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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 One (Vancouver) Early Edition with Stephen Quinn, Wednesday, February 5, 2020, are inaccurate and require correction.

Statement	BCPSEA Response
<p>"When I'm talking about equity of learning conditions I'm talking about the fact that our working conditions and student learning conditions were negotiated locally and it's very uneven. We have about seven districts that don't have any class size language, for example, for 4 to 12, and so we're looking for some improvements there. That relates to the \$1,800 per student less in funding for BC, according to the national average."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collective agreements contain terms and conditions of employment, not provisions on student learning. It is misleading for the BCTF to suggest they are negotiating student learning conditions. ▪ Student learning conditions are determined by policies set by the Ministry of Education and locally elected boards of education in the province's 60 public school districts, as well as through the hard work of school district management staff and teachers. ▪ The recommendations contained in the report of Mediator David Schaub, which was rejected by the BCTF without taking it to a vote of their members, include a Letter of Understanding to address "...workplace issues, such as standardizing/modernizing workload provisions...and other issues." ▪ There is no connection between the per student funding provided by the provincial government and class size language contained in the collective agreement. As stated by the BCTF President, there are some districts that have no class size language in the collective agreement. There is no negative impact on those districts' funding — nor is there a lesser standard of student services — due to the absence of collective agreement language.
<p>"We are waiting for dates from BCPSEA."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is incorrect. Both parties were waiting to be contacted by the mediator who will work with the parties to determine availability to meet. (Note: As of today's date, two dates to meet with the mediator have now been set for the end of February.)

<p>“For us to be facing such massive concessions at the bargaining table has been a real surprise ... but those concessions were tabled in April.</p> <p>They have been temporarily withdrawn. The employer made it clear that when that happened it was because government insisted upon it, but then they came back when we refused the mediator’s report.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several aspects of these statements are inaccurate. ▪ The employer does not have concessions on the table — this is a communications tactic that does not reflect the substance of the employers’ proposals or the discussions that have occurred. We are proposing changes aimed at re-directing resources contained within the collective agreement to more effectively provide services to students. ▪ When BCPSEA made an offer of settlement to the BCTF on September 26, 2019, the purpose was to have both parties set aside their bargaining objectives in this round and provide wage increases for teachers while the BCTF and BCPSEA worked together over the term of the collective agreement to address the barriers preventing productive negotiations. ▪ The offer of settlement included a statement — delivered to the BCTF both verbally and in writing — that IF the offer of settlement was accepted by the BCTF, BCPSEA would withdraw any outstanding matters from the table in this round. ▪ BCPSEA never said to the BCTF that we would withdraw our bargaining objectives otherwise, and government did not provide any direction to BCPSEA on this matter. ▪ Given the BCTF rejected our September offer of settlement, we were clear that our outstanding matters remain on the table (as do the BCTF’s). ▪ The September 2019 offer of settlement has no connection to the mediator’s report, which was issued November 1, 2019.
<p>“And so in order for negotiations to be more fruitful when we return to the table those concessions need to be gone. It’s not a shock that teachers that spent 14 years in court trying to get our language back, finally to get it back and for this to be the first round we’re able to negotiate it and we’re looking for some modest improvements in the areas that don’t have any class size or composition language, for us to be faced with concessions instead of making small improvements has been extremely perplexing to us.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As stated above, the employer does not have concessions on the table — this is a communications tactic that does not reflect the substance of the employers’ proposals or the discussions that have occurred. We are proposing changes aimed at re-directing resources contained within the collective agreement to more effectively provide services to students. ▪ The collective agreement belongs to both parties — the province’s 60 public school districts and the teachers’ union — not just the union. ▪ The Supreme Court of Canada decision said that both parties have a right to negotiate changes to the restored language. The restored language becomes the base from which the parties will negotiate changes. ▪ Boards of education and senior staff have consistently told BCPSEA that the restored language, originally negotiated in the 1980s, no longer fits in the classrooms of 2020 and beyond, and no longer fits with the public school system’s approach to inclusive education. ▪ Boards do not want this language to be expanded through the BCTF proposals, which cannot realistically be implemented, would make the old restored language even more difficult to implement, and — of even more importance — would be substantially less responsive to student needs. ▪ BCPSEA’s proposals and discussions have been clear that we want to ensure fair and reasonable workload supports for teachers while also ensuring boards of education can more effectively address individual students’ learning needs. ▪ One-third of the province’s 60 public school districts do not have class composition language — those districts have been better able to consistently provide a high level of services to students.