

Labour Relations Board requests Essential Service Designations

Background

On Thursday, April 3rd, the BCTF announced at the bargaining table that the union had reversed its long-standing position on essential services and would be applying to the Labour Relations Board (LRB) for an order to impose yet unspecified limitations on its own planned strike action. While this move was previously identified by BCPSEA as a possibility, it still came as somewhat of a surprise. Aside from being illogical, it required the BCTF to step away from 20 years of campaigning against essential services.

After BCTF pronounced that its members would refuse to provide supervision outside of classrooms as part of its initial strike activity, BCPSEA identified to the union that this strike tactic could compromise the ability of Districts to ensure the safety of children. In light of that, BCPSEA proposed to BCTF that the parties enter into a formal agreement on supervision provisions that would ensure the safety of students during any union strike action that did not fully close schools. The BCTF did not agree. Instead, it applied to the LRB for essential services designations. Given the absence of a commitment on behalf of BCTF to assist with supervision, BCPSEA did not oppose the application (see [BCPSEA letter to the Labour Relations Board](#)).

Labour Relations Board makes request to the Minister of Labour

As a result of BCTF's application, the LRB yesterday submitted a [request](#) to the Minister of Labour that the Board be directed 'to designate as essential services those facilities, productions and services that the Board considers necessary or essential to prevent immediate and serious danger to the health, safety or welfare of the residents of British Columbia, and to prevent immediate and serious disruption to the provision of education programs'. The Minister of Labour is expected to reply to the LRB request in short order. Until this process and the determination of any designations is complete, the parties cannot engage in any strike or lockout activity. In any LRB proceedings, BCPSEA will seek to ensure that any teacher strike action will not replicate the extended strike situation school districts faced in 2011-12.

BCPSEA and the BCTF will be back at the bargaining table next week (April 15-17). BCPSEA will continue to provide updates and clarify information as events progress.

Please contact Mike Roberts at 604 730 4519 or miker@bcpsea.bc.ca if you have any questions.