

DRAFT (not yet considered by Roundtable)

**Minutes – Meeting of the Learning Roundtable
October 24, 2005**

October 24, 2005 – 15:30 – 17:30

Attendees:

Co-Chairs -

The Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier

The Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Education and Deputy Premier

<u>Partner</u>	<u>Representatives</u>
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils	Kim Howland Debbie Desroches-Fulton
BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association	Tom Hierck Les Dukowski
BC School Superintendents Association	Sheila Rooney Wendy Lee
BC School Trustees Association	Penny Tees Lee Southern
BC Teachers Federation	Jinny Sims Irene Lanzinger Susan Lambert Ken Novakowski
Ministry of Education	Emery Dossdall Rick Davis (recorder)

1. Premier Gordon Campbell called the meeting to order and offered introductory remarks.
 - Premier stated he was pleased to respond to Minister Bond's request to join the deliberations of the Learning Roundtable.
 - Premier stated he viewed this undertaking as an open partnership with all participants to explore new ideas and approaches to challenges facing public education.
 - Premier Campbell stated he knew each of the partners at this table shared a commitment to building a top quality public education system; if there were challenges posed by the current *School Act* then we need to work together to fix them.
 - Initially, he understood that class size and composition would be the focus of discussion but there was much more to talk about in the long term – many

factors impact the learning conditions of students – student health, teacher and student safety and other matters may be part of the deliberations.

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- Other meetings would be occurring with the BCTF directly regarding other aspects of the recommendations of Vince Ready. Some aspects of these discussions would be public and may inform the Learning Roundtable.
 - There is a need to be inclusive – reaching out to others, particularly First Nations and other groups not sitting at this table.
 - The Premier emphasized that he was looking for the commitment and cooperation of all at this table to achieve the goal of being the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction in North America.
 - The Premier committed to seeking appropriate resources within the constraints of the finances available to achieve the outcomes sought by the Roundtable.
 - Premier Campbell made a special point of acknowledging the participation of the BCTF, noting the tensions of the past weeks.
 - The Premier concluded his comments with his undertaking to keep the proceeding of the Roundtable transparent with a record of minutes approved by the table and publicly accessible.
2. Minister Bond welcomed the members of the Roundtable.
- Minister Bond affirmed the introductory remarks of the Premier.
 - Minister Bond confirmed her wish, apart from the proceeding of the Roundtable, to continue her earlier meeting with the BCTF at its offices to conclude the earlier agenda and visit the BCTF facilities.
 - In addition, the Minister signaled her intention to get first-hand knowledge of the circumstance in classrooms by visiting schools and teachers. Minister Bond and BCTF President Jinny Sims confirmed their intent to visit a school together.
 - Minister Bond underlined the great opportunity for learning together at the Roundtable and indicated that these sessions would be substantive, hard work and the participants were not gathered just to have a chat.
3. Each partner made an introductory statement.
- BCSTA – Penny Tees, President
 - The purpose of the table is to find ways to continue to improve student achievement.
 - We can do that best by finding ways to work together.
 - Conversations need to be deep and include all factors that affect student achievement – class size and class composition are important, but there are other issues as well.
 - The BCSTA is welcoming this challenge and looking forward to the dialogue.

- BCPVPA – Tom Hierck, President
 - BCPVPA regards this undertaking as an exciting challenge.
 - We look forward to hearing the views of others.
 - We need to answer questions like, “What are reasonable numbers of students in a class?”, “What factors need to be considered in organizing classes?” and “What is a reasonable funding base to support quality learning?”
 - Decisions are best made closest to their impact. Schools, teachers and principals have important roles in organizing for learning. It is important to consult broadly but principals have an important decision-making role.
 - Principals around the province have a great deal of interest in, and hope for, the work of this table.
 - Principals hope that this table will develop policies and procedures together with appropriate resources to provide quality learning.

- BCSSA – Sheila Rooney, President
 - BCSSA welcomes a discussion about learning; one that moves from students’ needs to how best to meet these needs.
 - The concept of the Roundtable is appealing – it implies that everyone has an important part to play – that each person’s contribution is valued.
 - A Roundtable brings people together that have a common cause – in this case, student learning.
 - Here we can have concrete conversations and reflective discussion based on evidence and information that we share – we can evaluate and analyze facts to make decisions.
 - Through these discussions we can renew public confidence in public education – this is positive modeling for those that watch us work together.

- BCTF – Jinny Sims, President
 - President Sims indicated she was pleased to be present at this discussion, optimistic and “heartened by the words of the Premier”. She indicated it would have been easy to decline to attend, but came as an “advocate of public education”.
 - President Sims outlined the stories she hears from teachers and the struggles faced in a modern classroom; a classroom that is more challenging than five years ago when she was in schools.
 - Some of the challenges were outlined.
 - The four-day week and the stress it brings to bear on teachers and students.
 - Crowded conditions in shops and laboratories.

