



# British Columbia Teachers' Federation

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## THE BC COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

*A submission to*

Don Avison,  
Ministry of Education Fact Finder

from the

British Columbia Teachers' Federation

August 6, 2010

*A Union of Professionals*



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## Submission to Don Avison, Ministry of Education Fact Finder regarding the BC College of Teachers

### SECTION 1: The BCTF and the BCCT

The BC Teachers' Federation is a union of professionals representing 41,000 public school teachers in BC. The BCTF has a proud history of advocacy for the teaching profession, public education, and for social justice. Its founding objectives in 1916 have remained unchanged in the constitution:

- a. To foster and promote the cause of education in British Columbia.
- b. To raise the status of the teaching profession in British Columbia.
- c. To promote the welfare of the teachers of British Columbia.

The BCTF is the professional voice of teachers, and devotes considerable resources to nurture and support quality teaching. Advocacy for the teaching profession continues to be a central focus for teachers. The Federation takes very seriously its members' professional responsibilities and obligations toward students.

The relationship between the BCTF and the BC College of Teachers has had its challenges. These are rooted in a historical context. In 1943, long before the college was imposed on teachers, the BCTF adopted a *Code of Ethics*, and has continued to enforce it amongst the membership. Teachers' obligations and responsibilities are articulated in the *Code of Ethics*. Of specific importance are clauses 1, 2, and 3, which govern teachers' responsibilities to students (See Appendix 1). The *Code of Ethics* is administered by an internal Judicial Council, which deals with complaints that arise under the *Code of Ethics* (see By-law 7 and Procedure 31 in Appendix 2). Concern for student safety and well-being is paramount to teachers. Induction of new members to the BCTF and its locals includes a commitment to adhere to the *Code of Ethics*.

In 1947, the provincial government made membership in the BCTF and the payment of fees compulsory for all public school teachers. Prior to 1969, the BC Department of Education issued teacher certificates to public school teachers, and assisted school districts in determining their placement on district salary grids. Discipline, hiring, and dismissal of teachers rested with school districts. However, in recognition of the need to separate teacher certification from determination of teacher salaries, the Department of Education established the Teacher Qualification Service (TQS) in 1969. Since September 1, 1969, the TQS has continued to evaluate and assign categories for salary purposes based on qualifications. The TQS is jointly funded by the BCTF and the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA), and operates at arm's length from both bodies.

In 1987, the government of the day introduced a series of legislative changes to the governance of public education in BC. The Legislature enacted the *Industrial Relations Reform Act* and the *Teaching Profession Act*. Under the terms of the *Industrial Relations Reform Act*, teachers in every school district were required to choose between forming a local union with rights to bargain all terms and conditions of employment, including the right to strike/lockout dispute resolution mechanisms, or to form a local association and continue to function under the provisions of the *School Act*. In the fall of 1987, the BCTF and its locals signed up 98% of its members, and every local voted to form a union. Legislation also removed principals and vice-principals from membership and ended compulsory membership in the BCTF. In the first round of bargaining, teachers negotiated compulsory membership in the local and the BCTF.

The *Teaching Profession Act* established the BC College of Teachers. Teachers defined the BCTF as a "union of professionals." The BCTF was seen as both the professional body and the bargaining agent for teachers. Teachers viewed the creation of the college as an attempt to split the loyalty of members, and were opposed to the creation of a separate professional organization.

In this context the college was viewed as an imposition on public school teachers in BC. Teachers were angry at the new requirement for mandatory membership in a college that was legislated by government. Pursuant to the *Teaching Profession Act*, a teacher cannot work in the public school system in BC unless she or he is a member of the college and holds a certificate of qualification, or a letter of permission. The college was granted the authority to "require fees to be paid to the college for membership, for the issue of certificates for qualification and for other purposes incidental to the purposes of the college." Needless to say, this further fed the opposition to the college and its mandate.

From January 1, 1988 to January 1, 2003 the college was governed by a 20-member council. Fifteen were elected by the membership living and working in 15 geographic zones throughout the province. Two were appointed by the provincial cabinet, two by the minister of education, and one nominated by the deans of education and appointed by the minister of education.

Despite teachers' initial concerns, the Federation developed a good working relationship with the College of Teachers. This relationship is characterized by respect for the autonomy of the college, acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the college's role in regulating the conduct and competency of teachers, and engagement of the Federation in providing feedback on changes to by-laws, policies, and procedures impacting members, the profession, and teacher education programs. (See Appendix 3)

In 2002, the BCTF and its members were once again faced with a legislative agenda that restricted teachers' rights to bargain all terms and conditions of employment, and essential services legislation which restricted teachers' ability to take strike action. With a single stroke of a pen, all provisions related to class size, class composition, and support for students with special needs were stripped from teacher collective agreements. These negotiated contracts were the products of years of bargaining and compromise. In particular, class-size and composition

provisions had been achieved because teachers had ceded salary and benefit improvements. As well, 10 local agreements were extinguished in their entirety.

In this highly charged political context, college governance also changed. In 2003, Christy Clarke, then the minister of education, dismissed the elected college and amended the *Teaching Profession Act* to change the composition of the college council. The minister of education was empowered to appoint 12 councillors, and 8 would be elected by members. This legislation removed a hallmark of the profession—the right and obligation to be self-regulatory.

