



## British Columbia Teachers' Federation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Kids can't wait

#### **BCTF calls for prompt restoration of smaller classes and support for special needs**

The BC Teachers' Federation is urgently calling on Premier Christy Clark to act swiftly to bring the government into harmony with last week's ruling of the BC Supreme Court.

"We are ready to get down to work immediately with government to discuss how to restore the smaller classes and support for students with special needs that were cut as a result of BC Liberal legislation which has now been found to be unconstitutional and invalid," said BCTF President Susan Lambert. "The court gave government 12 months to address the repercussions of the decision, but surely the premier would not want to make students wait another year for the services they need."

Lambert has made efforts to request a meeting with Clark, but the premier's office has yet to set a date.

In a strongly worded decision, Madam Justice Griffin declared the BC Liberals' Bills 27 and 28 to be in violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The offending legislation stripped teachers' collective agreement of class-size limits and guarantees of support for students with special needs, with disastrous consequences in schools across the province. Class sizes increased as about 3,000 teaching positions were cut, including 1,400 school counsellors, teacher-librarians, learning assistance, and other specialist teachers who work with students with a vast range of special needs.

"We believe those teaching positions should be restored in time for the new school year in September," said Lambert. "The decision is a tremendous win for kids because through our bargaining we achieved contractual guarantees of the teachers and the services they need in classes that are of a manageable size. Now is the time to get learning conditions back to where they ought to have been all along."

Lambert added that the BCTF is requesting assurances from the government that they will not waste more time and tax dollars in appealing the ruling, which is clear and unequivocal. "Millions of dollars have already been spent on legal proceedings, and any further litigation will only divert additional funding that rightly ought to go into classrooms for the benefit of students," she said. On Tuesday, the Executive Committee of the BCTF passed a motion to call on the provincial government to restore education funding within the requirements of the restored collective agreement language.

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