



Teacher Compensation 2011

Context and Considerations

April 2011

Introduction

The purpose of this backgrounder is to understand the history, structure, and quantum of teacher compensation to inform the 2011 round of BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) and BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) collective bargaining. This round of bargaining will take place against the backdrop of:

- Public sector settlements 2010 and the operation of the provincial government's public sector compensation mandate
- BCTF messaging and proposals regarding teacher compensation
- BCTF drive to expand the scope of local bargaining
- Class size and composition disputes
- BCTF continued opposition to government public education policy initiatives, including what has become known as the 21st century learning agenda.

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Executive Summary

On January 17, 2011, BCTF President Susan Lambert commented on the BCTF salary objectives for the upcoming round of negotiations:

Asked about the freeze [on public sector compensation], BCTF president Susan Lambert said contract improvements are needed if BC hopes to attract and retain the best teachers. The union wants parity with teachers in Alberta and Ontario, she added.¹

Most recently, *The Vancouver Sun* on Tuesday March 22, 2011, reported on the BCTF news conference held the previous day at their Annual General Meeting in Victoria:

We haven't arrived at a figure yet," Lambert said when asked if the union bargaining team will press for a double-digit increase.

"It's a complex mathematical formula," she added, because salaries vary according to experience and place of employment.

But Lambert made it clear the union has no intention of accepting the net zero mandate for public servants ordered by the B.C. Liberal government in the midst of the global economic downturn.

"That's just not realistic," she said. "We're asking government to revisit their mandate to ensure that this round of bargaining is productive and there's a satisfactory conclusion."

B.C. teachers deserve pay similar to that of colleagues in other parts of Canada, but their wages have not kept pace during the past five years, tumbling from third place to eighth, she said in Victoria during a break from the BCTF's annual general meeting².

During the last round of bargaining in 2006, while virtually all other public sector unions, including support staff in the K-12 public education sector, negotiated four year deals that expired in 2010, the BCTF was able to achieve a 5 year deal that expires June 30, 2011.

All public sector unions are subject to the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) compensation mandate (2010-2012) of net zero. As events would turn out, by virtue of achieving a 5 year deal in 2006, the last year of the BCTF-BCPSEA deal, with a 2.0% general wage increase, is everyone else's first net zero.

¹ "Education Notebook: BCTF hopes to escape wage freeze," by Janet Steffenhagen, *The Vancouver Sun*, January 17, 2011.

² "B.C. teachers, government far apart on bargaining," by Janet Steffenhagen, *The Vancouver Sun*, March 22, 2011.

The Previous Round of Bargaining

The BCTF–BCPSEA 2006 collective agreement focused both on general wage increases for all teachers, and differentiated salary increases targeted to senior teachers and teachers in remote and rural school districts. There was an attempt to *harmonize* salary scales — to make them more similar to each other. This round of harmonization was targeted to senior teachers at the maximum salary step.

For the period 2006–2011, the minimum percentage increase a BC teacher realized was approximately 14.0%, while the maximum percentage increase a BC teacher realized was approximately 21.5%.

In 2008, for example, a senior teacher in a remote / rural school district received a total compensation increase of approximately 8.7% as a result of:

- A 2.5% general wage increase,
- The introduction of Teacher Supply and Demand Initiatives targeted at both senior teachers through an additional salary grid increase of 3.0%, and
- The introduction of a new Remote Recruitment and Retention Allowance targeted to all teachers in identified remote/rural districts or individual schools within such a district.

We Are 8th ...Really?

While the BCTF continues to take the position publicly that BC teachers' salaries rank in 8th place in Canada, further analysis is warranted because salaries vary according to experience and place of employment, as BCTF President Susan Lambert acknowledges.³

Further, the BCTF has stated:

...wages have not kept pace during the past five years, tumbling from third place to eighth...⁴

Teachers are paid according to their level of educational accomplishment and experience. The same level of education and experience results in a different salary placement both across provinces and within provinces.

For example, the average teacher in BC has completed five years of post secondary education whereas most teachers in Alberta and Saskatchewan have completed four. The most accurate comparison across the provinces is therefore the category in which the largest share of teachers

³ "B.C. teachers, government far apart on bargaining," by Janet Steffenhagen. *The Vancouver Sun*, March 22, 2011.