Teachers were once again outraged. However, the Federation, recognizing the important role of the college, did not ask for its dissolution. Instead, the BCTF called for the reinstatement of a democratically elected college council with at least two-thirds of the councillors elected by the members of the college. When this call went unheeded, the Federation and its locals organized a collective fee boycott. In December 2003, the government reinstated an elected college council with 12 councillors elected by and representing college members working or living in 12 geographic zones, 7 appointed by the minister of education, and 1 nominated by the deans of education and appointed by the minister.

It has taken time for the relationship between the BCCT and the BCTF to mature. Apart from the conflict in 2003, the BCTF and the college have developed a productive working relationship; the BCTF respects the autonomy of the college and its role in disciplining teachers. Moreover, the college has developed into an autonomous institution with highly specialized professional staff. The college has established high standards and stringent practices. There has never been any suggestion (apart from the recent unfounded allegations of Richard Walker in the press) that the BCTF has ever interfered in the internal workings of the college.

The development, adoption, and implementation of the current college standards are examples of a positive and mature relationship. When the college operated as a predominantly appointed council, a set of standards was adopted and imposed on the profession. Teachers, with a long history of self-regulation, an existing *Code of Ethics*, and detailed policy describing professional practice (see **Appendix 5**), were not consulted and did not support this imposed set of standards. When the composition of the council was changed after December 2003, the new council undertook the process of revising these standards.

Teachers entered this process by articulating their specific concerns with the original standards. The initial discussions were tense. However, all the partners involved persevered and the college established a sincere and respectful process of consultation. Throughout the consultation, teachers felt that their voices, as the practitioners of the profession, were heard. Through this process and the ensuing collaboration, the college developed the current *Professional Standards for Educators*. Elected councillors played a critical role in setting these standards. Their professional experience, expertise, and commitment informed and helped build consensus when

the standards were established. These standards are ascribed to by all the educational partners and the entire council, and are viewed as setting a very high and appropriate benchmark for the teaching profession.

There are many other cases that the Federation worked on with the college to address concerns and find solutions. For example, when legislation required cyclical criminal record checks for practising teachers, the college and the Federation worked together to address the redundancy of this requirement.

The college's policy-adoption process allows for full consultation with all partner groups, and the Federation provides advice through this process. The Federation participates fully by providing feedback not only on policy but also on other matters impacting the teaching profession, for example, the TILMA and the AIT. (See Appendix 4)

It was in the context of this working relationship that the BCTF was surprised and perplexed by the magnitude of the proposed changes to college governance presented at the December 4, 2010 council meeting.

The Federation would like to address the specific terms of reference for the BCCT fact finder, clarify the Federation's position, and provide relevant information.

## **SECTION 2: Terms of reference for the BC College of Teachers fact finder**

- a. **Whether the College of Teachers is fulfilling its mandate under Section 4 of the *Teaching Profession Act*: "It is the object of the college to establish, having regard to the public interest, standards for the education, professional responsibility and competence of certificate holders and applicants for certificates of qualification and, consistent with that object, to encourage the professional interest of certificate holders in those matters."**

The Federation believes that the college is fulfilling its mandate under Section 4 of the *Teaching Profession Act*. The college has established professional standards for educators and has put protocols and processes in place to address any concerns. The disciplinary decisions of the college demonstrate a focus on assessing whether the teacher acted in the best interests of students.

It is the Federation's belief that the public interest and the interest of the profession are closely aligned. Teachers care about the students they teach and are committed to high professional standards of practice. As a union of professionals, the Federation is committed to advocating for professional standards of practice that address the needs of all students. Teachers are aware of the responsibility of the profession to maintain a highly professional credibility, and that the value of such a reputation is based solidly in high standards of professional practice. Teachers understand that learning is enhanced when it is supported by

a successful and mutually respectful collaboration between students, teachers, and parents. Public confidence in the teaching profession is a critical component of successful instruction.

Teachers, individually and collectively, take very seriously the obligation to ensure the safety and well-being of students in their care. The BCTF *Code of Ethics* is very clear about a teacher's obligation and responsibility to the students she or he teaches. The policies and procedures of the BCTF show a strong commitment to student and public welfare, and teachers' commitment to their teaching practice and the teaching profession. Teachers set and maintain high standards of practice. (See Appendix 5)

**b. The college's role and performance respecting teacher pre-service and in-service training and regulation of member competence.**

**Pre-service**

The college is fulfilling its mandate respecting teacher pre-service and has worked closely with the deans of education to align teacher education programs and the requirements for certification. The college makes presentations to pre-service teachers in their teacher education programs. The college has set high standards for the education, training, and experience required to obtain a BC teaching certificate. In fact, the BCCT standards for teacher training are the highest and most comprehensive requirements for teacher certification in Canada. In response to the Labour Mobility Agreement (AIT), the college advocated strongly to maintain these high standards for certification and established two levels of certification to protect the requirements for the BC professional certificate.

The Federation advocated for, and supported the college's work with regard to maintaining professional standards in the face of possible erosion through both TILMA and the AIT. The issue is another example of the college and the BCTF working together to protect the interests of the profession.

The college has developed effective and stringent policies, by-laws, and practices to address member competence. The college has the mandate to suspend or remove a teacher's certificate and does so when the circumstances warrant.

The BCTF has acknowledged and affirmed this mandate of the college in Procedure 7.A.10 (see Appendix 2)

**In-service**

As stated above, the BC College of Teachers' requirements for teacher certification are among the highest in Canada. British Columbia certified teachers are very highly qualified. Teachers, as life-long learners, recognize and are committed to ongoing professional development.

Since its beginning, the BCTF has played a major role in professional development. The BCTF dedicates considerable resources to provide and promote professional development for its members. The Federation offers leadership training, both provincially and locally, for teachers in professional development, and provides a vast array of workshops for schools and locals.

