

BULLETIN

Teachers must be supported: A statement from BC's labour leaders

February 27, 2012

On Thursday, February 23, Education Minister George Abbott announced he was instructing his staff to unilaterally draft legislation that would impose a contract on BC's teachers. This legislation is expected as early as Monday.

Premier Clark claims that there is a crisis, that there is no way forward, and that legislation will end the dispute and restore normalcy to our schools. Minister Abbott is wrong on all three counts.

Premier Clark claims that the imposition of a contract is necessitated by crisis. As confirmed by the fact finder and by school administrators, the teachers job action has had minimal impact on the quality of classroom learning in our school system. Students are receiving everything they need to graduate and to pursue post-secondary education and training opportunities. Parents, in many cases, are receiving reports on their children's progress in greater and more useful detail than under the prescriptive report card system. There is no crisis.

Please support teachers at after school rallies in your community on Monday, February 27. Check with your [local teachers' association](#) for details.

British Columbians want their government to engage in a fair process and to reach a negotiated settlement that respects and values teachers. The BCTF has demonstrated a desire to reach a settlement through mediation or arbitration. Either of these options would result in a fair and reasonable contract that would improve learning conditions for students in the long run, and an end to the job action. The government has, so far, rejected these options. Mediation and arbitration are ways forward that are supported by the people of British Columbia.

On the question of ending the conflict, this government has tried legislation before. Each time, teachers and their supporters have been provoked to greater action, and the courts have found the government to have violated the constitutional rights of teachers. Legislating contracts is provocative and demoralizing. If the BC Government imposes a contract through legislation, parents can be assured that the learning environment will suffer. Legislation will not end the conflict.

BC's public and private sector unions and our more than 450,000 members stand in solidarity with BC's teachers and their desire for a fair, negotiated deal. In the next 72 hours, Premier Clark and the BC Government have an important decision to make. Will they remain on their current path toward conflict and confrontation, or will they change course, and pursue a fair outcome that restores a positive atmosphere of respect in our schools. The ball is in their court, and British Columbians are watching.

BC Government & Service Employees Union

BC Teachers Federation

BC and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council

Canadian Auto Workers

Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union

*Canadian Union of Public Employees
Communication, Energy & Paperworkers Union of Canada
Federation of Post-Secondary Educators
Health Sciences Association of BC
Hospital Employees Union
International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Operators
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
International Longshore & Warehouse Union
International Union of Operating Engineers
Public Service Alliance of Canada
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