

# Report *from the Chair*

BRITISH COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION

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By E-mail: 2 Pages

## Support Staff Bargaining

As you know, collective agreements between school districts and support staff unions expire on June 30, 2010 and bargaining preparation is well underway. There are 60 districts with 69 collective agreements and 11 unions. The unions that represent support staff are:

- Canadian Union of Public Employees
- International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE)
- BC Government Service Employees' Union (BCGEU)
- International Brotherhood of Teamsters (Teamsters)
- Construction, Maintenance, and Allied Workers (CMAW)
- United Steelworkers Workers' of America
- Trades Bargaining Council (SD 39)
- Non-Teaching Staff Association (NTSA)
- West Vancouver Municipal Employees Association (WVMEA)
- Professional Employees Association
- Allied Specialist Association.

As employers we operate under a delegated authority model. While BCPSEA is the accredited bargaining agent, the authority to bargain is delegated to each district or groups of districts in the case of the Okanagan Labour Relations Council (OLRC). Each agreement is subject to ratification by the local board of education and BCPSEA, ensuring that the agreement is consistent with the provincial compensation mandate.

Our approach to bargaining is unique in the public sector and requires considerable coordination and effective communication between boards, bargainers, and the association. The challenge, when bargaining in a multi-employer environment, is to ensure that one employer is not played off against another and that employers bargain with the provincial implications of a settlement in mind.

On June 1, 2010 CUPE BC issued a press release stating:

"The CUPE BC K-12 Presidents' Council served formal notice today to the BC Public School Employers' Association on behalf of member locals. Local unions also served notice individually to their employers."

...Key issues for school staff will be job security, addressing the unpaid work of education assistants and ensuring proper funding for long-term disability and other benefits...CUPE will be seeking ongoing support for province-wide initiatives like the Public Education

Benefits Trust, which provides cost-effective and comprehensive benefits, and the Support Staff Education Adjustment Committee, which deals with training and professional development to ensure a workforce that can meet the needs of learners.

...Given that the teachers' agreement provides a 2 per cent wage increase in the coming year...the issue of wage fairness for staff whose work keeps the public education system running will be on the table."

In addition to CUPE providing notice to bargain, three unions in two school districts provided notice earlier.

These will be challenging rounds of bargaining for our sector but to date, the following agreements have been concluded consistent with the compensation mandate:

- SFU and SFU Faculty
- Health Employers' of BC and Community Health
- Health Employers' of BC and Facilities
- Public Service of BC/GEU Master
- BC Hydro/IBEW
- Public Service and Professional Employees Association.

On June 1, 2010, we distributed to all districts a *Support Staff Bargaining Bulletin* advising of CUPE's notice to bargain and employers' responsibilities upon receipt of the notice. In the coming weeks you will see further information and resources to facilitate bargaining. Let me know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

I know that bargaining hasn't been top-of-mind for many of us because of the four and five year deals but, as we get prepared, the challenge becomes apparent. As you know, BCPSEA as an employers' association has a unique role — one of support and expert resources, and the other of process management to ensure that agreements are concluded within the compensation mandate with terms that allow boards to carry out their mandates as boards. As in past rounds of bargaining, BCPSEA balances the needs/interests of boards of education as employers with those of government on the public policy/fiscal side to ensure agreements are grounded in the realistic world of public education...the changing world of public education. On a personal note I can say confidently *we've done it before and working together we will do it again...*

Please stay in touch and don't hesitate to contact any member of the BCPSEA [Board](#) or [staff](#).



Ron Christensen  
Chair