At the request of the teaching profession, and after years of advocacy by the BCTF, five days were added to the school calendar in 1972 for professional development, with no extra remuneration. Teachers around the province plan and participate in professional development activities in their schools, districts, and provincially. Professional development is so central for teachers that every local association negotiated funding for professional development.

The BCTF has 33 Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs) and innumerable local specialist associations (LSAs). Teachers voluntarily join specialist associations to have access to conferences, newsletters, journals, and many other professional development opportunities. The BCTF has hundreds of members serving on ministry curriculum committees and on the Educational Resource Acquisition Consortium (ERAC) selection committees.

The BCTF is committed to quality teaching and has an excellent Program for Quality Teaching (PQT) based on teacher inquiry and action research. PQT promotes ongoing reflection and professional growth. In recognition of the quality of the program, the BCTF received a substantial ministry grant in 2008 to expand the work in this area.

For teachers struggling in the classroom, the BCTF has a Peer Support Program that is well utilized. Practicing classroom teachers provide professional support through this program to teachers requiring help with their practice. Often, districts work with BCTF peer support consultants to put in place a plan of assistance, should a teacher require help with her or his teaching assignment. Teachers also self-refer to seek peer support services.

The BCTF provides professional support across the curriculum and grade levels through the PSAs and through subject specific programs such as Aboriginal education, French services, and social justice programs.

British Columbia has a large number of teachers with diplomas and degrees beyond the basic requirements for certification. This is evidence that teachers are motivated and actively participating in their ongoing professional development.

Teachers and the Federation are responsive to the demands of educational change. For example, with the implementation of full-day Kindergarten, the BCTF designed a full-day K workshop on curriculum and pedagogy for these early learners, trained a cadre of Kindergarten teachers to facilitate the workshop, and is currently delivering it to teachers around the province. Both ministry staff and other partner groups have recognized the outstanding professional quality of this work.



BC teachers individually and collectively, through their professional union, expend considerable resources because they see the value of professional learning that is based in practice and driven by the needs of teachers

**c. The college's role and performance of its duties in comparison with other self-regulating professions.**

A defining hallmark of a profession is the central role members play in its self-regulation. When the college was established in 1987, the government legislated that 12 members (75%) of the BC College of Teachers' council would be elected by the profession from the membership of the college and 8 would be appointed. Currently, the BCCT council has 12 elected (60%), and 8 appointed members. The majority of other self-regulating bodies have two-thirds or more elected members. For example, the Law Society of British Columbia has 25 elected (80%) members on its governing body and only 6 appointed members. (See Appendix 6)

The BCTF believes that a self-regulating body needs to have at least two-thirds of the council members elected from the membership, by the membership. As practitioners, teachers understand the nature and demands of the teaching profession, and have a critical role to play in the self-regulation of the profession.

The expertise of the profession must inform the policy, practice, and processes of the college because it will improve the college's capacity to carry out its mandate. The democratic election of college councillors allows the representative voice of teachers to inform council decision-making.

**d. The college's teacher certification practices in comparison with those of other jurisdictions.**

British Columbia and Ontario are the only two jurisdictions in Canada with a College of Teachers. Other provinces and territories each have unique certification practices that involve the Ministry of Education and teacher associations, similar to what was in place in BC prior to 1987.

In Alberta, teacher development and certification resides with the provincial government, and the investigation of breaches of the professional conduct code rests with the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). All investigations and hearings are handled by the ATA. The ATA reports decisions to the minister, where the minister needs to cancel or suspend a member's teaching certificate, or if the decisions relate to a conviction of an indictable offence.

In Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Education grants teacher certificates and the minister, upon the recommendation of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF), may suspend or

revoke a teacher's certificate for cause. The STF has three disciplinary committees that preside over ethics, collective interests, and competency complaints.

In Manitoba, certification resides in the Department of Education. Investigations and other related matters are handled through the local employers and collective agreements.

In Quebec, certification is granted by the Minister of Education. Any person can file a written complaint with the minister against a teacher, and this could lead to the minister appointing a committee to investigate, and could further lead to a teacher's certificate being revoked.

In the rest of the provinces and territories, certification resides with the provincial government, in the departments of education. The minister grants certification, and the teacher associations and the employers play a role in the investigation process through practice and/or agreements. The ministers of education suspend or terminate a teacher's certificate.

- e. **The effectiveness of the college in carrying out its mandate with regard to complaints concerning teacher conduct or competence, including investigation, disciplinary action, and public reporting.**

The college has been effective in carrying out its mandate with regard to addressing concerns about teacher conduct or competence, including investigations, discipline, and public reporting. The college has by-laws, policies, and protocols to address reports and complaints that trigger disciplinary investigations by the college.

The college has expanded its role in regulating the competence of teachers. Originally, competence issues were only addressed by the college if a member was terminated for incompetence. The college is now more active in identifying competence issues in response to reports of minor discipline and person complaints. Members are frequently required to attend further training or provide reports regarding their competence. The college also addresses competency issues by entering into agreements with members for the relinquishment of their teaching certificate.

The college is very rigorous in addressing discipline concerns. (See **Appendix 7**) Most reports to the college, even those of a relatively minor nature, result in some form of action. The college requires teachers to demonstrate an understanding of the standards expected of teachers and requires teachers to provide evidence of their willingness and ability to meet those standards in the future.

