

Get your facts straight—BCTF rebuttal to Ministry of Education

BCTF Response to Ministry of Education claims in the INFORMATION BULLETIN, 2012EDUC0019-000236, March 3, 2012 titled *BCTF Claims and Facts*

Ministry of Education statements	BCTF Response
Claim: 700 fewer Special Needs teachers FACT: 2,100 additional special needs teaching assistants in B.C. classrooms.	BCTF analysis of ministry data shows that since 2001-02 there are: • 2,601 fewer FTE teachers, including a loss of 752 FTE Special Education teachers • 2,029 more FTE Education Assistants in all programs, including Special Education Education assistants replacing teachers is not adequate for special needs students.
Claim: Ninth-best paid in Canada FACT: B.C. teachers' salary plus benefits is fourth-best among provinces.	BCTF uses current salary figures (2011-12) for Category 5 (5 years of university) and Category 6 (master's degree) from salary grids in teacher collective agreements across Canada. Based on this comparison: • The maximum salary for a BC teacher with Category 5 qualifications ranks 9th in Canada, including the provinces and territories. • Based on provinces only, the rank shifts to 6th among the ten provinces. BCPSEA uses out-dated data and manipulates the rankings by comparing a teacher at Category 4 (only 4 years of university) salary with fewer qualifications, in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Quebec, to a BC teacher with Category 5 qualifications.
Claim: Seniority eroded under Bill 22—Education Improvement Act FACT: Seniority remains key factor but qualifications also considered. Math teachers teaching Math; Science teachers teaching Science.	Existing contracts already provide for qualifications and experience to be considered first, before seniority. The government knows this, and is willfully distorting the criteria for hiring.
Claim: Contract demands are reasonable FACT: A 15 per cent wage increase at a cost of \$2 billion is completely unreasonable, given the current economic reality.	• The ministry is exaggerating the cost of a salary increase by five times the actual cost. • Even BCPSEA estimates the cost of a 15% salary increase over 3 years at \$431 million, according to their February 27, 2012 Information Sheet. • Teachers across Canada have negotiated salary increases to cover the cost of inflation. Why is it only the BC government that claims they cannot afford a cost of living increase for teachers?

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Claim: Eliminated class sizes FACT: Class-size caps on all grades with exceptions made by principals and superintendents.	Bill 22: • Removes the involvement of teachers in the organization of their classes by repealing the requirement for teacher consultation. • Ensures larger classes in Grades 4 to 7 because it removes the previous requirement of teacher consent. • Removes parent involvement in the organization of classes by repealing the requirement that the principal consult with parent councils about class size at the beginning of the school year. • Eliminates public transparency and accountability by repealing the requirement that the superintendent provide a report to school trustees in a public meeting about class sizes in the district.
Claim: Reject net-zero wage mandate FACT: 130 net-zero contracts signed. 25,000 CUPE employees signed net zero contracts.	• Between November 2010 and July 2011, BC Bargaining Settlements Bulletins shows 36 municipal and federal public sector settlements in BC with annual wage and salary increases ranging from 1% to 3% for 2011, 2012, and 2013.
Claim: Teachers have not been fairly compensated FACT: Teachers received a 16 per cent wage increase; \$3,700 signing bonus for their last contract.	If BC teachers do not receive a salary increase for 2011–12, a Vancouver teacher at maximum salary (Cat. 5) will earn: • \$13,529 less than an elementary teacher in Toronto, • \$14,463 less than a secondary teacher in Ottawa, • \$21,001 less than a teacher in Edmonton
Claim: 12,000 overcrowded classes FACT: Of 65,000 classes, fewer than 1,500 have more than 31 students. Fewer than 600 have more than 33 - most of these are band, choir and theatre.	Bill 22 removes: • The limit of three students designated with special needs per class. • The right of teachers to be consulted about classes with more than 30 students. Class size issues need to be put into the context of class composition – the more complex the needs of students, the more difficult it is to meet the needs of all, especially when classes are over-crowded. Ministry statistics show: • 3,627 Grade 4 to 12 classes with more than 30 students in 2010-11. • 12,240 classes exceeded the legislated limit of 3 designated special needs students in 2010-11.

Updated salary comparisons:

<http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/2011-TS-02.pdf>

<http://bctf.ca/ResearchRoundup.aspx>