⁴ Ibid.

are employed and not the salary rate for the same category across the province as categories and category definitions vary widely.

Further, the analysis of salaries across Canada must take into account geographic and labour market considerations, and supply and demand in those labour markets. For this reason, an accurate comparison of teacher salaries across Canada should compare provinces only and should exclude the northern territories, given the vastly different context in those geographic areas.

Using this methodology, BC teachers' salaries rank 4th across Canada.

Further, the BCTF statement of "tumbling from third place to eighth" is inaccurate and misleading, as the 3rd and 8th place rankings are arrived at using differing methodologies:

- The reference to 3rd place uses 2006 salary data, and *excludes* the northern territories, consistent with the methodology set out above
- In contrast, the reference to 8th place uses current data and *includes* the northern territories.

An accurate description of the evolution of BC teachers' salaries from 2006 to 2011 would include either:

- In 2006, BC teachers' salaries ranked 3rd in Canada, and in 2011 now rank 4th; **OR**
- In 2006, BC teachers' salaries ranked 6th in Canada, and in 2011 now rank 7th.

2006 also saw the introduction of the first round of salary harmonization. The 2006 round raised starting and maximum salaries to an identified provincial average, creating a new base provincial salary. As a result, any starting or maximum teachers' salary which fell below that identified provincial average was raised to the identified provincial average; and any starting or maximum teachers' salary which was above that identified provincial average remained above that average.

Calculating the 2006 base provincial salaries forward to July 1, 2010, all BC teachers assigned to Category 5, the most common category as described above, earn an annual salary no lower than, and in many districts greater than, the base provincial salaries below:

July 1, 2010	Category 5 Starting	Category 5 Maximum
	\$45,909	\$74,353

Part One: In Detail

BC Teacher Compensation: The Numbers

The average starting salary of a teacher in BC is \$47,461 as of July 1, 2010. The average maximum salary is \$75,083. In addition to these annual salaries, teachers receive an additional 2.0% of salary in the form of an allowance. This allowance increases the average starting salary of a teacher in BC to \$48,410 and the average maximum salary to \$76,585.

Below are some examples of starting and maximum salaries in different school districts in the province, inclusive of the salary allowance of 2.0%:

School District	Category 5 Starting Salary	Category 5 Maximum Salary	Category 6 Starting Salary	Category 6 Maximum Salary
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No. 6 (Rocky Mountain)	\$49,786	\$75,840	\$53,586	\$83,119
<i>Allowance</i>	<i>\$976</i>	<i>\$1,487</i>	<i>\$1,051</i>	<i>\$1,630</i>
<i>Base salary</i>	<i>\$48,810</i>	<i>\$74,353</i>	<i>\$52,535</i>	<i>\$81,489</i>

No. 22 (Vernon)	\$47,730	\$75,840	\$52,510	\$83,119
<i>Allowance</i>	<i>\$936</i>	<i>\$1,487</i>	<i>\$1,030</i>	<i>\$1,630</i>
<i>Base salary</i>	<i>\$46,794</i>	<i>\$74,353</i>	<i>\$51,480</i>	<i>\$81,489</i>

No. 36 (Surrey)	\$46,827	\$75,840	\$52,498	\$83,119
<i>Allowance</i>	<i>\$918</i>	<i>\$1,487</i>	<i>\$1,010</i>	<i>\$1,630</i>
<i>Base salary</i>	<i>\$45,909</i>	<i>\$74,353</i>	<i>\$50,488</i>	<i>\$81,489</i>

No. 39 (Vancouver)	\$49,045	\$75,840	\$53,880	\$83,119
<i>Allowance</i>	\$962	\$1,487	\$1,057	\$1,630
<i>Base salary</i>	\$48,083	\$74,353	\$52,823	\$81,489

No. 52 (Prince Rupert)	\$50,757	\$77,158	\$54,846	\$84,702
<i>Allowance</i>	\$996	\$1,513	\$1,076	\$1,661
<i>Base salary</i>	\$49,761	\$75,645	\$53,770	\$83,041