The college carries out its duty to report in a variety of ways. There is a registry and protocols in place for reporting to the minister, school boards, other jurisdictions, and the

public. Regular reports of specific teacher discipline case summaries are included in the college publication *TC*. The college fulfils its obligations to report.

Over the years, the Federation has taken the position that trivial and inconsequential matters should be dealt with at the local level by the employer, and once those processes have been exhausted then, if necessary, be dealt with by the college. However, the Federation takes all matters of concern around the safety of children seriously and would never suggest that any discipline resulting from a concern for the welfare of children be withheld from the college. The BCTF *Code of Ethics* is very explicit on this matter. The BCTF addresses boundary and professional responsibilities and obligations of teachers as an integral part of its ongoing training, and also has specific workshops on boundary issues. Currently, the BCTF offers three workshops to teachers in schools and districts:

1. Understanding the professional relationship; boundaries between teachers and students
2. Workshop on boundaries for TTOCs
3. Social networking and new technologies—keeping yourself safe.

In the 2009–2010 school year there were 30 boundary workshops booked in school districts. The Federation plays a proactive role to ensure the safety of students.

There is no evidence that the BCTF has ever interfered in the discipline process of the college. The BCTF does ensure due process for members facing college investigations and hearings. In doing so, the Federation provides legal counsel to members facing an investigation or hearing, which is known as legal aid. There is no involvement or communication between legal counsel and elected officers, except that legal counsel will, from time to time, provide information to the BCTF Executive Committee on process issues. No information regarding individual cases is divulged to political officers. The only exception is where a member is denied legal aid by BCTF staff. In such a case the member may appeal that decision to an “in-private” meeting of the BCTF Executive Committee, thereby waiving her or his right to confidentiality for that limited purpose. After the appeal, if the individual is provided with legal aid, the confidential process resumes.

The BCTF does not interfere in the college’s parent/person complaint process and has never sought to influence a case. The college receives an extremely small number of person complaints relative to the large number of teachers in the province. The structure of the public school system results in most parent complaints being made to school-based administrators. If the complaint has merit, action is taken at the district level and the matter reaches the college as a report of discipline. Person complaints are generally only made to the college when the parent is not only unhappy with the teacher’s behaviour, but also with the response by local administrators.

Person complaints are dealt with through a complaint process that involves the college seeking information from both the member and the member’s employer. Most are

appropriately resolved without formal action as the teacher and/or district employer has been diligent in addressing the concerns.

It is the Federation's understanding, from both the elected and appointed council members, that BCCT committees and subcommittees have been functioning very effectively, and cordially. The BCCT subcommittee on governance did not raise any concerns with the way complaints and discipline are handled at the college. Consequently, the Federation was very surprised to learn of the concerns raised by the current chair in an opinion piece published in *The Vancouver Sun* on May 6, 2010. Prior to this opinion piece, no college councillor or staff member raised any concerns with the BCTF about the discipline, competence, or parent/person complaint process and committee work of the college.

Richard Walker's statements in *The Vancouver Sun*, on May 6, 2010, where he asserted that 270 public complaints since 2003 had not led to any discipline against any teacher and implied this was due to BCTF interference, were misleading and inaccurate. Walker made these comments in the context of allegations of sexual misconduct against a teacher in the public domain. These comments fed parent and public fears about student safety and ultimately led to the appointment of a fact finder.

As a long-serving member of the council, and as chair of the council, Walker must have been aware of the internal processes and policies for addressing public complaints against college members. At the June 4, 2010, public council meeting, a chart was distributed showing the disposition of all 269 parent/person complaints since 2003. The registrar's role in the complaint process is to make an initial assessment of the complaint and the registrar has the authority to forward or dismiss the complaint at this stage of the process. The report to the June 2010 council meeting indicated that the registrar took no action on 178 complaints, ruling that:

- a. the college did not have jurisdiction,
- b. the complaint was in regard to member competence and not conduct, or
- c. where the conduct was proven, the conduct could not be a breach of the standards.

The remaining 91 cases were investigated and either dismissed or informal resolutions were reached. The BCTF has not been involved in this process, or in any way interfered with, the disposition of these cases.

- f. **The effectiveness of the council of the college in carrying out its mandate to govern and administer the affairs of the college.**

The Federation believes the council of the college is effective in carrying out its mandate to govern and administer the affairs of the college. As noted above, the council is thorough and rigorous in addressing competency, conduct, and person/parent complaints. The committees

and subcommittees of the college function well and fulfil their mandate. The council has established processes and procedures to address policies and consult with partner groups.

### **SECTION 3: BCTF candidate endorsement and meetings with councillors**

Legislation establishing the BCCT in 1987 envisioned elected councillors representing geographical regions of the province. This basic democratic structure was not changed when the elected council was re-established in 2003. Thus, councillors were expected to be elected by a constituency of teachers within a given geographic region of the province. It follows that councillors are expected to represent their respective regions. The process of electoral democracy involves candidate determination, an election, an electoral decision, and the ensuing responsibility to the representation of that constituency.

The BCTF is a very democratic and transparent organization and its members have been actively engaged in the democratic process established by government, to elect college councillors in their respective zones. The endorsement process is clearly articulated in the *Members' Guide to the BCTF*, which is online and accessible to the public (Procedure 7.A.18). This practice has been in place since the college was first established, and has not been raised to the Federation as a concern of government or as a public concern. Over the two decades the endorsement process has been in place both endorsed and non-endorsed college members have been elected. College elections are by secret mail-in ballot administered by the college.

