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BCPSEA Responses to Comments made by the President of Greater Victoria Teachers' Association

This *For the Record* addresses statements made by a member of the BC Teachers' Federation's bargaining team and Greater Victoria Teachers' Association President, Tara Ehrcke, during an interview on January 3, 2012. Please [visit our website](#) for more information, including specific bargaining proposals, other bargaining related materials, and reports arising from each bargaining session.

“BCTF Demand Fair and Modest”

Interview with a member of the BC Teachers' Federation's bargaining team and Greater Victoria Teachers' Association President, Tara Ehrcke – January 3, 2012

Statement	BCPSEA Response
<p>“Teachers are quite disappointed that although we have come to the table, revised our proposals -- we are looking for modest and, we believe, fair salary increases, restoration of our class size language -- unfortunately, the government has come to the table with nothing but zeros and concessions.”</p>	<p>The BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) came to the table with proposals costing \$2 billion, including significant increases to salary, benefits, preparation time, and leave time. To date, the union has tabled revisions to two of their proposals: Compassionate Care and Early Retirement Incentive Plan (ERIP). The cost of their Compassionate Care proposal was reduced to \$154,000 reduced from \$49 million and the ERIP was reduced to \$387 million from the original \$445 million. Recently at the bargaining table, the BCTF has indicated that they will not be tabling revised proposals.</p> <p>The BCTF takes the position that changes or different approaches to addressing issues represent a “stripping of the collective agreement.” This is reminiscent of the BCTF in previous rounds of bargaining where contract stripping was broadly defined as any agreement that resulted in the BCTF, a local or any member of the BCTF losing any provision, term or benefit that existed. BCPSEA has modified its proposals and has tabled a full and integrated set of proposals in an attempt to reach a final agreement. The complete package included a withdrawal of eight items to narrow the scope of the proposals.</p> <p>The BCTF often states in the media that they are bargaining for “restoration of class size”. Class size and composition are not matters that can be bargained either provincially or locally. Those matters remain governed by provisions in the School Act. Last year, the BC Supreme Court did find that those provisions were invalid; however, the Court suspended its declaration for one year to allow government time to address the repercussions of the Court's decision. Consequently, the provisions still remain in effect at this time and are not an issue at the bargaining table.</p>

<p>"I really don't think it's fair to say that teachers need to take what is in essence a wage cut with the net zero."</p>	<p>Since bargaining began in March, union representatives have emphasized their rejection of the net zero mandate and the need for significant government funding in order for the parties to reach a new agreement. The BCTF's position in bargaining is unique. They do not acknowledge the province's current financial limitations and they ignore that most other public sector unions, including the K-12 support staff group, have successfully reached settlements under this mandate.</p>
<p>"We think that local communities need to have a lot more input into teacher bargaining and that we had a lot more success back in the 80s and 90s reaching negotiated agreements. It's only been since the imposition of a provincial model that we have had so many legislated contracts. Teachers did not have legislated contracts. There were strikes but not particularly long ones, and we were able to reach negotiated solutions that both parties felt good about and were able to implement."</p>	<p>Local bargaining was fraught with disputes and other difficulties. There were approximately 16 strikes in each of the three rounds of local bargaining and one occasion of legislative intervention.</p> <p>BCPSEA does not see that re-establishing what is now a decades-past system of local board of education–local teachers' union bargaining, and the resulting degree of duplication of effort, provides the most efficient means possible in a time when districts have sought to streamline processes in order to ensure the greatest possible resources are available at the school level. It would simply not be in the best interest of boards and the communities they represent to engage in centrally managed local bargaining on common provincial issues.</p> <p>Arbitrator/Mediator Vince Ready, in his official role as Industrial Inquiry Commissioner to review teacher bargaining, wrote in his final report following the successful 2006 round of provincial bargaining the following statement:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Having just achieved such a singular success, I am reluctant to recommend a wholesale change in the process of collective bargaining. Imposing solutions for collective bargaining which have worked in other jurisdictions may very well disturb the commitment of the parties which was evident during 2006. This would be contrary to the public interest."</p>
<p>"I think that parents certainly understand the issue around class size and that is one of our bargaining objectives...."</p>	<p>The BCTF often states that bargaining is about class size and composition. This is incorrect. Class size and composition are legislation and remain a part of the School Act; therefore these matters not available for bargaining at any level. Last year, the BC Supreme Court did find that those provisions were invalid; however, the Court suspended its declaration for one year to allow government time to address the decision. The Government has since engaged in consultations with the BCTF.</p>

The British Columbia Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) is the employers' association and accredited bargaining agent for all 60 public boards of education in British Columbia. BCPSEA operates as a co-governance model between the provincial government and the boards of education. Representatives from the 60 boards of education elect nine school trustees to the BCPSEA Board of Directors.