

News Release

For Immediate Release

June 26, 2012

Public school employers achieve tentative deal with BCTF

VANCOUVER – “After almost 80 bargaining sessions and 16 sessions with mediator Dr. Charles Jago, public school employers have reached a tentative collective agreement with the BC Teachers’ Federation,” announced Melanie Joy, Chair of the BC Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA).

Among the provisions, the tentative collective agreement standardizes provincial language for a number of leaves, establishes a process for the local/provincial bargaining process, and renews a number of existing Letters of Understanding.

“The agreement is for a 2-year term effective July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2013,” said Joy. “We will be communicating the details of the proposed agreement to our members — the province’s public boards of education — and engaging in the necessary discussion with them prior to the ratification vote,” said Joy. “Further information about the agreement will be available after both parties have held their ratification votes, which we anticipate will be completed by Wednesday, July 4, 2012.”

“This is now the third collective agreement negotiated between BCPSEA and the BCTF under the provincial bargaining structure,” said Joy. “We hope this tentative agreement will be carefully considered by both boards of education and teachers, and that they will agree this is a reasonable settlement at this time. For a variety of reasons it’s been a challenging round of bargaining, but we always believed that if the parties could get down to focused discussions at the table, a negotiated deal was possible. There’s no question that an agreement reached by the parties is always the best resolution, and that was always BCPSEA’s objective.”

“This has been a difficult year for all those involved with the public school system,” Joy said. “We hope that boards and teachers will ratify this agreement and that we can all look forward to the new school year in September with a focus on what’s really important — delivering the best possible educational experience for our students.”

BCPSEA is the accredited bargaining agent for the province’s 60 public boards of education.

– 30 –

For more information, contact:

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Fact Sheet

June 26, 2012

Tentative Collective Agreement Between the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) and the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF)

How many teachers are covered by this agreement? There are approximately 39,000 teachers in BC's K-12 public education system covered by this tentative collective agreement with the BCTF, which is the third largest union in BC.

How many teacher collective agreements are there? There is one master collective agreement with teachers and 60 district-specific local agreements, which form a part of the master collective agreement.

How much do school districts spend on employee compensation? On average, 89% of a school district's operating budget is spent on salaries and benefits.

The Mediation Process Under the *Education Improvement Act*

On March 15, the government enacted Bill 22, the *Education Improvement Act*, to:

- suspend the BCTF strike action and set a "cooling off" period,
- appoint a mediator to facilitate bargaining within defined terms of reference, and
- implement a new Learning Improvement Fund to resolve the issues arising from the April 2011 BC Supreme Court decision that found that certain aspects of Bill 28, *Public Education Flexibility and Choice Act* were unconstitutional.

The work of the mediator, whose role would be to facilitate the conclusion of a collective agreement, was subject to specific terms of reference. Specifically, the new agreement negotiated through mediation must:

- cover the period July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2013
- not create any new costs that would result in a net increase in the total annual cost of the collective agreement
- enable high quality teaching and learning through:
 - effective feedback and evaluation of teachers
 - alignment of professional development with teaching needs
 - scheduling and selection of teachers suited to student needs.

The mediator must provide non-binding recommendations by June 30, 2012. If a mediated settlement is not reached, the government has the option of legislating terms and conditions after June 30, 2012 and before August 31, 2012.

On March 28, Minister of Education George Abbott appointed Dr. Charles Jago as mediator. BCPSEA and the BCTF engaged in 16 mediation sessions prior to concluding a tentative collective agreement on June 26, 2012.

Teacher–Public School Employer Bargaining Strike and Settlement History

❖ BC Public School Employers’ Association–BC Teachers’ Federation Provincial Bargaining (1994-present)

- The BCTF and BCPSEA negotiated an agreement in 1994-96. The parties agreed to new terms, but also continued many of the provisions contained in local agreements (this agreement was referred to as the Transitional Collective Agreement or TCA). The TCA set the stage for the continuation of bargaining in 1997.
- In the 1997-98 round of bargaining, most of the terms of the collective agreement were reached between the parties, although some provisions were reached directly between BCTF and government (referred to as the Agreement in Committee or AiC), to the exclusion of BCPSEA. The AiC was submitted to the parties for ratification. BCTF members accepted the agreement but BCPSEA member school boards (now called boards of education) did not. In July 2008 the terms of the AiC were imposed legislatively.
- The provincial parties negotiated an agreement under a bargaining model proposed by Industrial Inquiry Commissioner Vince Ready as part of the resolution to the BCTF 2005 illegal strike. Ready would recommend this model for future rounds of bargaining, a recommendation that would not be accepted by the BCTF.

Strikes: Provincial Bargaining

During the provincial bargaining period there have been three strikes (including the 2011-2012 dispute).

There have been four occasions (including Bill 22, the *Education Improvement Act*) of ad hoc legislative intervention in public education labour disputes.

Local Teacher Union–School Board Bargaining (1987-1993)

- ❖ Between 1987 and 1993, agreements were negotiated under what was known as local bargaining — bargaining occurred between individual boards of education and locally certified teachers’ unions. The bargaining model was changed in the early 1990s to a form of provincial bargaining, with the BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) as the certified bargaining agent for all public school teachers and the BC Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA) as the accredited bargaining agent for the province’s 75 school boards (in 1996, arising from school district amalgamation, the number of boards was reduced to 60, including the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

❖ Strikes and Lockouts: Local Bargaining

During the local bargaining period there were:

- 15 strikes, 1 lockout (round 1)
- 17 strikes (round 2)
- 16 strikes, 2 lockouts (round 3).