No. 61 (Greater Victoria)	\$49,599	\$75,840	\$54,750	\$83,341
<i>Allowance</i>	\$973	\$1,487	\$1,074	\$1,634
<i>Base salary</i>	\$48,626	\$74,353	\$53,676	\$81,707

No. 73 (Kamloops/ Thompson)	\$53,897	\$75,840	\$58,094	\$83,119
<i>Allowance</i>	\$1,057	\$1,487	\$1,139	\$1,630
<i>Base salary</i>	\$52,840	\$74,353	\$56,955	\$81,489

No. 85 (Vancouver Island North)	\$49,461	\$78,868	\$53,180	\$85,495
<i>Allowance</i>	\$970	\$1,547	\$1,043	\$1,677
<i>Base salary</i>	\$48,491	\$77,321	\$52,137	\$83,818

The similarities in the above salaries are directly attributable to the 2006 round of salary harmonization. The salaries which are now identical in 2011 were those salaries which fell below the identified provincial averages in 2006, and were then increased to the new base provincial salary.

Teacher Salary Increases 2006 – 2011

The 2006 round of BCTF–BCPSEA bargaining resulted in substantial wage increases for BC teachers.

The collective agreement term starting July 1, 2006 through to June 30, 2010 provided for a total compensation increase of 16.0%. The minimum percentage increase a BC teacher realized was approximately 14.0%, while the maximum percentage increase a BC teacher realized was approximately 21.5%.

While the general wage increases for the 2006-2011 collective agreement term equalled 12.0%, an additional 2.0% of salary was provided in the form of an allowance payable monthly, as cited in the charts above.

An additional 2.0% of salary was provided by way of differentiated increases targeted to teachers in remote and rural school districts and teachers at the maximum salary scale placement across the province.

For example, in School District No. 81 (Fort Nelson), a beginning Category 5 teacher received the following cumulative salary increases⁵:

Annual Salary at June 30, 2006:\$44,361

Effective July 1, 2011:

Annual Salary:\$49,946

New Remote & Rural Allowance:\$2,255

New 2.0% allowance:\$1,044

Total Annual Salary & New Allowances 2006-2011:

\$53,245

Total Percentage Increase 2006-2011:20.0%

⁵ A beginning teacher with no previous teaching experience and assigned to Category 5 by the Teacher Qualification Service. Category 5 represents five years of post-secondary education.

A teacher at the maximum salary step of Category 5, in School District No. 81 (Fort Nelson), received the following cumulative salary increases:

Annual Salary at June 30, 2006:\$67,164

Effective July 1, 2011:

Annual Salary:\$77,888

New Remote & Rural Allowance:\$2,255

New 2.0% allowance:\$1,603

Total Annual Salary & New Allowances 2006-2011:

\$81,746

Total Percentage Increase 2006-2011:21.7%

In School District No. 36 (Surrey), a beginning Category 5 teacher received the following cumulative salary increases:

Annual Salary at June 30, 2006:\$40,776

Effective July 1, 2011:

Annual Salary:\$45,909

New 2.0% allowance:\$918

Total Annual Salary & New Allowances 2006-2011:

\$46,827

Total Percentage Increase 2006-2011:14.8%

A teacher at the maximum salary step of Category 5, in School District No. 36 (Surrey), received the following cumulative salary increases:

Annual Salary at June 30, 2006:\$64,116

Effective July 1, 2011:

Annual Salary:\$74,353

New 2.0% allowance:\$1,487

Total Annual Salary & New Allowances 2006-2011:

\$75,840

Total Percentage Increase 2006-2011:18.3%

The percentage increases set out above are in addition to salary increases provided in the first round of harmonization in April 2006. Those increases were a result of the October 2005 job action by the BCTF, and arbitrator Vince Ready's recommendations for settlement of that job action.

In his October 2005 recommendations, Mr. Ready included \$40 million towards the goal of salary harmonization. The actual implementation of the \$40 million was left up to the provincial parties. While the provincial parties reached various agreements to this implementation, they also required the assistance of Mr. Ready in settling various disputes. The full and final implementation of the salary harmonization system was not settled until July 2006. As a result, in addition to the general wage increase effective July 1, 2006, teachers also received retroactive pay attributable to April 1, 2006 – June 30, 2006.

