



BC CONFEDERATION OF PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

Suite 202, 1545 West 8th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6J 1T5
Tel: 604-687-4433 Fax: 604-687-4488 Email: info@bccpac.bc.ca

August 8, 2005

Ron Christensen, Chair
BC Public School Employers' Association
400 – 1333 W Broadway
Vancouver, BC V6H 4C1

Dear Ron,

The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils wishes to express concerns regarding the potential disruption of children's education in the 2005-2006 school year, as we recognize that members of BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) will begin this upcoming school year without a signed contract.

We are aware that the government's mandate is 0-0-0 on all provincial contracts and therefore BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) is not in a position to offer any salary and/or benefit increases at this time while the BCTF is advocating for increases, estimated to be in excess of \$600 million, making it difficult to agree to a settled contract. Should the government step in and legislate a contract on the BCTF, parents are concerned that some form of job action will still take place. Any disruption to the positive relationship between students and teachers is detrimental to that child's well being and educational achievement. The effect on whole school communities is still being felt from the last job action.

In 1993, member Parent Advisory Councils passed a resolution at the BCCPAC Annual General Meeting requesting an essential services designation for education to protect children from job action within bargaining. In 2000, this resolution was both strengthened and reaffirmed, when our membership specifically requested and approved inclusion of an amendment to the Labour Relations Code to include "education" wherever the phrase, "health, safety or welfare of residents of British Columbia" is stated. Since that time, and in response to parent concerns, Section 72 of the Labour Relations Code was amended to specifically reference, "the provision of educational programs to students and eligible children under the *School Act*," thus giving the Minister the right to state education as an "essential service".

We understand that the Labour Relations Board will only act to define "essential service" within the context of education once the BCTF serves strike notice and the Minister deems education an essential service. We also understand that "essential service" may have different meanings to different people. Regardless of how this is defined, parents expect that all parties involved will be committed to placing the needs of the students first in any decision on the definition of "essential service" in our public education. Ongoing positive relationships in our schools with the welfare of the whole child at the centre are what will make a difference in more children's lives.

BCCPAC welcomes the opportunity to be part of the discussion on what constitutes "essential services" as parents and their children will be directly affected.

In Partnership,

Kim Howland
President
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils

cc: BCTF
BCCPAC Membership
Minister of Education
Premier of BC

BC School Superintendents' Association
BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association
BC School Trustees' Association
BC College of Teachers