

Statement from BCTF President Jim Iker

February 14, 2014

BC Teachers' Federation President Jim Iker, also the Federation's lead negotiator, is at the bargaining table today working hard to secure a negotiated settlement that delivers a fair deal for teachers and better support for students.

On the government's notice to stay the recent BC Supreme Court Ruling, Jim Iker issued the following statement:

"Three times now the BC government has lost in BC Supreme Court regarding the stripped language. Their actions against teachers and BC's education system have twice been ruled unconstitutional. The Court found that they put their own political agenda ahead of fair negotiations and tried to provoke a full-scale strike to manipulate public opinion.

By trying to prevent teachers from gaining back their illegally stripped working conditions, the government is blocking much-needed improvements to our education system.

Some of the provisions this government is trying to keep out of BC schools include:

- Class-size limits of 24 for technology and industrial education classes where students are working with heavy machinery. Since 2002, more and more technology education teachers have become concerned about overcrowded and unsafe conditions in their workshops.
- Specialist teacher staffing levels, like one learning assistance teacher per 504 students and one teacher counsellor per 693 students. Because these ratios were eliminated in 2002, BC has lost 1,400 specialists, including 700 special education teachers. That means all students are getting less one-on-one time.
- A class-size limit of 20 for Kindergarten to ensure our youngest learners get the most one-on-one time possible.

The BC government is also appealing the BC Supreme Court ruling that would allow the BCTF to share our closing argument with our members which includes evidence of government conduct that was before the Court. Given the Premier and Minister of Education's willingness to deny the facts as laid out in Justice Griffin's ruling, we believe releasing all of the information to our members is more important now than ever. "