Similar to how the 2006 round of negotiations resulted in differentiated salary increases targeted to teachers in remote and rural school districts and teachers at the maximum salary scale placement across the province, the 2006 \$40 million salary harmonization also resulted in differentiated increases.

The full and final implementation of the 2006 salary harmonization system resulted in the establishment of provincial average starting and maximum salaries for each of the standard Teacher Qualification Service Categories of 4, 5, 5+ and 6. As a result, any starting or maximum teachers' salary which fell below that identified provincial average was raised to the identified provincial average. Any starting or maximum teachers' salary which was above that identified provincial average remained above that average.

As most school districts in northern British Columbia provided salaries in excess of the newly-established provincial average starting and maximum salaries, teachers in those districts did not receive any salary increases as a result of this harmonization system. This outcome was subsequently addressed by the provincial parties in the 2006 round of bargaining and the resulting targeted salary increases and allowances to teachers in remote and rural school districts.

The Current Compensation System

Overview

Teachers' salaries have been regulated in virtually the same manner dating back to the 1940s. Teachers' salaries are paid according to the category placement of the teacher as determined by the provincial Teacher Qualification Service, and the number of years of experience gained as a teacher. Teachers generally progress through the salary grid one step for each year of teaching. In addition to an annual salary, teachers are paid additional allowances such as the Salary Indemnity Plan allowance of 2.0%, Position of Special Responsibility allowances, and isolation allowances, where applicable. Teachers' total compensation also includes, but is not limited to, a defined benefits pension plan, comprehensive health and welfare benefit plans, professional development funding, and leaves of absence.

- **Salary Grid Categories and Length**

The 2006-2011 Provincial Collective Agreement provides for four standard salary categories to which the vast majority of teachers are assigned: Categories 4, 5, 5+ and 6. In some school districts, additional categories are available such as 4+ or 6+, and are referred to as "anomalous" categories. While many anomalous categories were eliminated through the harmonization initiatives of 2006 and 2008, some such categories still remain in operation, and teachers in those districts may continue to be placed into those "anomalous categories." The length or number of steps of the salary grid may vary both by category within the salary grid of school district and among school districts, though no standard category in any school district is longer than 11 steps.

- **Category Placement**

Teachers are assigned to salary categories by the provincial Teacher Qualification Service (TQS). Established in 1969, TQS is a non-profit society funded jointly by the BC Teachers' Federation and the BC School Trustees Association. The most common category assignment of BC teachers is Category 5, reflecting five years of academic and professional studies. Teachers may achieve Category 5+ by completing a sixth year of studies. Teachers may achieve Category 6 by also completing a graduate degree.

- **Experience Recognition**

Each of the current 60 teachers' collective agreements contains comprehensive provisions setting out how previous teaching and working experience will be recognized for salary purposes. These recognition provisions apply when a teacher moves between two British Columbia school districts or when a new teacher possesses related non-teaching work experience that may be recognized in the teacher collective agreement, such as tradesperson or business experience. As these recognition provisions vary between school districts, a teacher applying for work in two or more school districts may have previous experience recognized in one district and not another, potentially resulting in disparity in salary placement. In addition, most non-teaching experience is not fully recognized and there may be a maximum to the amount of such experience that may be recognized. For example, 20

years of tradesperson experience may only be recognized at 50% of that 20 years and, in addition, only five total years of non-teaching experience may be recognized per teacher, resulting in those 20 years of tradesperson experience being recognized for only 5 years of experience for salary placement purposes.

▪ **Salary Progression**

While teachers may move among the salary categories by completing the additional requirements as set out above, teachers progress up the steps of the salary grid within a salary category by accumulating the experience requirement of the collective agreement. The vast majority of the current 60 teachers' collective agreements require accumulation of the equivalent of one year of full time teaching experience for a teacher to progress one step up the salary grid. In addition, teachers may also be granted experience, for progression up the salary grid, for time served with associated organizations such as the local or provincial union, BC College of Teachers, and the BC Ministry of Education.

