



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Delivered via e-mail: educ.minister@gov.bc.ca

June 11, 2014

Hon. Minister Peter Fassbender
Ministry of Education
Po Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fassbender:

RE: BCTF Bargaining

The Board of Education for School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast) has unanimously moved to write to you once more to express our grave concerns about the long and divisive labour negotiations with the teachers of British Columbia.

In our letter of March 17, 2014, we asked you to bring flexibility to the table and consider the needs of students and stability for education as paramount. Two months later we have a crisis in education in our province. In the midst of strike and lock-out activities, students are suffering and all our stakeholders – parents, support staff, community members and teachers – are desperate to see some responsible leadership. Very little movement on substantial issues and poorly thought out statements in the media that dismiss the other side, whether made by you, your premier, or the BCTF, are not helping the students of this province.

Once again, we ask you to support a freely negotiated agreement with the BCTF. Further, we ask you to do this by:

- ensuring that government apply more thought to BCPSEA's communications and consultation with the field before employing confusing, miscalculated directives such as the May 21, 2014 lockout announcement;
- instructing BCPSEA to immediately propose to the BCTF to re-affirm the Framework Agreement in Committee for the 2013 Round of Bargaining to: a) re-engage the common data study of data related to compensation, working conditions, demographics and relevant collective bargaining matters b) revise the date of the facilitator's report that was never issued last year to June 30, 2014;

- maximizing the use of Mark Brown as the mutually contracted facilitator, at a neutral bargaining location with no spectators/guests who are not senior decision-makers for their respective parties;
- committing sufficient funds to address the outstanding dispute over class size and composition and learning specialist ratios as new language at the bargaining table, rather than continue to drag the K–12 public education system down into a second decade of legal wrangling;
- ensuring that BCPSEA offers the BCTF a fair wage proposal in line with other BC public sector employees who have recently received raises.

The current approach of blaming each other in the media is hurting communities, parents and students. Minister Fassbender, you have the power to change this dynamic for the better. We urge you to give our suggestions serious consideration and it is our sincere hope that we will see responsible, respectful action at the bargaining table and a successful conclusion to negotiations for a collective agreement in the coming days.

Sincerely,



Betty Baxter
Board Chair

p.c. Board of Education of School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast)
Patrick Bocking, Superintendent of Schools
Nicholas Weswick, Secretary-Treasurer
Louise Herle, SCTA President
Carolyn Smith, CUPE Local 801 President
Nicholas Simons, MLA, Powell River-Sunshine Coast
All Boards of Education, via BCSTA