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BCPSEA Responses to BCTF and Local Teachers' Association Statements

Statements made by the BCTF President during an interview on CFAX Radio (Victoria) CFAX Mornings with Al Ferraby, Wednesday, November 13, 2019, are inaccurate and require correction.

Statement	BCPSEA Response
<p>“What happened is the mediator wrote a report that the BCPSEA had requested. We thought that was a little premature.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requesting the report was not premature given the fact that very little progress had been made after a combined 69 days of bargaining and mediation sessions. ▪ During this time, only three items were signed off by the parties and the BCTF made very few meaningful changes to their opening positions.
<p>“They had put forward a proposal. We wanted to counter it to continue negotiations. They refused and asked the mediator to write a report...”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is not correct. There was no proposal available to counter. This statement is referring to an offer of settlement that BCPSEA provided the BCTF on September 26, 2019. ▪ When we delivered the offer of settlement, we told the BCTF that its purpose was to allow both parties to set aside their bargaining objectives and provide wages for teachers while the BCTF and BCPSEA commit to work together over the term of the agreement on the barriers preventing productive negotiations. ▪ There was also a statement at the top of the document, which we also spoke to, explaining that if the offer of settlement was accepted by the BCTF, BCPSEA would withdraw any outstanding items from the table. ▪ Given the BCTF rejected the offer of settlement, our outstanding matters remain on the table. ▪ We also explained that we remain committed to our objectives going forward. ▪ The BCTF chose to ignore the oral and written information they were provided, which specifically stated that BCPSEA made an offer of settlement, not a proposal to which they could counter. ▪ Despite BCTF public comments to the contrary, BCPSEA has not removed proposals from the table.

<p>“I think that the mediator decided a few things that give us hope. One is that he didn't contain any concessions that the employer had tabled in their submission within his report, and so that's good news for us. We think they should not be in existence anymore. We think we should be going from basically the mediator's report to try and secure additional things that teachers need in order to settle this collective agreement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are a number of inaccuracies in this statement. ▪ None of the BCPSEA proposals remove resources from the system and therefore characterizing them as concessions is inaccurate and misleading. ▪ BCPSEA's workload proposals have not been removed from the table. ▪ The mediator's recommendations didn't reflect either the BCTF's OR BCPSEA's proposals on class size and composition. ▪ The mediator's recommendations also included a Letter of Understanding to address "...workplace issues, such as standardizing/modernizing workload provisions...and other issues.” ▪ BCPSEA remains committed to our bargaining objectives, which include negotiation of the class size and composition language restored by the Supreme Court of Canada decision.
<p>“The other thing that we're looking for is equity of student learning conditions across the province. So that hasn't happened to date. We're looking for improvements in student learning conditions. We think it's important that regardless of where a student goes to school in this province their learning conditions should be relatively equitable. So we're looking for some class size improvements across the board and we're also looking for some composition language.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collective agreements contain terms and conditions of employment, not policies related to student learning. It is misleading for the BCTF to suggest they are negotiating student learning conditions. ▪ This statement suggests that the outdated class composition language provides for better student learning conditions. This is not the case. ▪ Boards of education have been clear in their communication to BCPSEA that the current class composition language, which was originally negotiated in the 1980s, negatively impacts their ability to provide student supports where they are needed and is operationally impossible to implement. ▪ The BCTF proposals would make the old restored language even more difficult to implement and substantially less responsive to student needs. Boards have been clear that they do not want this language expanded. ▪ There are currently 20 school districts without class composition language in their collective agreements. The data suggests that students in those districts do as well or better than students in districts that do have language in the collective agreement.
<p>“And so in order to attract [teachers] we need a better salary and in order for that to happen we need to do some things... what we've seen other unions be able to do is change their salary grid to shorten it. We would like to do that. And also we need additional money attached to parts of the grid. So a lift at the top of the grid for teachers that have been teaching for a long time.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In addition to the general wage increases available under the public sector bargaining Mandate, BCPSEA also offered the BCTF several ways to package proposals to increase teacher salaries — including eliminating the bottom step on the salary grid and adding a further percentage increase to the top of the grid — along with modifications to the teacher workload language. The BCTF said they would not consider any salary increase that was linked to changes to the class composition language. ▪ Other unions were able to achieve changes to their salary grid within the Mandate by negotiating trade-offs to language within their agreements to free up money that could be used for wage increases. ▪ At the bargaining table, the BCTF repeatedly told BCPSEA that they are not willing to change any of their current collective agreement language and would only consider “leveling up” of their language. This approach has resulted in no ability to consider trade-offs to increase the salary grid as other unions have been able to achieve. ▪ The BCTF have insisted that they should be able to negotiate provisions that will drive additional funding or expand the Mandate. As the mediator indicated in his report, these matters are appropriately the focus of the provincial government.