



Powell River Board of Education School District 47

Learners Preparing for Challenges of Tomorrow

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An open letter to the community from the Powell River Board of Education

Along with other school districts in the Province, Powell River is experiencing the negative impact of the ongoing labour dispute between the Government and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation.

As trustees, we are very much aware and very much concerned about the effects that this situation has had and continues to have upon the lives of many in our community.

Each day that passes increases the frustration of students, parents, teachers, support staff, school and district administration.

This Board has always endeavored to provide quality learning experiences for our students and we have supported our professional staff through provision of good working conditions and a wide variety of professional development activities.

However, over the years, with declining enrollment and reduced funding for public education, difficult decisions have had to be made, some of which have challenged us to find new ways to maintain the standards to which we are committed. We have regularly expressed our concerns about the need for adequate funding for public education to the Ministry of Education by direct communication as well as through the British Columbia School Trustees' Association.

Nevertheless, we believe that, through ongoing collaboration with our professional staff, we have continued to provide a wide variety of learning opportunities for the students in Powell River.

Unfortunately, determining what is best locally is no longer an option. Tax dollars, collected for education, which once were directed to the local school district are now controlled at the provincial level. Presently, those tax dollars are being directed at an increasing rate to private schools - which remain open during this current dispute.

Bargaining has also been removed from local control and, while there remain two school trustees who sit at the table when bargaining is taking place between the British Columbia Teachers' Federation and the the British Columbia Public School Employers' Association, they represent us in voice only.

Over the past few months, this Board has written to the Premier, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Finance, the President of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation and, most recently, to the President of the British Columbia School Trustees' Association. These letters can be read on our district website: <http://www.sd47.bc.ca/Board/advocacy/Pages/default.aspx>

Last month the BCSTA developed a Back to School Action Plan:

<https://dsweb.bcsta.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-75623/BCSTA%20Back%20to%20School%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

This Board supports this plan but, at the same time, we believe that it is time to acknowledge that BCPSEA is not properly representative of school trustees throughout the Province.

We are aware that directives have been given to professional staff and to the public to communicate concerns to local trustees. We know and share these concerns and, while we do appreciate hearing from you, there is little that we can do that has not already been done. Hence, we encourage you to visit the BCTF, BCSTA, BCPSEA and Ministry of Education websites for current information and to communicate your concerns with those who have the power to reach a negotiated or mediated settlement.

It is our hope that through the public expression of concern to the Government and to the BCTF that a resolution will be found and that we can move forward to open schools and begin the rebuilding of the relationships upon which quality education depends.

Most sincerely

Dr. Jeanette Scott, Chair

Powell River Board of Education