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By E-mail: Two Pages

Bargaining Update

▪ Support Staff

Board Chairs have received a letter from the Minister of Education with respect to the Cooperative Gains Mandate and the current round of support staff collective bargaining.

BCPSEA will be working with boards with respect to the relationship of the savings plan you are able to develop and your bargaining plan. This will have implications for our provincial discussions and we will continue to work with you on those implications. This will be a very difficult round of bargaining to conclude.

As we have previously reported, provincial framework discussions were held during November with representatives of the sector's support staff unions. Further discussions will be held in January.

▪ Teachers

As you know, on October 17, 2012 the Premier directed the Minister of Education to undertake a *review of the teacher bargaining process that will see government engage with the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and other education stakeholders on how best to make systemic improvements prior to the next round of bargaining*. BCPSEA CEO Hugh Finlayson and I met with Deputy Minister of Education James Gorman in November for discussion.

During our meeting, we shared our observations that the processes, procedures and structures by which public school teachers and boards of education determine terms and conditions of employment have been extensively studied over the years. Our collective experiences show us that the chosen structures have yielded mixed results, whether the parties negotiated on a local district by local teacher union basis (1987-1993) or provincially under the *Public Education Labour Relations Act* (1994-present). Some have argued that the current so-called problem with bargaining is not one of structure at all.

BCPSEA, through our work and consultations, has developed an approach in response to the October 17 direction, which we shared with the Minister. Our proposed model, provided as a starting point, takes into consideration our bargaining experiences, the work of Commissioners Don Wright (2004) and Vince Ready (2007), the process approach that assisted in the June 2012 provincially negotiated agreement, and the following five principles:

1. Respects the right to bargain collectively
2. Encourages voluntary settlements
3. Encourages timely settlements

4. Observes government fiscal and policy imperatives
5. Limits the effect of disruption without undermining 1, 2, and 3 above.

We will be distributing to school districts later this month a detailed resource paper that reviews the approach in detail. We look forward to further discussion at our upcoming Annual General Meeting.

Annual General Meeting

The 19th BCPSEA [Annual General Meeting](#) is scheduled for January 25-26, 2013 at the Coast Coal Harbour Hotel in Vancouver. The timeline for submission of proposed resolutions and pre-nominations for elections to the Board of Directors closes at the end of the day today. An information package will be distributed to districts prior to Christmas.

I want to take this opportunity to let you know that this will be my last Report to you as Chair of the BCPSEA Board. I have made the decision to not seek re-election to the Board.

My time on the Board, both as a Director and Chair, has been a true experience in every sense: gratifying, frustrating, challenging, interesting...well, you get the idea! Given all that is on the horizon for the next year, with the bargaining review, continued bargaining with support staff unions, another round of bargaining with the BC Teachers' Federation, a provincial election...the time is right to move on to other challenges and interests and allow the opportunity for a fresh perspective to be brought to the role.

I am proud of many of the accomplishments of the employers' association during my tenure, including a provincial framework agreement with support staff unions this time a year ago, and a negotiated deal with the BCTF after protracted job action and, to be frank, a generally prevailing view that a negotiated deal would not be achievable. I am also pleased that we were able to complete many governance initiatives, including a review of all internal and external Board policies, and a review of our strategic planning process. This is all strong foundational work that ensures the health of the governance structure and the organization as a whole.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Board, who thoughtfully consider challenging issues on an ongoing basis. Given that approximately 90% of a board of education's budget is devoted to employee compensation, the work of the employers' association is vitally important to our work in districts. I encourage trustees to get involved in the employers' association, whether through putting your name forward for election to the Board (remember, there are also nominations from the floor when AGM opens) or by becoming your board's Trustee Representative to BCPSEA, or by staying current and engaged on employment matters generally.

Ongoing Dialogue

The more we engage with each other, the more we learn and the better able we are to stay connected with what's going on both at the district and provincial levels. Please feel free to contact any member of your [Board of Directors](#) at any time. We look forward to seeing many of you at AGM in January. In the meantime, on behalf of the Board and staff of BCPSEA, we wish you all the joys of the season.



Melanie Joy, Chair