

# Get the facts straight:

## Evidence to challenge the Ministry of Education news release on decision to appeal BC Supreme Court ruling

The Ministry of Education issued a news release, *Minister of Education Statement on Decision to Appeal*, on February 4, 2014, in response to the BC Supreme Court ruling on Bills 28 and 22 on January 27, 2014; it can be found online at [newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/02/minister-of-educations-statement-on-decision-to-appeal.html](http://newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/02/minister-of-educations-statement-on-decision-to-appeal.html)

Evidence is provided on the following pages to challenge statements made by the Minister in the news release.

Note: Links are provided to the BCTF publications in which data was originally cited. See each document for a full list of references and data sources.

The Supreme Court ruling can be found at [courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/SC/14/01/2014BCSC0121cor1.htm](http://courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/SC/14/01/2014BCSC0121cor1.htm)

**Minister’s statement:** “It is the BCTF’s job to defend its members’ interests and has done so with passion and vigor. But it is government’s responsibility to balance those interests against the best interests of students, their families, and the 4.6 million British Columbians who already invest nearly \$5 billion into the K-12 education every year.”

**Evidence to challenge the Minister’s statement:**

- Government has failed to address cost pressures on school districts which have resulted in ongoing structural budget shortfalls and significant cuts to education programs and services.
- BC per-student funding is about \$1,000 below the national average
- BC has done considerably less than the rest of Canada to improve operating funding to school districts. Between 2006–07 and 2010–11, Operating Expenditures for elementary and secondary public schools in Canada as a whole increased by 19.6%, compared to only 9.6% in British Columbia.
- BC ranks lowest of all the provinces in terms of improvements to education funding. Our province ranked the lowest for seven key indicators used by Statistics Canada to measure public-school expenditures.

See pages 2–3 of the BCTF 2013 Education Funding brief,  
[bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf)

**Minister’s statement:** “In practical terms, the judgment is completely unaffordable for taxpayers. It would create huge disruptions in our schools and, most importantly, it will prevent districts from providing the right mix of supports that our students actually need.”

**Evidence to challenge the Minister’s statement:**

- Other provinces have experienced declining enrolment and a global economic crisis yet have continued to make improvements in K to 12 funding
- If BC brought per-student funding up to the national average, this would provide an additional **\$543 million** in funding for BC public schools

See page 7 of the BCTF 2013 Education Funding brief,  
[bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf)

**Minister’s statement:** “Over the past 13 years, we’ve increased annual funding by \$1 billion, even while student enrolment has declined by an unprecedented 9.4 per cent. Student success rates have increased and on major international assessments, British Columbia students rank among the very best in the world.”

**Evidence to challenge the Minister’s statement:**

- The education minister is using declining enrolment to try to justify school closures and other education cuts. Yes, enrolment has declined in BC, as it has in all other provinces except Alberta and Saskatchewan<sup>1</sup>, but the difference is that all provinces except BC have hired more educators. Between 2006–07 and 2010–11:
  - FTE educators increased in all provinces **except BC**.
  - FTE educators *increased* by an average of 3.2% across Canada.
  - FTE educators *decreased* by 3.7% in BC.

See page 6 of the BCTF 2013 Education Funding brief,  
[bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Statistics Canada (2013), *Summary Elementary and Secondary School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2006/2007 to 2010/2011*, Chart 2.2, p. 30; available at: [statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2013099-eng.pdf](http://statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2013099-eng.pdf).

**Minister's statement:** "We've increased supports for students with special needs, including a 36 per cent increase in the number of full-time education assistants."

**Evidence to challenge the Minister's statement:**

- No time period is stated
- Hired EAs while reducing professional learning specialist teachers by 769.2 FTE between the years 2001–02 and 2011–12.

See page 13 of the BCTF 2013 Education Funding brief, [bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf)

**Minister's statement:** "Average class sizes are near historical lows of 19.3 students for kindergarten, 21.5 for grades 1 to 3, 25.7 for grades 4 to 7, and 23.0 for grades 8 to 12. To put that in perspective, in 1970 the average class size was 42."

