



**BCCPAC's Report to the Membership
Learning Roundtable Meeting
December 10, 2007**

On Monday, December 10, 2007, members of the Learning Roundtable met for the first time in this 2007/2008 school year. Representatives from each of the partner groups were in attendance. Representing BCCPAC were Ron Broda, 1st Vice President and Lori Tedrick, 2nd Vice President.

1. Overview and discussion of class size report for 2007-2008

The meeting began with an overview and discussion of the class size and class composition data collected this fall. Deputy Minister Dosdall shared with the members of the Learning Roundtable the data collected. The initial findings include:

- All classes in all schools have reported in. The total number of classes is 68,693.
- The number of classes of over 30 students continues to decline. In the first year of the report, there were 9,253 classes of more than 30 students. Last year 3,242 classes were reported. Currently that number stands at 3,179 classes with more than 30 students. Many of these classes have 31-33 students. The majority of the classes that have reported being more than 30 students are music, drama and non-traditional classes, such as leadership.
- It is estimated there has been a decline of 7,000 students this year. Last year's enrolment was 12,000.
- The distribution of special needs students is very comparable to the numbers reported last year; 15 percent of classes have more than four special needs students.
- The number of classes with teaching assistants has risen this year; 278 new teaching assistants were hired this year to support students. There are 15,379 classes with assigned education assistants.

Deputy Minister Dosdall reported that the data collected this year was done electronically, which was much more helpful to assist in reviewing rationale, determining patterns and trends. The consultation process continues to improve. There is still a concern with the grades 4-7 class sizes. This year, one percent of classes are over the Bill 33 requirements; however, all have received teacher consent.

Comments from representatives:

The BC Teachers Federation (BCTF) commented on the "failed promise" of Bill 33. They believe there has not been any improvement in learning conditions since the Bill was introduced and they believe there will not be any improvements to learning conditions until the funding for education is increased.

The BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) was encouraged with the findings. BCSTA President Tees commented that the classrooms with four or more special needs students do not take into consideration the structures and rationale for the decision made to put children in this type of class composition. There may, in fact, be good reasons for this move. The numbers alone do not provide the answers. Class size alone is not the solution. There must be a balance between the views/needs of each of the partners when determining optimum learning conditions for all children. Vice President Denesiuk commented that additional discussions on this issue also take place at the local level and must be considered as well.

President Jopson of the BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA) commented that there is a challenge to meet the needs of special learners. The answer is as not simple as setting class size/composition limits. It is a combination of many things that are taken into account when determining class size and



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composition. Past BCSSA President Rooney stated that we cannot focus only on the negative when there are so many positive things happening in our classrooms and schools. Everyone needs to respect the dialogue at all levels: provincial, district and school. Comments in isolation of context are misleading. Comparison of numbers will not provide answers or solutions. Members of the roundtable will not all agree with the findings, but all need to find some things that everyone can agree on and move forward.

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) 1st Vice President Broda stated that the rationales needed to be reviewed, alongside the numbers, before any assumptions are made about the effect of Bill 33. The numbers alone will not tell the story. Further questions must be answered including:

- What is the achievement of the students in the classes of more than four special needs students?
- Why do some classes have more than 4 special needs students and some have none?
- What is the actual number of special needs students? What is the trend? Is the number of special needs students rising? If so, why is that? How many qualified special needs teachers are there? If there is a shortage, does there need to be more professional development or training to increase the number of teachers qualified to teach special needs students?

Minister Bond concluded this portion of the agenda by stating that members of the Learning Roundtable need to look at how to find a balance of what can be done to address education for each individual student in public education. A number of questions around the data were raised during the discussion and the Ministry will go back, review the data and find answers to those questions.

2. Report of the Sub-Committee Reviewing Bill 33

Rick Davis from the Ministry of Education reported on the work of the sub-committee. (Bill 33 required that a committee be formed to review the legislation within the first year. At the last meeting of the Learning Roundtable a sub-committee was formed to meet this requirement.) Members of the sub-committee comprised two representatives from the BCTF and one representative from each of the other partner groups.

Two administrative changes have been made in the reporting. The first change was that the information reported back to the Ministry of Education be based on the district report approved by Boards of Education. The other change made was with respect to the rationale of the decision made on each class size/composition decision. This information was also included in the report which was made electronically. Space for reporting the rationales were limited, but initial indications show that this was still effective and that rationales submitted were clear and concise.

The second area the sub-committee reviewed was the policy on Bill 33. It seems to be working, with the right balance. This will continue to be monitored. At this point there are no recommendations to change the policy.

Work on defining “consultation” for the specific purposes of determining class size and composition issues is still under consideration. Further discussion will take place on this topic with members of the Roundtable.

Rick Davis concluded that the work of the sub-committee has been completed as per legislation. Further work will now fall to the members of the Learning Roundtable.



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3. Future Agenda Items

At the request of Minister Bond, a discussion took place about future agenda items. Minister Bond shared a concern that came out of the Teachers Congress, held on November 30, 2007, where it was brought to her attention, by a teacher, that a certain grade 10 student could only read at a grade 5 level. This is just one of the items she would like to see further explored by the Learning Roundtable. This supports BCCPAC's desire to discuss a number of issues that the Confederation has brought forward in earlier meetings. These include: teacher qualifications, the BC College of Teachers, and special education – just to name a few. There was a clear desire from many of the partners represented at the meeting to move beyond class size and composition issues, which have been the focus of all meetings for the last two years, and move onto discussion of other issues of importance in education. The Minister agreed and will take this under advisement.

The next meeting of the Learning Roundtable is expected to take place in early January.

If you have any questions or comments please contact Kim Howland at kim.howland@bccpac.bc.ca, Lori Tedrick at lortedrick@bccpac.bc.ca or Ron Broda at ronbroda@bccpac.bc.ca.

Information on the 2007/2008 Class Size and Composition Reports can found at:

A provincial class size overview report is available online at:
www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reports/pdfs/class_size/2007/Public.pdf

The full class size report will be available online at:
www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/enrol/class-size.php