

February 8, 2012

By E-mail: 2 Pages

Jim Iker
1st Vice President
British Columbia Teachers' Federation
100 – 550 West 6th Ave
Vancouver BC V5Z 4P2

Dear Jim:

Thank you for your recent e-mail message regarding potential bargaining dates for February. Further to our discussion at the bargaining table last week, I believe it is important to share formally with you our expectations with respect to upcoming bargaining sessions in order to ensure that both parties are able to advance negotiations in a constructive fashion.

Teachers have been on strike since the first day of school and the past eleven months of bargaining have shown little progress in narrowing the gap between the parties. This has been punctuated by a lack of dialogue and engagement on the central issues.

Since the outset of this round of collective bargaining, the BC Teachers' Federation has set pre-conditions for concluding a collective agreement. These pre-conditions were succinctly stated during the bargaining session on January 10, 2012:

- Government dropping the net zero mandate so that BCPSEA can negotiate a substantial wage improvement for teachers
- Additional improvements in both preparation time and other entitlements for teachers
- A resolution of the Bill 28 dispute that includes the return of all old class size, class composition, and non-enrolling staffing ratio language to the collective agreement along with the right to negotiate improvements in this round of bargaining
- A significant restructuring of the provincial–local split of issues so that all (or perhaps nearly all) non-PELRA items can be negotiated at the local level in this round of bargaining
- The dropping of all employer proposals at the provincial table that you have labeled as “contract strips” (including those dealing with proposed changes to teacher evaluation, teacher professional growth, post and fill, and benefit trade-offs).

Although, as referenced above, BCPSEA has tabled a number of items properly at the provincial table related to issues such as professional growth, post and fill, mentorship, and evaluation, the BCTF has conveniently refused to engage in authentic dialogue on these matters using the rationale that these are items the BCTF believes should be negotiated at the

February 8, 2012

Jim Iker

Page 2

local level. You have consistently referred to this as a "hard bargaining" position. This position is in spite of the fact that Arbitrator Marguerite Jackson ruled, in three decisions arising from the dispute on the provincial-local split of issues, that neither the BCTF nor the BCPSEA can unilaterally change where particular issues are bargained, and that both parties must comply with the existing letter of understanding that the two organizations agreed to before the start of bargaining.

BCPSEA has now tabled two complete settlement packages, the first in November 2011 and the most recent on February 1, 2012, in order to attempt to move negotiations forward. On both occasions, the BCTF quickly and clearly rejected the packages, refusing to engage in meaningful discussion of employer proposals related to professional growth, development, mentorship, and evaluation, and expressing outright rejection of the current compensation mandate established by the provincial government.

One approach that could have prompted meaningful engagement was your decision to bring individuals in to make presentations at the bargaining sessions on a variety of matters. However, the presentations were lengthy, often on the same or similar topic, and unilateral in that dialogue was not permitted. For example, on the one occasion where the potential for a fulsome and engaging discussion emerged (the presentation of Dr. Charlie Naylor), you ushered him from the room when his presentation was complete despite the fact that we made it clear we wanted to engage in conversation. In addition, there has not been a link between such presentations and movement at the table.

The "any change is a concession" approach of the BCTF and its position on the current mandate, combined with an unwillingness to recognize and bargain within the current split of issues and engage in dialogue on important issues such as professional growth, evaluation, post and fill and mentorship, has left us in a place where meaningful exploration of the matters at issue is stymied. In order to move the process along, this must not continue to be the case. In fact, BCPSEA is only prepared to meet when it is clear, through an agenda process, what the parties intend to address on any particular day of bargaining and when it is clear the BCTF is prepared to address issues of importance to both parties including a willingness to consider options and trade-offs within the current mandate.

BCPSEA remains committed to achieving a negotiated collective agreement and we are prepared to meet at any time to continue bargaining. It is imperative, however, that given the length of time we have been at the table, the lack of progress to date, the distance between the parties, and the negative implications for the public school system of your phase 1 strike action, the conditions be conducive to legitimate collective bargaining.

Please contact me for discussion of the agenda and dates for upcoming bargaining sessions.

Yours truly,



Jacquie Griffiths

Associate Executive Director

- c. BCPSEA Bargaining Team
- BCPSEA Board of Directors