The Federation understands that once elected to the college council, BCTF members have a very distinct role as college councillors. All councillors, appointed and elected, take an oath and are governed by conflict-of-interest policies. College councillors, current and past, have conducted themselves professionally and are cognizant of their role as council members. Although Richard Walker implied impropriety in his statements to the press, not one instance has been identified where an elected or appointed councillor has not acted in the public interest, and no councillor has been accused of violating her or his oath to serve the public interest.

Prior to March 2010, the BCTF met regularly with elected college council members to discuss member concerns in general, and policies and procedures of the college. The meetings were very productive and helped to give clarity and better understanding of matters of pending policy.

Upon hearing the concern that appointed councillors were feeling excluded, the BCTF Executive Committee took a recommendation to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in March 2010, and now all councillors, both appointed and elected, are invited to the BCTF meetings. The meetings are held in the evening, and the BCTF reimburses for any additional expenses incurred by councillors (e.g., mileage, parking). There was a period when meetings were held during the day, but practice over the last few years has been to meet in the evenings in conjunction with the BCCT meetings. There is no compensation paid to members to attend the BCTF-sponsored meetings. In the early years of the college there was a BCTF College Advisory Committee. That committee last met in 2004 and was discontinued. Once again this reflects the maturing

relationship, and recognition by the BCTF of the separate role members hold when they serve on the council.

At the April 2010 council meeting, the BCTF stated its willingness to examine current BCTF policies and practices regarding the endorsement of college councillors. The BCTF continues to be willing to discuss any concerns about this endorsement policy and any other policy regarding the college.

#### **SECTION 4: The “manufactured crisis”**

The BCTF believes that there is no crisis of public confidence in the college. There has been no indication of a crisis from the government or evidence of public concern. The sweeping nature of the recommendations of the governance report of December 4, 2009, took the BCTF by surprise. Prior to the tabling of the report there were no indications that such changes were being considered and no situations or events occurred that would have triggered such recommendations.

The BCTF presentation to the BC College of Teachers public council meeting on June 4, 2010, articulates the Federation’s belief that the urgency with which some members of the college council pursued the implementation of the governance report recommendations was not a response to any event, issue, or concern raised by the college, government, or the public. There was at least the appearance that the urgency was a response to a political deadline: college council elections that may result in a different council composition. This became more apparent during the April 6, 2010 press conference when Walker called for government intervention in postponing the scheduled May 2010 council elections.

On January 4, 2010, the chair, vice-chair, and the registrar met with the table officers and staff of the BCTF. Despite Federation requests for the full report on governance, the BCTF was not given a copy, and was told that the report was confidential. At this meeting, three issues were identified as motivating the recommendations of the governance report: the endorsement of college candidates; the meetings the BCTF holds with elected council members prior to the council meetings; and a suggestion that BCTF policy opposed the right of the college to cancel teacher certificates.

The BCTF dealt with each of these concerns. The BCTF Executive Committee recommendations to the March 2010 Annual General Meeting (AGM) (See Procedure 7.A.10 Appendix 2) were all wholeheartedly endorsed by the membership.

As noted above, the BCTF now invites all college councillors, appointed and elected, to the BCTF meeting held prior to the council meeting. The Federation expressed its commitment and willingness to work with the council to address the Federation’s endorsement process and other governance concerns. The BCTF Executive Committee reviewed Procedure 7.A.10 and agreed that though the intent of the policy was to describe the manner in which certification could be

voluntarily ceded, the policy could be misinterpreted out of context to read that the BCTF took the position that the college did not have the right to cancel teacher certificates. This was not the intent and the policy was revised.

The BCTF presentation to the council meeting on April 1, 2010, reviewed the concerns and identified the actions taken by the BCTF:

1. The Federation adopted the following statement of principle:  
The BCTF is committed to the teaching profession, the public interest, and public education. Teachers have a necessary role on the BC College of Teachers and bring the experience, expertise, and teacher voice to decision-making at the college.
2. The Federation revised Procedure 7.A.10 to clearly recognize the statutory role of the college to review, suspend, and/or terminate a teacher's certification.
3. To address concerns expressed about BCTF-sponsored meetings with elected councillors being exclusive, the BCTF will now invite all college councillors, elected and appointed, to attend. All councillors will be encouraged to submit agenda items and participate.
4. The Federation is prepared to examine current BCTF policies and practices regarding endorsement of college councillors.
5. The Federation expressed its commitment to work with the BC College of Teachers to address other areas of concern, and asked for an inclusive process and sufficient time in which to do so. (See Appendix 8)

However, despite these actions and almost immediately after this presentation on April 6, 2010, the college chair called for government intervention. The Federation continues to be perplexed as to why and when the council made that decision. It appeared to the Federation that the chair had given no consideration to the actions taken by the BCTF. It was also clear to the Federation that the chair and the registrar were not looking for solutions, and instead sought to escalate the urgency of the governance issue in order to have government intervene. The chair's request of government to postpone the elections to allow the current council members to complete the changes to governance added clarity and substance to the apparent urgency of the chair's public statements. There was no public crisis of confidence in the college. There appeared to be a political crisis impending for the current councillors supporting governance changes: upcoming council elections.

An invitation from the BCCT on April 7, 2010, for the BCTF Executive Committee to meet with the council, was welcomed by the Federation. The Federation sent proposed dates and expressed a willingness to commit substantive time to this matter. The Federation was again taken by surprise when the registrar and the chair postponed the meeting. The Federation cannot fathom

how the college can refuse to meet to find solutions, and at the same time call on government for immediate intervention.

