

2012-02 February 22, 2012

By E-mail: Two pages plus attachment

BCTF “Provincial Day of Action” — February 27, 2012

Several districts have been advised that the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and its union locals are planning a “Provincial Day of Action” on Monday, February 27. Based on information obtained to date, we understand the day will involve teacher meetings over lunch and demonstrations after school, and could include teachers wearing political messages on buttons, t-shirts, etc.

Attached is content from two teachers' union local memos to their members about plans for the day.

BCPSEA Advice

BCPSEA's advice is that the decision of Arbitrator Mark Thompson issued on October 30, 2011 continues to apply. This award confirmed BCPSEA's position that students must be insulated from political messages in the classroom. Teachers should not engage in political issues with students, post union political messages on school walls, or wear (e.g., t-shirts, buttons, etc.) political messages in the classroom. The BCTF has appealed the Thompson decision to the BC Court of Appeal but at this time the decision is binding.

The Essential Services Order is still in effect during any BCTF protest of this nature and teachers must still comply with the provisions of the Order. Given that the “day of action” activities appear to be planned for before school, noon hour, and after school we recommend you confirm with your local teachers' union local that teachers who are scheduled to perform student supervision duties on Monday, February 27, will not be withdrawing those services.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact your BCPSEA labour relations liaison.

BCTF Statements

The memos also reference BCTF *Report from the Provincial Table #55* (attached), “that outlines the contract stripping BCPSEA wants to achieve as well as possible teacher reaction to these attacks.”

It's curious that the BCTF continues to characterize any areas of interest to the employer as “contract stripping,” which provides a convenient excuse to avoid discussion of any of these matters at the bargaining table. We have said repeatedly during negotiations that teachers are the most important determinant of student success and we want to discuss, on both a philosophical level and an operational level, various areas of support for teachers such as mentorship, and professional growth and development plans. The BCTF refuses to engage in any discussion of teacher needs in these areas, which should be of interest to them.

Further, the BCTF uses inflammatory rhetoric — “We told them that we are not interested in a “master/servant” model that de-professionalizes teaching and leaves teachers working in a climate of fear” — unsupported by any substantive conversation at the table. This approach is not only unfortunate, it is untrue and unproductive.

Attachments: Content of BCTF Union Local Memos; BCTF *Report from the Provincial Table #55*

BCTF Union Local Memos

This Thursday (Feb. 23rd), the appointed fact finder, Trevor Hughes will be submitting his report to govt. to answer the question, "can BCPSEA and the BCTF achieve a voluntary agreement in bargaining?" It is assumed that his answer will be "no" unless he agrees with the BCTF that a mediator needs to be brought to the bargaining table. If the answer is "no," it is expected that an imposed contract will be legislated sooner than later and we would then have to decide what course of action to take.

It is expected the Hughes report will be available on Monday, Feb. 27th. On that day, the BCTF is calling for all teachers in the province to take part in a day of action. Normal instruction will take place but the BCTF is asking that the following also occur:

- Work only from "bell to bell" by arriving at school in the morning just before the bell and leaving school soon after the bell at the end of the day. Any extra-curriculars would be put on hold for the day.
- Hold a staff committee meeting at lunch to discuss the Hughes report, bargaining bulletin #55 that outlines the contract stripping BCPSEA wants to achieve as well as possible teacher reaction to these attacks.
- A variety of after school demonstrations. If there is support for a demonstration, it would make sense to hold one at the board office. If there is little support for a demonstration, we won't plan one.

Staff reps and other [union] executive members at your school will be receiving more information about this event over the next few days. I hope you will support them as they coordinate events on Monday. I realize that some of you are not comfortable participating in public demonstrations, so please support the "bell to bell" and committee meeting at lunch since they are not public.

We anticipate a report from Assistant Deputy Minister of Labour, Trevor Hughes (the province's "fact finder") by the end of this week. Thus there is a province-wide action planned for each school in BC on Monday February 27.

The day will be a "bell to bell" day, and will include a lunch break "union action" meeting, and an after-school demonstration.

Below you will find the draft agenda for the school-based union meetings at lunch on Monday, February 27.

Agenda for school-based union meetings at lunch on Monday, February 27:

- Distribute "fact-finder" Hughes' report, and BCTF Bargaining Report from table #55 (attached)
- Discussion/comments on implications of the report
- Together, brainstorm ideas and send out e-mails, tweets, Facebook, and phone calls to trustees, MLAs, BC School Trustees' Association (including leaving messages and voice mail at MLAs' offices)
- Make signs for after-school demonstrations (if want different messages than those signs that we will provide via courier)
- Discuss options for teacher actions in response to possible legislation.

Agenda for after-school demonstrations:

Meet directly after the dismissal bell at an agreed upon location such as the staff room, and then proceed together to the spot you have chosen to hold the short rally. If your school is on a high traffic street, then perhaps it is best to gather near the road; alternatively, if you have more foot traffic from parents, then you may choose to assemble closer to the school in order to better speak to parents. Take pictures, tweet out to trustees and MLAs, speak about the issues to parents, and depart from the school after 15-20 minutes.