▪ **Other Salary Provisions**

The current 60 teachers' collective agreements contain a myriad of other salary related provisions, including comprehensive provisions for Positions of Special Responsibility such as Department Heads, Teachers in Charge, and Coordinators. In addition to the provincial Salary Indemnity Plan allowance of 2.0% of salary, and the Remote Recruitment and Retention Allowance for remote and rural school districts and identified schools within a school district, many of the collective agreements provide for a variety of other salary allowances of varying amounts.

Teachers' Total Compensation

While salary forms the most identifiable portion of the total compensation package, that package also includes:

- health and welfare benefits
- a defined benefit pension plan, resulting in teachers retiring, on average, at age 58
- professional development funds/opportunities
- hours of work and the work year framework
- instructional and preparation time framework, and
- a myriad of leaves of absence.

BCTF Compensation Messaging to Date

The BCTF has stated that it intends to pursue compensation increases at the bargaining table for its 45,000 members. President Susan Lambert said that the goals, objectives, and strategy to achieve this were worked out in early November 2010. An article in the BCTF *Teacher* magazine in April 2010 describes the mandate and impending negotiations as follows:

“The government has committed to continue collective bargaining within a net zero increase wage mandate. In other words, the collective bargaining process, a process typically utilized by public sector unions to increase wages, has no mandate to negotiate increases in wages. Good luck with those negotiations.”

In recent media interviews, the BCTF President indicated additional objectives:

...but what we have identified as ways of improving this system right now, in this context in British Columbia, is by restoring the level of funding to what was in place about ten or 11 years ago and restoring the services to students that we have lost over this last decade.

...In this context we're talking about the number of teachers in schools, the number of non-enrolling teachers and classroom teachers, so that we can reduce the class size and we can provide the services that non-enrolling teachers provide for students, so that we can provide English-as-a-second-language services, so we can provide aboriginal education support services, so that we can provide counselling services, so we can provide teacher-librarian services. That's what we're talking about -- the numbers of teachers, and we can reduce the number of oversize classes and provide support for students with special needs.⁶

On January 17, 2011 BCTF President Susan Lambert commented on the BCTF's salary objectives for the upcoming round of negotiations:

Asked about the freeze [on public sector compensation], BCTF president Susan Lambert said contract improvements are needed if B.C. hopes to attract and retain the best teachers. The union wants parity with teachers in Alberta and Ontario, she added.⁷

Most recently, *The Vancouver Sun* on Tuesday, March 22, 2011, reported on the BCTF news conference held the previous day at the BCTF's Annual General Meeting in Victoria:

We haven't arrived at a figure yet," Lambert said when asked if the union bargaining team will press for a double-digit increase.

"It's a complex mathematical formula," she added, because salaries vary according to experience and place of employment.

⁶ CHNL Radio, Thursday, January 6, 2011.

⁷ "Education Notebook: BCTF hopes to escape wage freeze," by Janet Steffenhagen, *The Vancouver Sun*, January 17, 2011.

But Lambert made it clear the union has no intention of accepting the net zero mandate for public servants ordered by the B.C. Liberal government in the midst of the global economic downturn.

"That's just not realistic," she said. "We're asking government to revisit their mandate to ensure that this round of bargaining is productive and there's a satisfactory conclusion."

B.C. teachers deserve pay similar to that of colleagues in other parts of Canada, but their wages have not kept pace during the past five years, tumbling from third place to eighth, she said in Victoria during a break from the BCTF's annual general meeting.⁸

The PSEC Mandate and Public Sector Settlements

The provincial government's 2010 "net-zero" mandate for negotiations means that public sector unions and employers must settle for two-year deals at no additional cost. Consider:

- More than 250,000 public sector workers are covered by contracts that expired in 2010
- More than two-thirds of all public sector employees with agreements that expired in 2010 are now covered by agreements negotiated under the province's 2010 mandate.
- These agreements have been negotiated across most sectors, including 99 percent of all healthcare workers, more than 70 percent of university faculty, and agreements at many crown corporations, including BC Hydro.
- Some agreements are still outstanding with teachers and K-12 support staff, at some crown corporations, with community social service employees, and in the post-secondary sector.

