

BY EMAIL & CANADA POST

February 5th, 2013

Honourable Don McRae
Minister of Education
P.O. Box 9045 Stn. Prov. Govt.
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Re: Your Letter of January 23rd to Board Chairs

I am writing on behalf of 27,000 CUPE support staff who work in BC public schools.

CUPE is at the table to negotiate fair and reasonable collective agreements. Our members expect contracts in line with other public sector education settlements. Support staff keep schools clean, safe, and running smoothly. We ensure special needs students have the opportunities they deserve.

You often speak of the great work CUPE support staff do. We ask you to back up your praise for the work we do with fair and reasonable action.

We understand you have a desire to maintain and improve our high performing education system, labour peace and that you want to negotiate fair agreements. Obviously, we share these values.

But these values come to life through responsible and responsive funding for quality public education. Lifelong learning and jobs training can only be built on the strong foundation of the public school system. Erosion through underfunding is tragic. There can be no "protecting and creating jobs for families in BC" without families having access to the best possible K-12 public education.

Locally-elected Boards of Education have said in no uncertain terms that they do not have the means to continue to provide the best possible quality public education with the demands for 'balanced' budgets with inadequate funding.

We are concerned that government is interfering in free collective bargaining. In your December 3rd letter, you telegraphed a 1.5% ceiling for support staff wage increases to Boards.

In your January 23rd letter to Board Chairs you state: "there must not be any incremental cost to boards or the province as a result of collective agreements." A second wage freeze on workers who have been without any increase since 2009 will not bring labour peace, fair and reasonable settlements or a high performing education system.

CUPE and its members want labour peace. But our priority is to negotiate fair and reasonable settlements in line with other education settlements. We look forward to any dialogue that addresses this situation.

I would respectfully ask that your staff contact our Legislative Coordinator, Tania Jarzebiak at 604 202 6336 or tjarzebiak@cupe.ca to set up a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Yours truly,



Colin Pawson
CHAIR, CUPE BC K-12 Presidents' Council

Cc: Robin Austin, NDP Education Critic
Barry O'Neill, CUPE BC President
Mark Hancock, CUPE BC Secretary-Treasurer
Tania Jarzebiak, CUPE Legislative Coordinator
Bill Pegler, CUPE K-12 Coordinator