**Evidence to challenge the Minister's statement:**

Between 2006–07 and 2013–14, the average class size:

- increased from 17.5 to 19.3 students per class for Kindergarten classes
- increased from 20.3 to 21.5 students per class for Grade 1 to 3 classes
- remained about the same in 2013–14 (25.7) as in 2006–07 (25.8) for Grade 4 to 7 classes
- decreased from 24.4 to 23 students per class for Grade 8 to 12 classes.

See Ministry of Education Class size summary reports at: [bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/province.php](http://bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/province.php)

**Minister's statement:** "Over the past eight years, the number of classes with more than 30 students has dropped by 88 per cent. Less than two per cent of classrooms have more than 30 students, and of these, the vast majority are in subjects like band, drama and gym where larger numbers are beneficial and intentional."

**Evidence to challenge the Minister's statement:**

It is not clear whether there has been a real improvement in class size, or if the Ministry changed the method by which it counts and reports on the number of classes with more than 30 students in the 2013–14 school Class Size Summary reports ([bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/school.php](http://bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/school.php)).

BCTF Research reviewed the Ministry's Class Size Summary reports for 2011–12, 2012–13, and 2013–14 for a sample of secondary schools to compare the total classes with over 30 students as stated by the ministry on page 2, and the total number of classes with over 30 students as counted in the detailed class list at the end of the school report.

- For three of the four secondary schools, the total classes with over 30 students as stated on page 2 of the 2013–14 report is lower than the total number of classes with over 30 students as counted in the detailed class list.
- For example, for Alberni Secondary the 2013–14 class-size report (page 2) shows a total of 4 classes with over 30 students while the detailed class list shows 45 such classes. The 2013–14 class-size report for Victoria High Secondary states a total of 5 classes with over 30 students on page 2 while a count of the detailed class list in the school report shows 36 classes with over 30 students, including courses such as English 9, Mathematics 11, and Science 9, 10.
- It appears that the Ministry made a significant change in how it reports the number of classes with over 30 students, after 2012–13. Caution should be used in a making year-to-year comparisons with the 2013–14 data until these measurement issues are resolved.

**Minister’s statement:** “In fact, at 18 to 1, the full-time equivalent student-teacher ratio is exactly the same today as it was before the disputed changes to the collective agreement were made in 2002. It is just that we organize our classrooms far more effectively today.”

**Evidence to challenge the Minister’s statement:**

BC is one of the only provinces that did not improve the SER over time.

- The BC government claims<sup>2</sup> that the student-educator<sup>3</sup> ratio (SER) has been stable over the decade. Yes, that is correct, but that is a problem, not something to boast about. Other provinces have improved what they are able to offer to students, while BC has not.
- BC’s student-educator ratio of 16.8 students per educator (educator includes administrative staff) was the worst in Canada in 2010–11 (the most-recent year for which these statistics are available), considerably higher than the national average of 13.8 students per educator.
- The gap between the student-educator ratio in BC and in Canada widened even further after the global recession in 2008, as BC did less than other provinces to improve support for students.

See pages 4–5 of the BCTF 2013 Education Funding brief, [bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf)

**Minister’s statement:** “That is why we must build on successful approaches like the \$210 million Learning Improvement Fund. Last year, in consultation with teachers, the fund was used to support teachers with additional professional development, and to hire an estimated 500 new teachers, 400 new special education assistants and increase the hours for 7,400 special education assistants.”

**Evidence to challenge the Minister’s statement:**

- The Minister states the government provided \$210 million in LIF funding. This is the total funding over three years, not the allocation per year. And the actual total for the LIF funding is \$195 million, not \$210 million.
- The LIF allocation was \$30 million (+ \$30 million savings from the teacher’s strike) in 2012–13, for a total of \$60 million, \$60 million in 2013–14, and \$75 million in 2014–15, for a total of \$195 million over three years.
- Money initially allocated to teachers’ salaries (but not paid during a strike) contributed approximately 50% of the 2012–13 LIF funds.
- There is no increase to LIF funding in 2013–14 beyond the \$60 million initially allocated for 2012–13.
- Based on a BCTF analysis of district audited financial statements, about half of the 2012–13 LIF funding (\$30–\$35 million) was allocated to teachers.