- Limited support for included students with special needs
- Poor supplies of textbooks

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- Teachers spending their own money to equip classrooms
- (Later Ms. Sims returned to this theme to draw the Roundtable's attention to reduced support for learning by specialist teachers like librarians and counselors)
- BCCPAC – Kim Howland, President
 - Parents were “ecstatic and honored” to be included at this table. It was a sign of great progress in the way parents were included in meaningful discussions with the partners.
 - There is a need to study the real facts and circumstances of classrooms today – to come to agreement on the reality of public schools and move on from there.
 - It is important to hear what all the partners have to say.
 - The concept of Roundtable is welcomed, it is inclusive and we need to see the child at the centre of it.
 - BCCPAC hopes that through this table many of its resolutions, some dating back to 1993, will be addressed.
 - Parents are looking for information, but there is a generalized lack of trust. That trust needs to be rebuilt through working together.
 - We will lead by example if we can all sit at one table.

4. Premier Campbell

Thanked the members for their comments and drew attention to the performance of our current school system as very high performing. Although we seek to improve we need to remind ourselves that we have one of the best performing systems in the world.

5. Deputy Minister Dosdall

Confirmed the Premier's remarks regarding system performance. Dr. Dosdall noted that there are always difficult choices to be made – that we must be wise in the decisions we make to maintain high performance and system confidence.

6. Premier Campbell – Outlining Terms of Reference for the Learning Roundtable

- **Membership of Roundtable**
 - Co-Chairs – Premier and Minister of Education
 - 2 Representatives of BCSTA, BCCPAC, BCSSA, BCPVPA
 - 4 Representatives of BCTF
 - Ministry of Education – Deputy Minister, Secretariat

The following points resulted from discussion.

- Regular attendance at all meetings was important.
- Continuity in those attending and representing organizations was highly desirable. Partners were asked to have the same individual representatives that are approved annually.
- Terms for representatives will be consistent with the school year. New representatives should begin attending in July of each year when changes are made.
- BCTF will name its representatives after its next executive meeting.

- **Relationship to the Education Advisory Council (EAC)**
 - There is no change in the mandate, meeting schedule or work of EAC.
 - Discussions at EAC may inform the Roundtable.

- **Meetings**
 - Next meeting will be held within two to four weeks.
 - At the next meeting, a regular monthly meeting date will be set.

- **Recommendations**
 - A report from the Roundtable including recommendations will be made to the Minister each September or early October. This permits cost issues to be considered in Government's budget cycle.
 - Recommendations for allocation of \$20M available arising from the "Ready Recommendations" in the 2005/06 school year will emerge from the bilateral discussions between the BCTF and Government.
 - Decisions regarding the expenditure of the \$20M in 2005/06 will be made public and inform the discussions of the Roundtable.
 - Recommendations of the Learning Roundtable will be made available to the public.
 - Recommendations do not need to arise from consensus of all parties – that is, there is no obligation to come to agreement on each recommendation.
 - The Minister of Education has discretion respecting the disposition of recommendations.

- **Research**
 - Each of the partner groups has research capacity and stated a willingness to participate in research projects.

- There is a need for international and academic research to identify best practices throughout the world that hold promise for student learning in British Columbia.
- There is a need to look for “made-in-BC” solutions by researching and sharing best practice of what is working in BC now.

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- **Class size information**
 - Class size data have been received from school districts and reports are being finalized.
 - Reports will be reviewed at the Learning Roundtable. Any necessary revisions will be made, and the report will be made public.
- **Reporting Out**
 - Minutes will be taken by the secretariat and become the official record of the proceedings of the Roundtable.
 - Draft minutes will be sent to each member and approved at subsequent meetings of the Roundtable.
 - Once approved by the Roundtable, minutes will be made public.
 - Partners will report out to their members consistent with their established practice. Premier Campbell indicated he trusted that these reports would be in the spirit of the meetings and accurately reflect the proceedings.
- **Timing**
 - In response to a question respecting timing from BCTF representative Susan Lambert, the premier stated that the Roundtable is able to make recommendations for amendment to the *School Act* in time for introduction to the spring sitting of the legislature. If passed, these amendments could be implemented in the fall of 2006 or at some other time as decided by the legislature.

7. Undertakings arising from this meeting.

Secretariat will -

- Schedule next meeting of Learning Roundtable within three to four weeks at the Cabinet Offices in Vancouver.
- Provide participants with class size reports in advance of the next meeting.
- Seek input from participants on a regular date for ongoing meetings.
- Circulate draft minutes
- Develop and circulate an agenda, seeking input on agenda items from members.
- Confirm membership through to June 30, 2006 on Learning Roundtable.
- Begin to identify research/information needs of the Learning Roundtable.

Partners will -

- Confirm representatives for the balance of the school year at the next meeting.
- Submit research and information needs to Roundtable.