

CUPE deal increases pressure on government to revise mandate for teachers

The BC Teachers' Federation is encouraged by news of the tentative agreement reached between the Canadian Union of Public Employees, representing school support workers, and the BC Public School Employers' Association.

BCTF President Susan Lambert welcomed three key elements of the deal: "The employer dropped its concession demands, put money on the table, and addressed CUPE concerns about their bargaining structures," she said, adding that "the government is treating the two bargaining tables very differently. The concessions being demanded at the BCTF table are deep and broad. They would fundamentally restrict teachers' rights and virtually eliminate fair process in hiring, transfers, and evaluation."

Lambert emphasized that the government's net-zero mandate has not been applied across the board. "Nurses, anaesthesiologists, police, firefighters, and now CUPE have all broken the net-zero mandate," she said, adding that with the current rate of inflation running at 3%, net zero actually means a 3% salary cut.

"Net zero would just compound the growing gap between BC teachers' salaries and those of our colleagues in other provinces," Lambert said. She pointed to the example of Alberta, where teachers at top of scale make over \$20,000 more than their counterparts in BC. By contrast, CUPE school support workers in BC are among the highest paid in Canada for their job categories.

Lambert also noted that the CUPE deal contains improvements to working hours for special education assistants (SEA). "That's good news. More SEA time means improved services for students with special needs. Now we need to persuade the government to restore special education teachers as well," she said.

Another positive element to the CUPE deal is that it incorporates both provincial and local bargaining. This is a goal of the BCTF bargaining too, but so far the employer has insisted that negotiations must take place at the provincial table.

"CUPE's bargaining structures were altered to meet their needs. I don't understand why the same could not be done to allow teachers to negotiate local solutions to problems or challenges in local school districts," Lambert said.

- 30 -

For more information, contact Nancy Knickerbocker, BCTF media relations officer, at 604-871-1881 (office) or 604-340-1959 (cell).

Nancy Knickerbocker
Media Relations Officer
BC Teachers' Federation
Office: 604-871-1881
Cell: 604-340-1959
www.bctf.ca <<http://www.bctf.ca/>