

Message from BCTF President Jim Iker to the teachers of BC

August 30, 2014

Teachers pare \$125 million from their package, government demands court case escape clause

After two days of work with Vince Ready, it has become clear that the government is not prepared to find a fair settlement that will get BC's students and teachers back in classrooms. The BCTF team tried to kick start meaningful talks by dropping some proposals entirely and reducing others substantially. In total, our moves today reduced our package by \$125 Million.

Unfortunately, the government did not indicate they were willing to make any meaningful moves in return.

Education Minister Peter Fassbender has said many times: "Let the courts decide." And we agree entirely with that approach. But, in reality, what they are insisting upon at the table would undo any future court decision.

Does the government really expect that teachers would bargain away everything the BC Supreme Court has already awarded us? And what future decisions might bring?

Twice now the government has been found to have violated Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in BC Supreme Court. And now, the BC Liberals are trying to negotiate away those court losses and any future decisions.

Once again, the BC Liberals want to keep the necessary funding that students need out of BC's public education system.

Not only is government insisting on something they know perfectly well teachers cannot accept, they are refusing to make any compromises in their position.

There was no commitment to increase funding to support the learning needs of our students, nor was there any effort to move on salary. By refusing to increase funding for learning conditions and trying to circumvent the courts, the BC Liberals are jeopardizing the start of the school year.

These two days should have been productive and brought the two sides closer together. Instead, the government put up new roadblocks and refused to compromise.

Teachers took this effort with mediation seriously and made significant moves. Government's inaction and unwillingness to compromise shows that they have been disingenuous in their public comments.

This government did nothing this weekend to help get schools open. I encourage all of you to contact your MLAs and let them know it's time for the government to compromise, increase funding to address issues related to class size and composition, and learning specialist levels. Above all, it's time to respect the courts.

To be clear, teachers have not walked away. We have not given up. As things stand now, the strike will continue. But we are still determined to get a deal before September 2.

Call to action: Flood their inboxes tonight!

Hey BC teachers, your bargaining team needs your help. Even if you've previously contacted them, please email and call [Christy Clark, Peter Fassbender, and your MLAs](#) tonight or first thing tomorrow morning. If every single one of us takes a minute to do this, we will flood their inboxes and voicemails with more than 40,000 messages.

Tell them they must bring the funding and resources to the bargaining table to properly deal with the learning needs of BC students. They cannot hold bargaining up any longer just because they don't like the court case rulings.

Bargaining means give and take, but one side cannot do all the giving. The government's time to compromise is long overdue. They need to move off their position on class size and class composition and tell Vince Ready that they want him back at the bargaining table.

Send a copy of your email to your local paper and radio station. Let's make sure our voices are heard loudly in every community this weekend.

Ask your family, your friends, and your neighbours to do the same. Use your social media networks and ask your Twitter followers and Facebook friends to spread this request on their networks.

It's not too late to get a deal, but government must hear from teachers, parents, and the public in huge numbers tonight and tomorrow. It only takes a minute.

And, now more than ever, it's important that we all attend the [Labour Day events](#) in our communities on Monday, and show up for the [rallies](#) that are planned at MLA's offices for this week. Do you have a message for Peter Fassbender? On Tuesday you can raise your voice at a rally at his office at 5:00 p.m. at Venture Way at Fraser Highway in Surrey.

Keep checking your email throughout the weekend for further updates.