Certain trends can be identified in the early settlements. Of the collective agreements ratified, most were done so by extending the existing contract by two years. The existing collective agreement language was rolled over and no compensation trade-offs occurred. However, some settlements did include net compensation trade-offs including:

- The BC Government Employees' Union (BCGEU) representing over 29,000 public service workers and the BC Public Service Agency. The union bargaining committee made a decision to improve health care benefits. To do this they agreed to increase the annual deductible from \$65 to \$80 and obtained benefits for hearing aids, paramedical benefits and an increase from \$100,000 to \$250,000 for the lifetime maximum.
- The agreement reached between the Health Employers Association of BC and the Health Services and Support Facilities Subsector Bargaining Association of Unions. Trade-offs were made to extended health benefits — the one-time annual deductible was increased from \$25 to \$100, the first time the deductible has been changed since 1968. Coverage of the

⁸ "B.C. teachers, government far apart on bargaining," by Janet Steffenhagen, *The Vancouver Sun*, March 22, 2011.

prescription drug dispensing fee was capped at \$9. The vision care benefit increased by \$125 – from \$225 per person every 24 months to \$350 per person every 24 months.

These are just two examples of net compensation trade-offs made to address changing employee needs.

Part Two: A Question of Comparators

The BCTF has said that they will be looking for improvements in pay and benefits when contract talks begin in the spring of 2011 — despite the freeze on public sector compensation. BCTF president Susan Lambert said the union wants parity with teachers in Alberta and Ontario.⁹

The BCTF has also stated that BC teachers have modest salaries that are among the lowest in Canada. In March 2010, then-President of the BCTF Irene Lanzinger said, “in fact, we have the lowest salaries west of Quebec now, so other teachers have passed us.”¹⁰

A comparison of the most recent compensation data for teachers across Canada reveals that teachers in BC are paid fourth in Canada when comparing the average starting and maximum teacher salaries to those in other provinces.

Province	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NS	NB	PEI	NFLD
Category*	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5
Average Starting Salary	\$47,461	\$54,347	\$46,419	\$50,552	\$43,959	\$39,375	\$47,074	\$47,358	\$44,860	\$49,198
Rank	4	1	7	2	9	10	6	5	8	3
Average Maximum Salary	\$75,083	\$85,709	\$73,036	\$77,381	\$90,096	\$70,704	\$67,186	\$73,028	\$64,188	\$64,424
Rank	4	2	5	3	1	7	8	6	10	9
Effective Date	1-Jul-10	31-Aug-10	1-Sep-09	30-Jun-10	1-Sep-10	1-Apr-10	1-Aug-09	1-Sep-10	30-Jun-09	1-Sep-10

⁹ “Education Notebook: BCTF hopes to escape wage freeze,” by Janet Steffenhagen, *The Vancouver Sun*, January 17, 2011.

¹⁰ “Lanzinger: Government education funding dishonest,” CKNW Morning News Show, Friday, March 19, 2010.

**Average salary is the salary relevant to the category in which the largest share of teachers are employed, in relation to the years of post secondary education most teachers possess: BC, MB, ON, NB, NFLD — 5 years; AB, SK, QC — 4 years.*

It is important to note that the most common scale category placement differs across Canada. The average teacher in BC has completed five years of post secondary education whereas most teachers in Alberta and Saskatchewan have completed four. The most accurate comparison across the provinces is therefore the category in which the largest share of teachers are employed and not the salary rate for the same category across the province as categories and category definitions vary widely.

When comparisons are made across Canada based on the same salary category, the rankings change. Below is a comparison of teacher salaries obtained from the Canadian Teachers' Federation *Teacher Salary Scales* published in 2009.

