



## Statement from BCPSEA Board Chair Alan Chell

November 8, 2019

### **School Districts' Employers' Association Disappointed with BCTF Rejection of Mediator's Recommendations for Settlement**

On October 1, the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) asked mediator David Schaub to file a report under Section 74(5) of the *Labour Relations Code* in relation to the negotiations between BCPSEA and the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) for a renewed Provincial Collective Agreement.

Mediator Schaub presented his *Report and Recommendations for Settlement Between the British Columbia Public School Employers' Association and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation* to the parties on November 1. The mediator provided clear direction that the details of the report remain confidential and asked that both parties advise him by the end of day Friday, November 8, 2019 whether their respective executives would make a recommendation to their members to endorse the recommendations for settlement contained in his report.

"After a combined total of 69 bargaining and mediation sessions, the BCPSEA Board of Directors was surprised and disappointed to be advised that the BCTF Executive had rejected the mediator's recommendations for settlement and would not take them forward for a vote of the BCTF membership," said BCPSEA Board Chair Alan Chell. "In our view, this is a missed opportunity to work with the mediator to create a pathway to move forward."

"Given the BCTF rejection, the BCPSEA Board of Directors has determined that a vote of the Board or a vote of our members is moot," said Chell. "Although the mediator's recommendations didn't represent BCPSEA's preferred approach, the Board believed they would provide the public school system with the necessary labour stability while we attempted to work with the BCTF over the term of the agreement to address the structural barriers that are preventing productive negotiations."

"We are concerned that the BCTF continues to take an approach that will not lead to a freely negotiated collective agreement," said Chell. "In his report, the mediator specifically points to the barriers, including, among other matters, the BCTF refusal to negotiate within the provincial government public sector bargaining mandate, their attempts to re-negotiate the split of Provincial and Local issues as agreed by the parties, and their attempts to negotiate the size of the K-12 public education operating budget. These are significant barriers," said Chell.

"BCPSEA remains committed to our bargaining objectives, including negotiation of the class size and composition language restored by the Supreme Court of Canada decision, which the Court said the parties have the right to negotiate, and which boards told us needs to change so they can more effectively provide the services to students that they need in 2020 and beyond," said Chell.

Stephanie Higginson, President of the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA), reiterated to BCPSEA that boards of education and the BCSTA continue to support BCPSEA through the bargaining and mediation process. "BCPSEA developed its bargaining objectives through

extensive consultation with the 60 boards of education in the province,” said Higginson. “Our member boards were clear in their feedback to BCPSEA — we need changes to the restored language, which was originally negotiated in the 1980s and was already out of date in the 1990s. Although we’re disappointed that the BCTF rejected the mediator’s recommendations, we continue to hope that they are willing to have the productive discussions needed to conclude an agreement that will reasonably meet the needs of teachers and school districts.”

“As we have said many times before, the success of any round of bargaining depends on the commitment of the parties to make it work,” Chell continued. “The mediator has not booked out and we will be communicating further with him.”