Note: The Ministry of Education *Summary of Grants* tables show \$60 million in LIF funding for 2012–13 and 2013–14. See [bced.gov.bc.ca/k12funding/funding/12-13/summary-of-grants.pdf](http://bced.gov.bc.ca/k12funding/funding/12-13/summary-of-grants.pdf) and [bced.gov.bc.ca/k12funding/funding/13-14/summary-of-grants.pdf](http://bced.gov.bc.ca/k12funding/funding/13-14/summary-of-grants.pdf) for LIF allocations; 2014–15 estimates have not yet been posted.

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<sup>2</sup> BC Ministry of Education. Education by the numbers, *Information Bulletin*, August 27, 2013, [newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2013/08/education-by-the-numbers-2.html](http://newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2013/08/education-by-the-numbers-2.html).

<sup>3</sup> The student-educator ratio includes teachers, administrators, and pedagogical support.

## Ministry needs to provide evidence to support the claim that 500 teachers were hired.

- The “Learning Improvement Fund” is described by government as responding to the needs for more resources for the system. The minister claims that the LIF produced 500 additional teachers. That claim is not based on facts. In the first year of the LIF, the number of teachers in the province decreased by 33 (full-time equivalent) compared to the previous year, rather than going up by 500.
  - The number of FTE learning specialist teachers *increased* by 132 in 2012–13, not by 500 as claimed: 99 in Special Education, 10.8 in Library Services, 12.5 English Language Learning, and 8.7 in Aboriginal Education. Counsellors increased by only 1 FTE position.
  - The total number of FTE teachers in the province *decreased* by 33, despite the number of learning specialist teachers increasing by 132.
  - Districts spent \$10.1 million less on teachers’ salaries in “Regular Instruction” in the 2012–13 amended annual budget than in their projected annual budget<sup>4</sup>. They were able to do this because the district maximum class-size averages for elementary grades were eliminated by Bill 22. Thus, districts could fill classes to the maximum and reduce the number of teachers required. This is why the total number of teachers could decrease while specialist teachers increased.
  - Districts spent \$4.1 million less on teacher salaries for Special Education in the “instruction” amount (not the LIF), and \$4.9 million more on Special Education Assistants, than indicated in their proposed annual budgets<sup>5</sup>. Districts reduced the number of Special Education teachers (presumably knowing they could pay for more in the LIF) and used that amount to hire more Special Education Assistants.

See page 11 of the [BCTF 2013 Education Funding brief](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf):  
[bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/2013EdFundingBrief.pdf)

Note: Until the 2013–14 staffing data is available, we are unable to assess changes in teaching employment between September 30, 2012 and September 30, 2013.

For further information see BCTF Research Reports:

**Changes in FTE Learning Specialist Teachers, 2001–02 to 2012–13**  
[bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/RR2013-07.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/RR2013-07.pdf)

**Changes in salary and benefit expenditures in instructional programs: A comparison of amended and annual budgets for 2012–13 and 2013–14**  
[bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/RR2013-06.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/RR2013-06.pdf)

**Did the “Learning Improvement Fund” (LIF) make a difference? Not really**  
[bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/RR2013-05.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/RR2013-05.pdf)

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Education (School District Financial Accountability). Revenue and Expenditure tables: *Table 6: 2012/13 Provincial summary of annual budgeted operating expenditures by function, program and object*; *Table 15: 2012/13 Provincial summary of amended annual budgeted operating expenditures by function, program and object*; available at [bced.gov.bc.ca/accountability/district/revenue/1213/](http://bced.gov.bc.ca/accountability/district/revenue/1213/).

<sup>5</sup> Note: These figures are based on Function1: Instruction which includes Regular Instruction and a range of specialist programs including Special Education, reported on in Table 6 (Annual) and Table 15 (Amended) of the 2012/13 Revenue and Expenditure tables. These tables reflect changes after the 2012–13 enrolment count as of September 30. A final accounting, based on district Audited Financial Statements, is not yet available.

**Minister’s statement:** “The union, however, is seeking to further reduce teacher workload and manage classrooms through rigid and costly formulas and ratios that have no material bearing on the actual needs of students in the classroom.”

