

SEPTEMBER 9, 2014

ADVOCACY UPDATE

As we enter the second week of the school year, with classrooms still closed BCSTA is extremely concerned about the impact the continuing strike is having on students, staff, parents, and BC's public education system overall.

We appeal to both sides to move beyond their current positions to make meaningful and real concessions with the assistance of mediator Vince Ready. If the parties will not make the necessary moves to achieve a negotiated settlement BCSTA strongly encourages a cooling off period that would include a public third party report and non-binding recommendations.

The most recent development has been a call by the BCTF for binding arbitration. [BCPSEA Chief Negotiator Peter Cameron has recommended that government not agree to the proposal due to the preconditions set by the BCTF.](#) The arbitration proposal has resulted in a significant amount of media and comment. While we respect that individual Boards will decide their own local position on binding arbitration BCSTA continues to advocate the following positions:

- An agreement that is freely negotiated that can be supported by both parties going forward. While legislation or a binding settlement imposed by a third party would get students back into classrooms neither of these approaches adequately address the long-term issues facing the education system.
- Boards of Education have repeatedly expressed the need for flexibility on class size and composition. Rigid numbers set in a contract make it very difficult to accommodate individual learning needs at the school level.
- The Learning Improvement Fund (LIF) provides a flexible way to provide additional learning supports in classrooms where needed. BCSTA has called on the government to increase the LIF funding beyond the \$75 million already in the 2014-2015 budget. The LIF must be increased to address class size and composition issues.
- BCSTA believes that while teachers deserve an increase in compensation it needs to be comparable to those accepted by other BC public sector unions and realistic given the provincial government's existing economic mandate.
- BCSTA urgently and continuously calls for increased funding for BC's public education system.
- When a settlement is reached it must be fully funded by government.

While we may not all agree on the specific aspects of each party's current position, trustees, teachers, administrators and parents agree that we need students back in the classroom now. ■