Finally, on May 6, 2010, Richard Walker's opinion piece was published in *The Vancouver Sun*. In the context of a teacher facing allegations of sexual misconduct, Walker alleged that no action has been taken on 270 person complaints received by the college since 2003, and asserted that this was due to the influence exerted by the BCTF. The chair, knowing the processes of the college, made statements that were untrue and that fed parent and public fears about student safety. In his zeal to "create a crisis" and force government to intervene, the chair tarnished the reputation of the teaching profession. Both Walker and the registrar are aware that the BCTF *Code of Ethics* is clear that child protection concerns must be reported, and both are familiar with the BCTF's training programs and workshops that address the imperative of reporting and of keeping students safe. Again, up to this time, the Federation had heard no concerns from the college or any council member about the handling of complaints or the work of the subcommittees on this matter.

Prior to the comments in the media, by the chair and the registrar, there was no crisis. There were no complaints about the lack of public confidence in the college from the government or the public. There was no crisis until the chair and the registrar manufactured a crisis to force government to intervene.



## **SECTION 5: Conclusion**

In a highly charged and confrontational political climate, the College of Teachers was imposed on the teaching profession. Despite the unwanted imposition of the college, the Federation has learned to work with the council on matters related to the college and the profession. A mutually respectful relationship has evolved. When the elected college was dismissed and there was a politically appointed council, the Federation did not ask for the dissolution of the college but urged the government to re-establish a college council that would have two-thirds of its councillors selected from, and by the profession. The Federation respects the autonomy of the college and accepts the legitimacy and importance of the college's role in regulating the conduct and competency of teachers. The college is both thorough and rigorous in its response to complaints about conduct and competency, and has set a very high standard for the profession. Certification requirements for the professional certificate in BC are the highest in Canada.

The Federation recognises that members of the Federation, once elected to the council, have a distinct and separate role while they serve as council members. Prior to recent comments made by Richard Walker, there has been no indication of any interference in the work of the college as it carries out its mandate. The Federation has taken steps to address many of the issues raised through the governance review, and remains committed to working with the college to address outstanding areas of concern about institutional autonomy. The college has been informed of the changes made and the commitment to work with the council on any other areas of concern. The Federation welcomes the opportunity to clarify concerns raised and issues related to the work of the BCCT through the process of the appointed fact finder.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. Link to BCTF Professional Development Calendar 2009–2010  
[http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Professional\\_Development/PD-Calendar.cfm](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Professional_Development/PD-Calendar.cfm)
2. Link to *BCTF Services Handbook 2009–2010*  
<http://www.bctf.ca/BCTF-ServicesHandbook.aspx>
3. Link to *The Practice of Teaching: A handbook for new teachers & TTOCs*  
<http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/NewTeachers/handbook.pdf>

