



## **BC CONFEDERATION OF PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS**

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May 9, 2006

Honourable Shirley Bond  
Minister of Education  
Deputy Premier  
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Bond:

At our May 6-7, 2006, Annual General Meeting, our membership passed the following resolution:

### **2006.20 Ensuring the Rights of All Students**

Be it resolved that BCCPAC advise all education partners that limiting the number of students in classrooms based on designations or labels is discriminatory and as such, legislation or employee contracts must not contain wording that promotes or creates such limits.

Since the House is currently considering Bill 33, The Education (Learning Enhancement) Statutes Amendment Act, our members asked that we communicate their support for the entitlements of all children to all Members of the Legislative Assembly as soon as possible.

The rationale for the resolution states:

Decisions based on the unique needs of each student are sound educational practice. Decisions based on group characteristics are inherently discriminatory. Belonging in a classroom is an individual right and should be supported unconditionally.

At the April 21, 2006, meeting of the Learning Roundtable, BCCPAC presented our position paper on class size and composition. Our presentation included the following on class composition:

The Roundtable is also specifically focusing on class composition, the inclusion of students with special needs. Quoting from the recommendations of the Special Education Review in 2000:

*13. The Minister of Education should ask employer and employee organizations to identify clauses in existing collective agreements that might adversely affect students with special needs or contravene the rights of such students under the School Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, or provincial human rights legislation, and to undertake steps to eliminate such clauses from future agreements.*

Subsequent legislation addressed these concerns and we do not support the re-introduction of potentially discriminatory language on class composition. Parents support inclusion for students with special needs, and support common sense decisions that place students in classes where they have

opportunities to be successful. Decisions on placement should be made in consultation with parents and should be realistic and fair for all students.

In reviewing the data on class size and composition, we acknowledge that the majority of districts are complying with legislation, and that most classes are, in fact, reasonable in size. Large classes tend to occur for subjects such as band and drama, and size is understandable for these electives. Some decisions on class size and composition can and should be questioned, but this should occur at the local level. By increasing public accountability for decisions, and by sharing information on those decisions with school communities, we can achieve our objectives while still allowing funding to be available where it is most needed and to be focused on the best interest of students.

BCCPAC asks that the Members of the Legislative Assembly carefully consider the views of parents and eliminate portions of the Bill that restrict the ability of students with special needs to continue to be fully participating members of our schools. Simply restricting the number of designated special needs students in a classroom will not, in itself, address the issue of learning conditions in the classroom. There are many other factors that affect the quality of learning in the classroom. These include, but are not limited to:

- English as a second language
- English as a second dialect
- Gender
- Gifted
- Teacher qualifications

We believe that all students are entitled to equity, access, equality, and inclusion. We are already receiving reports from our members who have been told by administrators that they may be denied access to their neighbourhood schools as a consequence of this legislation. We sincerely hope that Members of the Legislative Assembly will join with us in protecting the rights of our most vulnerable students by eliminating class composition language from Bill 33.

Thank you for your cooperation and your commitment to the education of all our children.

In Partnership



Kim Howland  
President  
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils

cc All MLAs  
BCSSA  
BCSTA  
BCPVPA  
BCTF  
BCCT  
BCPSEA