**Evidence to challenge the Minister’s statement:**

There is considerable evidence in the *2009 Worklife survey of BC Teachers* to indicate that teacher workload and work stress increased over the previous five years:

**Chapter3: Workload Issues for BC Teachers<sup>6</sup>:**

- **Average** work week in 2009: 47.8 hours
- 24.2% work of teachers 50–59 hours per week
- Almost 1 in 10 teachers working an average of 60 or more hours per week on school-related work.
- 95.4% do school-related work before, after school, and evenings
- 87.6% do school-related work in the evenings
- 76.9% do school-related work during weekends
- Weekly average time spent on prep time: 6.6 hours
- Weekly average time spent on marking: 4.5 hours

Following are comments made by teachers in the Worklife survey about workload:

“All meetings are scheduled at lunch time and after school. Lunch breaks are virtually unheard of.”

“I was only on a 0.6 FTE contract, but was working about 50–60 hours a week, mostly on planning and preparation (10–15 hours), marking & record-keeping (10–15 hours), but significant time also went into meetings (IEP and other) and working with students outside of class. I rarely had time to eat lunch or break for recess, and was often at the school from the early morning into the late evening.”

“The hours are difficult to calculate. I arrive at school and power through most days until 5:00 p.m. with few recess or lunch breaks. Coaching eliminates prep time and we all give up time for recess (or out of school) playground duty. I am drained when I come home to my own two young kids. If I could afford to stay home I would; the job takes its toll on my emotional and physical health.”

For any citation of quotes, please include the source, *BCTF 2009 Worklife of BC Teachers survey*, [bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=21498](http://bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=21498).

**Chapter 6: Sources of work-related stress and changes in workload, stress and job satisfaction<sup>7</sup>**

- 62.6% of teachers reported increased stress compared to five years ago
- Two-thirds of respondents rated their stress level as *high* or *very high* due to inadequate support for students with disruptive behaviour and/or non-designated, “grey area” students, and class composition issues. Six out of ten teachers rated the unmet needs of students in the classroom/school as a significant source of stress. About half of responding teachers rated class size and level of support for inclusion of students with special needs as *high* or *very high* stressors.

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<sup>6</sup> Chapter 3 – [bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Issues/WorklifeWorkload/2009/Chapter3.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Issues/WorklifeWorkload/2009/Chapter3.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Chapter 6 – [bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Issues/WorklifeWorkload/2009/Chapter6.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Issues/WorklifeWorkload/2009/Chapter6.pdf)

- 21% of teachers said they were thinking of leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement. A higher number of mid-career teachers were considering leaving the profession.

Following are some reasons teachers gave for why they are considering leaving the profession:

“Burn-out. I am trying to arrange a personal sabbatical for myself next year—unpaid of course to try to re-charge and be able to continue teaching as I feel a true and strong vocation but find it truly does take over my life and leaves so little for my family.”

“I feel that I cannot keep up, physically, with the demands of parents and administrators when the needs of students continue to grow, but support and resources continue to diminish.”

“Teaching is no longer as fulfilling and rewarding as it was when I began teaching 20 years ago. I feel it is much more difficult to have an impact...or effect change. I blame this on long term, chronic underfunding of education for over 20 years.”

“Tired of school-based admin and district office. Tired of the government’s policies. Tired of being told we have one of the best if not the best education [systems] in the world on the one hand and then made to feel like we aren’t doing a good job on the other. Too many changes implemented in district and provincially that are not about teaching and real change but about padding someone’s resume or political [career?].”

“I will retire as soon as I am able to. The work drains me of energy and basically leaves me with not much left at the end of the week. I go from week to week, recuperate during the weekend and then do it all over again.”

For any citation of quotes, please include the source, *BCTF 2009 Worklife of BC Teachers survey*, [bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=21498](http://bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=21498).

### **Data on teachers’ mental health<sup>8</sup>:**

Of all the claims through the BC Teachers’ Salary Indemnity Program (SIP), over 40% of claims are for mental disorders, many caused by workplace stress. The cost of treating teachers’ mental disorders is approximately \$12 million per year. SIP starts when all sick leave has been used up, so the human and economic costs of teachers’ mental health disorders is huge. The somewhat-insulting statement that the union is seeking to “further reduce teacher workload” flies in the face of the data showing teachers reporting increased workload and stress, with a significant number of teachers with mental health disorders. These are not indicators of any reduction in workload.

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<sup>8</sup> See BCTF Research Report, at [bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Publications/Research\\_reports/2009WLC01.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Publications/Research_reports/2009WLC01.pdf)