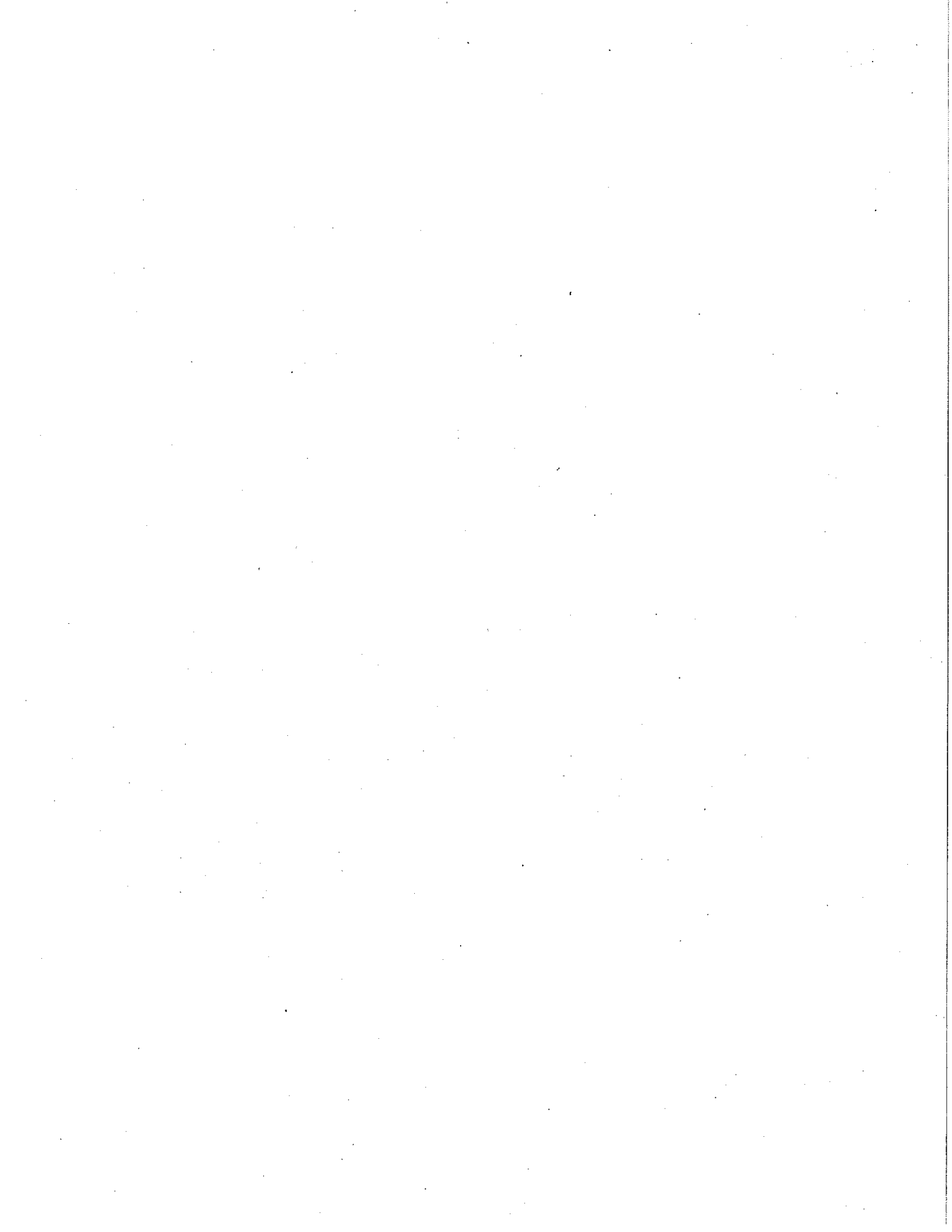
## Appendix 1

### *The BCTF Code of Ethics*

The *Code of Ethics* states general rules for all members of the BCTF for maintaining high standards of professional service and conduct toward students, colleagues, and the professional union.

1. The teacher speaks and acts toward students with respect and dignity and deals judiciously with them, always mindful of their individual rights and sensibilities.
2. The teacher respects the confidential nature of information concerning students and may give it only to authorized persons or agencies directly concerned with their welfare.
3. The teacher recognizes that a privileged relationship with students exists and refrains from exploiting that relationship for material, ideological, or other advantage.
4. The teacher is willing to review with colleagues, students, and their parents/guardians the quality of service rendered by the teacher and the practices employed in discharging professional duties.
5. The teacher directs any criticism of the teaching performance and related work of a colleague to that colleague in private, and only then, after informing the colleague in writing of the intent to do so, may direct in confidence the criticism to appropriate individuals who are able to offer advice and assistance. (See note following #10 and statement 31.B.12.)
6. The teacher acknowledges the authority and responsibilities of the BCTF and its locals and fulfills obligations arising from membership in his/her professional union.
7. The teacher adheres to the provisions of the collective agreement.
8. The teacher acts in a manner not prejudicial to job actions or other collective strategies of his/her professional union.
9. The teacher neither applies for nor accepts a position which is included in a Federation in-dispute declaration.
10. The teacher, as an individual or as a member of a group of teachers, does not make unauthorized representations to outside bodies in the name of the Federation or its locals.

**NOTE:** It shall not be considered a breach of Clause 5 of the *Code of Ethics* for a member to follow legal requirements or official protocols in reporting child protection issues.





# British Columbia Teachers' Federation

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August 25, 2010

**Addendum to:  
the BC Teachers' Federation submission to Don Avison  
regarding the BC College of Teachers**

## **BC College of Teachers**

The college in BC has been in existence for 23 years, and if it is to continue, it should have, at least, two-thirds of its council members elected from, and by, the teaching profession. The BCTF holds a strong belief that the statutory mandate of the BC College of Teachers must be limited to:

1. establishing requirements for issuing teacher certificates.
2. issuing teacher certifications.
3. taking action up to and including reviewing, suspending, and/or terminating a teacher's certification.
4. approving teacher education program(s) for pre-service teachers.

The BCTF acknowledges and values the importance of the college in approving pedagogically sound teacher education programs for pre-service teachers, establishing a high standard for those entering the profession, and ensuring rigorous requirements and processes prior to certification being granted. The college has to be the gatekeeper, and has to ensure high standards for the teaching profession.

Once a teacher has a teaching certificate, the college plays a critical role in reviewing, suspending, and/or terminating teacher certification when warranted. Teachers take their professional responsibilities for the safety and well-being of students seriously, and are committed to ensuring high standards for the profession.

If the institution of the college were to be disbanded, these critical functions would have to be maintained. The Federation, representing 41,000 practicing teachers, must be engaged in discussions prior to any changes, and the mandate must address the functions identified above. Were the college to be disbanded, and its core functions shifted elsewhere, it is the BC Teachers' Federation's view that the majority on any panel or board must be elected from, and by, practicing teachers.

Competence is the responsibility of school districts, and is best handled at the school district level. There is currently redundancy in the college's involvement in this area.

BC teachers are actively engaged in ongoing professional development, in myriad forms. The Federation feels very strongly that professional development for active teachers is not the purview of the college. This field is currently occupied by the BCTF, local associations, and school districts. Professional development and in-service are more effective and meaningful when they rise out of, and inform, a teacher's practice. The BCTF, a union of professionals, takes seriously its commitment to

address professional issues. The Federation dedicates significant resources, including a Professional and Social Issues Division with 20 full-time staff, to provide professional support to teachers. Programs and services provided by the division are documented in the original submission. Every teacher has five professional development days; local associations and the BCTF offer a wide array of school- and district-based professional development and in-service opportunities.

School districts also play a key role in providing opportunities for in-service, curriculum development, curriculum implementation, and professional development. For example, in Coquitlam, both the school district and the local association work together to design comprehensive and teacher-driven professional development programs (schedules enclosed). Locals have negotiated funding and processes for professional development into their collective agreements (examples of collective-agreement language on professional development are included in the documents).

It should also be noted that many teachers are engaged in pursuing, or have completed, formal academic credentials beyond the requirements for teacher certification. A pan-Canadian survey by Kamanzi, Riopel, and Lessard (2007) reported that 43% of its respondents had education beyond Bachelor level.

