

February 4, 2011

Susan Lambert
President
BC Teachers' Federation
100 - 550 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2

Dear Susan:

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak to our Representative Council on January 28. Your presentation was extremely valuable and allowed participants to hear directly from you the priorities of the BCTF with respect to the upcoming round of bargaining.

In addition, thanks to you and your BCTF representatives for taking the time to meet with BCPSEA on January 26th. This meeting followed a series of meetings and exchanges of correspondence regarding our respective views on the approach to the upcoming round of bargaining.

At our meeting, you confirmed that the BCTF has a bargaining plan already in place and that this plan was developed internally through a process that took over two and a half years. The BCTF has indicated that this plan includes local negotiations of all matters except wages, benefits, hours of work and paid leaves. At our meeting you also expanded on this statement by noting that this should include local negotiation of collective agreement language with respect to class size and composition.

At our meeting you also provided clarity that it was not your intention to recreate local bargaining but, instead, create a two-tiered system of bargaining. Within this system, you clarified that issues identified above would initially be "negotiated" locally but would also be advanced to the provincial table in districts where an acceptable agreement was not reached.

You also restated your view that the BCTF and BCPSEA should enter into a mid-contract negotiation to expand the items to be negotiated under this new process. You advised that concerns over funding as a result of the process would be something that the BCTF intends to address through direct talks with the provincial government. This would include funding of locally negotiated provisions on class size and composition.

As we stated at the meeting, BCPSEA has always indicated a willingness to look at the most constructive ways in which to ensure all matters are addressed. This is an issue that has arisen in other parts of the public sector and BCPSEA believes the parties can be guided by these experiences as well. As stated, BCPSEA has identified the following principles that should guide the parties in examining this issue. In particular, the parties should seek to establish a process that:



- is constructive for both parties
- minimizes the possibility of disruption and harm to local relationships
- is sustainable for both parties
- is cost effective with limited duplication of effort and cost
- is efficient
- is best able to address issues unique to one district or region.

BCPSEA is concerned that the process identified by the BCTF may not be consistent with these principles. A system that provides two opportunities to address the same issues is neither efficient nor constructive in our view. A bargaining process that allows items not resolved in some districts but agreed to in others to be moved to the provincial table with new local agreement language serving as the starting point for all outstanding districts is not sound.

Given our concerns with the current process as proposed by the BCTF, BCPSEA proposed an alternative approach to address your concerns regarding local specificity without prematurely reaching conclusions regarding the appropriate process. In particular, BCPSEA proposed that in order to begin this process, the provincial parties could:

- identify all matters at issue
- identify matters unique to one district or region
- develop a process to address such matters subject to the principles above
- engage the assistance of a third party to examine issues which may need to be addressed within a local or other context and consider potential solutions with consideration for the principles identified above.

Although you indicated an initial reluctance to the process described above, we urge you to reconsider our proposal. Please contact Jacquie Griffiths at your earliest convenience should you wish to proceed.

Yours truly,

Hugh J. Finlayson
CEO