



Strike Update

2011 February 16

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stronger
together

A Teacher's Response to George Abbott

Mike Sopic a Surrey teacher wrote a response to George Abbott's "Opinion" column: Teachers' Union Job Action Can't Go on Forever.

There is a fundamental disconnect between George Abbott's words and his government's actions. Furthermore, he evades and ignores certain facts and historically important realities.

1. If BC "has a great education system filled with people who are passionate about what they do," then why do we need a "BC Education plan" to "improve the system?" Furthermore, his plan has been announced in the media, but has never been explained to teachers or implemented. How can it be a "great success?"

2. He writes that the "teachers' union...refuses to accept BC's economic and financial reality." Yes, guilty as charged. Teachers refuse to accept that Olympic games, smart meters, stadium roofs, corporate tax-cut welfare, carbon taxes (which benefit corporations) and carbon taxes on schools are more important than public education for the public interest.

3. He professes that teachers' "singular focus has been to secure a large salary increase." Wrong. Teachers asked for class size limits in the '90's in lieu of salary increases (6% over 9 years!). In 2002, Christy Clark ripped this negotiated principle out of teacher contracts. Teachers went to court and this was ruled to be unconstitutional last year. Government has still refused to put class size back in teacher contracts. This is a major issue and in teachers' eyes, hugely disrespectful.

4. Government has draconian provisions on the bargaining table that strip all job security from teachers, all assessment process, all autonomy over professional development, all transfer processes. The effect will reduce us to "McTeachers" instead of conscientious, autonomous professionals, who possess at minimum two degrees and in many cases three. These provisions are not ones an employer demands of a respected partner.

Mr. Abbott hopes to "restore some degree of normalcy to what remains of the school year." If he imposes a contract on teachers, as many of us suspect, the "normalcy" he desires will never happen. Sadly, we will all rue the consequences. Teachers are outraged, frustrated and bitter at the abuse they have been subjected to (remember the Fraser Institute rankings?). He can profess to want to work with teachers, but his party's actions speak otherwise. Actions, Mr. Abbott, speak louder than equivocating words or obfuscating statistics. Settle up with teachers and stop the politicking.

Mike Sopic

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