across the country. Teachers in Alberta and Saskatchewan will be seeing negotiated salary increases this year.

Alberta teachers at the top of the increment scale make \$20,000/year more than their BC counterparts. We are the lowest paid

teachers in Western Canada, and 8th in the country.

PROPOSALS AND DEMANDS

Much is said in the press about teacher salary “demands.” The uninitiated would take from most media commentary that the only thing that teachers are interested in is more money in their pockets, and that if salary “demands” aren’t met, then there will be no deal.

Nothing could be further from the truth!

Our bargaining team has presented a salary “proposal.” It is a bargaining chip; it’s negotiable, just like all other “proposals.” It’s important for everyone to understand that distinction between “proposals” and “demands” at the bargaining table.

We have proposed 60 article amendments to our provincial collective agreement where we would like to negotiate improvements. In none of these proposals have we said that the terms are non-negotiable. BCPSEA has a similar number of *demands* for eliminating existing provisions within the collective agreement. They have made it clear that their demands are non-negotiable, insisting that implementation of the government’s **Education Plan** requires a systematic gutting of our existing agreement. Government continues to demand non-negotiable concessions; we continue to propose negotiable improvements.

CONCESSIONS

Today, with \$100/year provided by the board for our professional development funding, we are near the bottom of the barrel when compared with other districts across the province. In 1998, the last time that the STA conducted meaningful negotiations with our local school district, we sacrificed improvements to pro-d provisions in order to secure improvements to our class size and composition language.

In 2002, with the imposition of Bills 27 and 28 (found to be illegal by the Supreme Court) followed by the odious Bill 33, all class size and composition provisions, and non-enrolling teacher ratios, were ripped from the pages of local contracts across the province, and larger class sizes were imposed by legislation. There was no negotiation, no trading, and no improvements elsewhere in the contract in exchange. Having stated that the new Education Plan can only work if our collective agreement is “aligned” with ‘the Plan,’ the government is currently proposing similar legislative action, with a much, much more sweeping, and deeper dredging of our collective agreement.



It is extremely important that you notify the STA Office, as well as the Board Office, when you have a change of address, name, phone number, email, or other personal information.

BCTF Annual General Meeting 2012 Sooke Delegates

Local Reps:	Ed Berlando (EMCS)
	John Pearce (TTOC)
Delegates:	Kathryn Arkell (Belmont)
	Navi Bhatti (TTOC)
	Patrick Henry (President)
	Ian Johnson (Vice-President)
	Brian Hotovy (Spencer)
	Kristine Kosolofski (Happy Valley)
	Kelly Taylor (Poirier)
	Ilda Turcotte (John Stubbs)

THE EDUCATION PLAN

Better termed the “Fix The Teacher” plan, the government’s Education Plan focuses on teachers as the fundamental impediment to greater student success today. Within the plan, one can find elimination of the following:

- Professional Development Autonomy
- Professional Autonomy in the Classroom
- Seniority
- Due Process for Post and Fill
- Due Process for Dismissal

Under the plan:

- School principals will have the power to hire and fire at their discretion, regardless of seniority or due process.
- Each teacher will be told by their principal what their professional development goals will be at the start of each year.
- Teachers will be evaluated annually.
- Principals will have the power to fire those teachers who don’t meet the principal’s personal expectations.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 2012

17 Tri-District Pro-D Day

March 2012

1 Two-Hour Early Dismissal
2 Non-Instructional Day
7 Exec Meeting – 4pm –
STA Office
14 General Meeting
16 Schools Close for Spring Break
17-21 BCTF AGM
26 Back to School

THE MEANING OF INDEPENDENCE

On February 9th, local presidents across the province were called together for a meeting to discuss ideas for a collective response to government. Not surprisingly, on the morning that we met, the government instructed Labour Minister, Margaret MacDiarmid to appointment an independent fact finder. The fact finder’s task will be to analyze the state of bargaining and report back to the government on the prospects of a negotiated settlement.

Upon government’s request, Minister MacDiarmid leapt into action, stepped out of her office, and strolled to another office down the hall to appoint an “independent” fact finder. The fact finder is Minister MacDiarmid’s Assistant Deputy Minister of Industrial Relations Trevor Hughes. Given the measure of “independence” a member of the ministry will bring to the task, the results of his findings are predictable.



NEXT STEPS

The BCTF provincial executive committee will be compiling the information, ideas, proposals and suggestions that were generated during last week’s meeting of local presidents. At the most recent staff rep assembly, staff reps were presented with speculation on what government legislation might look like, as well as what our options for a collective response might be. Obviously, the measure of our response will be guided by a provincial vote in the event of any significant escalation of job action.

