



British Columbia Teachers' Federation

100-550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2 • (604) 871-2283, 1-800-663-9163 • www.bctf.ca
TTY 604-871-2185 (deaf and hard of hearing) Executive Offices fax: 604-871-2290

December 2010

Dear colleague,

By the time this letter reaches you, classes will be done for this term and you will be beginning a well-deserved time of rest and celebration with family and friends. So, please forgive me for interrupting your holiday time, but I felt this message was just too important to wait for January.

You will be aware that last spring the minister of education appointed lawyer, Don Avison, to investigate the functioning of the College of Teachers and to issue a report on future options. The report, entitled "A College Divided," was released December 8, 2010, and it immediately created much controversy and media attention.

The report was sparked by erroneous allegations that the BCTF had interfered unduly in discipline matters before the college, specifically, allegations that 271 "person complaints" had not been properly addressed. In fact, as the report states, "many of these complaints had been reviewed by the registrar and had been found to be either beyond the council's jurisdiction or not sufficient to warrant 'further action'." In a meeting with BCTF leaders, Avison told us clearly that he found no evidence of BCTF interference in college parent-complaint processes.

However, the report cites three egregious cases in which certification was granted or renewed. These include:

- a former teacher, convicted years earlier on charges involving sexual assaults of students, had his certificate returned.
- a person sentenced to a six-year term for narcotics trafficking was found fit to be credentialed as a teacher.
- a former lawyer who had been "permitted to resign" from the Law Society after findings against him on multiple complaints, including forging of court documents, was granted a teaching certificate.

On the face of the information in the report, we share the public sense of shock that individuals such as these would be permitted to teach. However, as you know, the BCTF has nothing to do with the certification process. The Federation never has and never will interfere or intervene in the individual discipline cases of the college.

The report also cites the case of a teacher, now deceased, a former president of the Abbotsford local and a college councillor, as an example of the BCTF failing to act in the public interest. In this case, a laptop alleged to contain literature of a pornographic nature was turned in to the BCTF. As soon as the BCTF became aware of the nature of the material on the laptop, we turned it over to police and requested an investigation. The investigation led to criminal charges and ultimately a conviction.

Dear Colleague
December 2010

As teachers, we feel heartsick at the idea that any teacher would harm a student, but the ugly truth is that it does happen. Clearly, the BCTF takes very seriously the responsibility of upholding rigorous standards of personal and professional conduct in our public schools. We did it before the college ever came into being, and we continue to be committed to this principle.

The report outlines four possible options for the college: the status quo (which is not defined as a viable option); a substantial reorganization of the college; creation of a new teacher certification board; or the college functions being subsumed into the Ministry of Education.

In future months we will engage with the minister in extensive discussions about what changes are needed to ensure that British Columbians, and parents in particular, can be fully assured that their children are nurtured and their well-being is protected in our public schools.

I welcome your feedback on this important issue facing our profession. Thank you for all you do every day for the students in your classrooms and schools. Our hard work continues to make an enormous difference in the lives of the children we teach. Together we have built one of the best, if not the best, public education systems in the world.

All my very best wishes for 2011.

In solidarity,



Susan Lambert
President