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BCPSEA Responses to BCTF and Local Teachers' Association Statements

Statements made by the BCTF President during an interview on CBC Radio's Early Edition with Stephen Quinn, Monday, September 2, 2019, are inaccurate and require correction.

Statement	BCPSEA Response
<p>"It was surprising to us when we entered negotiations and the employer tabled rolled back assisted learning conditions...We are looking to improve learning conditions in this round of bargaining, we are not interested in rolling them back."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Supreme Court of Canada decision said that both parties have a right to negotiate changes to language, including the restored language, which comprises teacher workload provisions. ▪ BCPSEA has not tabled "rolled back" language — describing the BCPSEA proposals as a "roll back" while describing their own proposals as "improvements" is a tactic that does not reflect the substance of the proposals or discussions that have occurred. ▪ The restored language dates back to the 1980s and, as we've learned since the Court's decision, cannot be implemented in today's public school system without significant ongoing disruption, cost, and dispute because language terms and classroom conditions have changed since the language was negotiated. ▪ BCPSEA has proposed a number of options for discussion to ensure fair and reasonable workload supports for teachers while also ensuring school districts can effectively address individual students' learning needs. ▪ Student learning conditions are not the same as teachers' working conditions — student learning conditions are determined by policy set by the Ministry of Education and locally elected boards of education in the province's 60 public school districts, as well as the hard work of school district management staff and teachers, not through the collective agreement. ▪ Locally elected boards of education in the province's 60 public school districts have the statutory responsibility and accountability for delivering public education services to students in their school districts.

<p>“It means increasing class sizes...what we are looking at are class sizes, for example, that are worse than almost any class sizes in the province currently; that are worse, in fact, that what is in legislation in the School Act and composition language being rolled back, non-enrolling ratios being cut back, especially in the larger districts and so, according to our calculations for example, the more than 200 specialist teachers in Surrey, for example — those jobs would be eliminated if the language was put in place.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ These statements are completely untrue. ▪ BCPSEA has three proposals to address teacher staffing, which are to be read as a package — NO teacher in the province would lose their job as a result of our package. ▪ The BCPSEA package proposed a baseline class size and the ability to provide additional resources to allow school districts, through discussions at the local level with their teachers, to lower the baseline class size and/or to customize the workload supports that work best for the teachers in that particular learning environment. ▪ As part of this package, to address concerns expressed by the BCTF, BCPSEA also proposed a process to allow local teachers’ unions to examine the package as a whole and to “opt-in” or “opt-out” prior to any final settlement. ▪ BCPSEA is so confident that our non-enrolling teacher proposal would not result in job losses that on July 11, we tabled a proposal that included a clause guaranteeing staffing stability for school districts. ▪ We note that the BCTF has omitted this information in its media interviews and continues to claim that non-enrolling positions will be reduced in districts.
<p>“One of the problems we are having, especially attracting teachers from other jurisdictions to BC is our low salary. Lowest in all the western provinces and second lowest nationally. So we are having some teachers come from other parts of Canada but not in anywhere near the numbers that are needed.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Teacher Regulation Branch, as the organization responsible for certifying teachers in BC, indicates that BC is experiencing a net inflow of teachers from other provinces. ▪ See <i>For the Record</i> No. 2019-04 on page two for further statements regarding salary and class size comparisons. ▪ The general wage increase available under the government compensation mandate for public sector bargaining is the largest wage offer for public sector employees since 2006 and the second largest in the past 20 years. ▪ In addition, BCPSEA has proposed other options available to the parties to increase the teachers’ salary grids within the government compensation mandate and the current collective agreement.
<p>““We didn’t anticipate that we would be studying this long with concessions on the table, mind you, but BC teaching negotiations is never easy and we didn’t anticipate it would be an easy round.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The employer does not have concessions on the table — this is a tactic that does not reflect the substance of the proposals or discussions that have occurred. ▪ At the outset of bargaining in February, on multiple occasions BCPSEA asked the BCTF to consider engaging a facilitator to assist the parties in bargaining — the BCTF declined. ▪ After over 50 bargaining sessions, in an effort to move the parties toward meaningful and productive discussions, in June BCPSEA applied to the Labour Relations Board to appoint a mediator. ▪ The parties have now engaged in over 60 bargaining sessions, including 13 sessions during July and August with the assistance of the mediator. ▪ BCPSEA is trying to engage the BCTF in negotiations through presenting a number of different options for discussion and considering the issues expressed by the union. ▪ The BCTF has not indicated any interest in discussing the needs of employer school districts and has tabled proposals that cannot realistically be implemented, either from a financial, capital, or human resource perspective. ▪ We know that solutions to these complex issues will only be found through productive discussions at the bargaining table, rather than through a public relations campaign in the media.