A recent BCTF survey of Teachers' Worklife 2009–10, shows that 52% of respondents reported that they had academic credentials above the requirements for teacher certification in BC. Specifically, 26% had completed a university certificate/diploma above a Bachelor's level, 25% had earned a Master's degree, and 1% had a Doctorate degree. Teachers are lifelong learners, and take their professional responsibilities seriously. Professional development and the monitoring of professional development for active teachers cannot be the work of the college.

### **Discipline prior to 1987**

(BCTF policy *Members' Guide to the BCTF 1973–1974* is enclosed.)

Prior to 1987, the hiring, discipline for conduct and competence, and the dismissal of teachers was handled by each school district. The BCTF had processes and protocols in place to address members in violation of the Code of Ethics, and had the right to revoke a teacher's membership. At this time, BCTF membership was compulsory for teachers working in public schools.

The BCTF did revoke membership of a teacher found guilty of sexual misconduct (1984), and of a teacher who was finding it difficult to get along with colleagues (1974).

**A selection of additional professional development documents related to the following is enclosed:**

### **Program for Quality Teaching (PQT)**

1. Teacher Inquiry Project 2008–09 (January 2010)
2. Teacher Inquiry Fraser-Cascade Teacher Research (BCTF publication, March 1999)
3. Teacher Research in the Backyard, Kitimat-Terrace Teacher Research (BCTF/UBC publication, May 2003)

### Professional Specialist Associations (PSAs)

1. PSA workshops for schools and districts (2009)
2. PSA conference calendars from 2009–10, 2010–11
3. Conference programs from the following PSAs:
  - Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Association (PITA), 2009, and 2010
  - BC Teachers of English Language Arts (BCTELA) (October 2009, and October 2010), includes Conference Schedule at a Glance
  - The British Columbia Association of Mathematics Teachers (BCAMT) 2009–2010
  - Aboriginal Education Association (2010)
  - Environmental Educators' Provincial Specialist Association (2010)
  - Special Education Association of British Columbia (SEABC) (2009–2010)
4. PSA journals and samples
  - Special Education Association of British Columbia (SEABC)
    - *Crosscurrents*, Spring 2010, Volume 27, Number 3
    - *Crosscurrents*, Winter 2010, Volume 27, Number 2
    - *Crosscurrents*, Fall 2009, Volume 27, Number 1
  - British Columbia Primary Teachers' Association (BCPTA)
    - Full-day Kindergarten Conference, August 2010
    - Primary Leadership Conference, October 2010
    - *BCPTA Newsletter* (Winter 2009)
    - *BCPTA Newsletter* (March–April 2009)
  - *BCAMT Newsletter*, June 2010
  - BC Teachers of English Language Arts (BCTELA)
    - *President's Bulletin* (September 2009)
  - *Voices Visible: Student Writing Journal* (2005–07)
  - *English Practice*, The Journal of the BC Teachers of English Language Arts, Vol 51 No 1–Spring 2009
  - English as a Second Language PSA
    - *Notes for ESL*, The Newsletter of the ESL PSA (2010)
  - BC Co-operative Learning PSA (BCCLPSA)
    - *Classroom Connections* (Summer 2010, Volume 20, Issue 2)
  - BC Alternate Education Association (BCAEA)
    - *Newsletter* (Spring 2010)
  - Association Provinciale des Professeurs de l'Immersion et du Programme-Francophone BC (APPIPC)
    - *Inform' Appipc* (vol. 21 No 2 Septembre 2008)
  - BC Science Teachers' Association (BCScTA)
    - *Momentum* (Volume 10 No. 2 Spring 2009)
  - BC Art Teachers' Association
    - *Visually Speaking* (Spring A 2010)

- Adult Educators' PSA (AEPSA)
  - *The Adult Educator* (Volume 14, Issue 2, July 2010)
- BC Music Educators' Association (BCMEA)
  - *The BC Music Educator* (Volume 53, No. 1, Fall 2009)
  - *The BC Music Educator* (Volume 53, No. 2, Spring 2010)
  - *The BC Music Educator* (Volume 53, No. 3, Summer 2010)
- BC Business Education Association (BCBEA)
  - BC Business Education Association (April 2010, Volume 13, Number 1)

### **Local and district professional development**

1. Coquitlam Teachers' Association
  - CTA Pro D Day Creative Connections (Riverside Secondary, February 12, 2010)
  - Connecting Lively Learning Communities, Professional Development Opportunities 2009–10
  - Connecting Learning Communities, Professional Development Opportunities 2008–09
  - Staff Development Department, Summer Events
  - E-mail: May 18 Learning Team Celebration (2010)
2. Local Associations' Professional Development: Funding and Control for:
  - Revelstoke Teachers' Association (19)
  - Richmond Teachers' Association (38)
  - Coquitlam Teachers' Association (43)
  - North Vancouver Teachers' Association (44)
  - Nanaimo District Teachers' Association (68)
  - Gold Trail District Teachers' Association (74)
3. Pan-Canadian and BCTF Survey

### **Professional standards**

The BCTF did participate fully in the consultation process adopted by the elected college. Documents on the consultation process, and the BCTF feedback on the standards are enclosed.

1. Original standards 2003–04
2. Correspondence
3. Consultation process

### **Trade, Investment and Mobility Agreement (TILMA), and Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT)**

Analysis and correspondence documenting BCTF concerns with the impact of the trade agreements on lowering the standards, for teacher certification.

1. TILMA analysis
2. Trade Investment and Labour Mobility
3. Correspondence

Enclosures

SL/ls/afeu