



British Columbia Teachers' Federation

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May 9, 2012

Jameel Aziz, President
BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association
200 525 West 10th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1K9

Dear Mr. Aziz:

I am writing you today to invite you and all members of the BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association to join with the teachers of BC in advocating for the many improvements we all know are urgently needed in public schools across our province.

For over a decade now, teachers have been engaged in vigorous public campaigns and advocacy work in our local communities and on the provincial stage in an ongoing effort to defend quality public education as a social good, not a commodity to be privatized and sold, and as every child's birthright in our democratic society.

In 2002, when the unconstitutional Bills 27 and 28 were imposed, your organization did not speak up; indeed, many teachers felt their principals and vice-principals applauded the contract-stripping. Since then, teachers have stood alone in resistance to this government's misguided policies, enacted through 21 different pieces of legislation that have cumulatively had a devastating impact on public education. (For details, see: <http://tinyurl.com/ChronologyOfLegislation>).

In your recent "Perspectives from the Principal's Office" letter, you express concerns that "school culture has been significantly eroded this year by the continuing dispute" and that if the dispute continues, "the negative effects will be long-term and profound."

I would respectfully suggest that after a decade of chronic underfunding, direct attacks on teachers' rights and severe lack of learning resources and support to meet students' needs, the negative effects are already long-term and profound. I urge you to use your position of leadership and influence to help us reverse this terrible trend.

At a recent CAPSLE conference, members of our staff attended a workshop on the BC teachers' dispute given by a principal from Burnaby. In the question period, they challenged this principal as to why the BCPVPA chose not to support teachers. Principals from Ontario and other provinces were incredulous to learn that the relationship between our two organizations is not one of mutual support, as it is in their home provinces.

We believe it is time for principals and vice-principals, your members who define their role as education leaders, to stand with us, the teachers. If you truly wish to show leadership, surely you cannot remain silent in the face of the latest legislation, Bill 22. Surely you must be aware that,

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more than ever, this bill will result in larger classes, more difficult class composition, and deteriorating teaching and learning conditions, not to mention school morale.

I urge you to join us, to work in partnership with the BCTF to raise the many issues of mutual concern. I invite you to meet with me and other BCTF leaders at your earliest convenience for an open and free-ranging discussion on ways in which we can join together to express our shared commitment to our students and to building an ever-stronger public education system for the future.

Leadership is far more than title and position. Leadership carries with it a responsibility to strive for the conditions necessary for successful teaching and learning. It's time for us to join together. Together we can be far more effective in engaging government and citizens to achieve the improvements our schools and students so desperately need.

Sincerely,

Susan Lambert
President

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