

March 26, 2020

Tentative agreement reached in mediation

Dear colleagues,

We are pleased to be able to make an announcement today that your BCTF Bargaining Team achieved a tentative agreement with the employer, and the BCTF Executive Committee is recommending this agreement to the membership.

At 2:00 a.m. this morning, March 26, after marathon negotiation sessions with the employer, the Bargaining Team reached an agreement-in-principle with the BC Public School Employers' Association that will, if ratified by a province-wide membership vote, conclude this round of bargaining.

The ability to conclude an agreement in this complex and challenging round is built upon the support of members across the province, through actions that served to keep the pressure on the bargaining table, emails to elected representatives, #RedforBCED, rallies and public outreach. The engagement and solidarity of members ultimately led to this outcome.

The BCTF will communicate all the details to you as soon as possible. In order to allow for communication of the proposed changes and improvements in a clear and concise manner, we may need the next few days to get that together for you. Watch for an email when those documents are ready for you to review, and we will also be schedule a livestream at <https://livestream.com/bctf> so I can update you personally. We will let you know once that is set up as well.

While you wait for those details, here are some highlights of the tentative agreement:

Recruitment and Retention

The parties agreed on an additional 1% at the top of the salary scale above the 2%-2%-2% in the second year of the agreement to address retention issues, with the possibility of an additional 1% at the top of the scale in the third year as part of a Retention Initiative Dividend. First year teachers who accept a contract will be raised to the second year of their salary grids, and a one-time \$12 million-dollar fund will be determined by the BCTF to support teacher mentorship.

Parity

Additional salary gains will begin to address some of the outstanding teacher salary inequities among our colleagues. Teacher Psychologists and Speech Language Pathologists will have their annual fees paid by Boards, and we have improved teacher mobility opportunities across the province.

Equity

The new collective agreement includes Cultural Leave for Aboriginal members, and a strengthening of the Employment Equity process for Aboriginal Educators. It includes improvements to the Harassment and Sexual Harassment language, Non-Sexist Environment language, and the inclusion of a leave respecting Domestic and Sexual Violence as well as Critical Illness or Injury leave. The parties will meet in the coming months to discuss the scheduling of secondary preparation time and the provision of Adult Education Teachers' preparation time.

Gaining Ground

Members across BC will see salary improvements greater than in previous rounds, and we ensured that the restored collective agreement language was protected. We were successful in pushing back on the employer's attempted concessions that would have weakened or removed existing protections for teachers and students. The 2% increases in each of the three years of the deal include retroactivity back to July 1, 2019, including teachers who began or retired between July 1, 2019 and the ratification of the agreement. Importantly, this includes gains and improvements above and beyond what was possible in the fall.

Thank you again for all your support, effort, patience, and understanding during this significant round of bargaining and at this unprecedented moment in history.

The BCTF Executive Committee members are unanimously recommending that members vote yes to this tentative agreement. As it is still breaking news, you will have all the details in your email inbox in as soon as we can. Working with our Provincial Returning Officer, we will get information out to you soon about how and when the ratification vote will take place, acknowledging that it will look different due to the pandemic restrictions in place.

Outside of the conclusion of this round of bargaining, the BCTF and our locals have been continuing to work incredibly hard at the provincial and district levels to make sure your return to work is safe and supportive. I know many of you are still waiting to hear from your employers about what the first weeks back after spring break will look like. We have been pushing hard to make sure your health and safety is the number one priority. There will be many more updates to come around our work and public schools in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for everything you are doing to keep yourselves, loved ones, students and communities safe and well during these challenging times.

In solidarity,
Teri Mooring
President