Province	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NS	NB	PEI	NFLD
Category*	5	5	V	5	A3	Single Scale	ITC	CV	CV	V
Average Starting Salary	\$45,991	\$53,524	\$47,392	\$48,745	\$46,488	\$38,411	\$43,305	\$43,954	\$44,860	\$45,487
Rank	5	1	3	2	4	10	9	8	7	6
Average Maximum Salary	\$71,117	\$83,370	\$74,002	\$74,491	\$81,213	\$68,973	\$65,292	\$67,779	\$64,188	\$59,563
Rank	5	1	4	3	2	6	8	7	9	10
Effective Date	1-Sep-08	1-Sep-08	1-Sep-08	1-Sep-08	1-Sep-08	1-Sep-08	1-Sep-08	1-Sep-08	1-Sep-08	1-Sep-08

Using the above comparison data, BC ranks fifth in both average starting and maximum salaries, with the lowest salaries west of Quebec. This is a less accurate comparison than the first table presented as this compares the salaries for a common category and not the category in which most teachers are employed in the province. The averages stated represent provincial averages in some cases but, in many, represent just one large school board in the province. For example, the BC data reflect only School District No. 39 (Vancouver) and the Ontario data reflect that of the Toronto District School Board (Elementary Teachers). As was demonstrated in

the first section of this paper, salaries can vary widely across school districts in the province. The data presented in the table above are as of September 2008 and do not reflect recent wage improvements.

For teachers in BC to be paid on par with teachers in Alberta and Ontario would require an immediate 13% wage increase. The issues of comparability and the appropriateness of using national comparators as opposed to general labour market have been raised before. Is the work unique and there are no local comparators, are the only similarities the groups in other jurisdictions, or is there another model of comparability? The Weiler/Scarfe¹¹ model and the principle of comparability state that comparability should follow a labour market approach and make comparisons based upon the economic factors in the local or regional labour markets in which the employees work. Therefore, the comparison is not a national one but a local one — local salary increases and the local or regional economy. When using a national comparator, it is the ratio between similar employees and that region's industrial composite; thus, it is not absolute wages that are compared. Consider:

- **Settlements with other bargaining units**

Take into consideration the settlements achieved by the employer with its other bargaining units. The consistency of settlements between bargaining units is significant in terms of equity and industrial stability.

- **Local labour market conditions**

The circumstances of the regional or local economy and the local labour market conditions are considered. This would also include any unique factors concerning the nature of the work or service performed.

- **The employer's financial situation**

- **The economic and collective bargaining circumstances**

- **The industrial aggregate and cost of living**

- **The goal of relative, and not absolute, comparability**

- **All enumerated factors considered as a whole**

All enumerated factors must be considered as a whole, no greater weight is given to one section than another.

¹¹ Scarfe, Brian (2007). *An Economic Framework for Interest Arbitration*. BriMar Consultants Ltd.

Conclusions

Teachers' salaries are much scrutinized and debated, never more so than during bargaining. An examination of recent history provides evidence of what the BCTF seeks and the messaging they use to promote their cause. The BCTF has never backed away from asking for substantial wage increases. In October 2001, the BCTF tabled a 34% wage increase proposal. They made a minor adjustment to their original position but their resolve remained firm as the spectre of legislative intervention loomed large. In September 2005, the BCTF tabled a 22% wage increase proposal. And in June 2006, the wage proposal on the bargaining table was 24%.

During each of those same rounds of collective bargaining, the BCTF has put a strike vote to its membership. Each time such a vote has been put to the membership, approximately 80% of BCTF members turn out to vote, and have returned "Yes" results of 91.4% in 2001, 88.4% in 2005, and 85.2% in 2006. With the exception of 2006, job action has occurred in two of the last three rounds of collective bargaining.

Wages of course are not the only matters at issue in a round of bargaining. The texture, tenor, and content of bargaining is influenced by other settlements, the parties' respective demands, and the expectations that flow from those demands and the parties' bargaining experiences. It must be remembered that a collective agreement invariably emerges regardless of the process and progress of bargaining.

The history set out above, and the context of teacher compensation as set out in this paper, must also be considered in the context of the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) compensation mandate (2010-2012) of net zero, and the other BCTF bargaining objectives of expanding the scope of local bargaining, ongoing class size and composition disputes, and the continued BCTF opposition to government public education policy initiatives including what has become known as the 21st century learning agenda.