

Learning Roundtable Minutes
Friday, February 17
9:15 to 11:45
Premier's Vancouver Office

1. Call to order – Minister Bond

Welcome and introductions

- All regular members present (Premier Campbell joined in shortly after opening)
- Margaret Lipke, director, BCCPAC, was welcomed as record keeper

2. Approval of Agenda

Agenda amended as follows

- Approval of minutes
- Roundtable decision-making processes – BCPVPA
- Further analysis of class size data – BCSTA
- Class size and class composition legislation – BCTF
- District level/school level decision making and accountability – BCSTA
- Ministry's expanded mandate – BCSTA
- Administrative roles in class size decisions – BCSSA
- Students with Special Needs – BCCPAC
- BCCT Teacher's Registry – BCCPAC
- Other meeting locations – Ministry
- Invitations to Stake holders – Ministry

3. Approval of minutes of the meeting of December 5, 2005

Amendments were suggested. Revised minutes will be provided at the next meeting following a review of meeting notes.

4. Roundtable Decision making processes - Discussion

Extensive discussion of the impact of Roundtable communications to members, particularly communications by the BCTF to its members via **Issue Alert** occurred. The Premier reminded the Roundtable that this was not a decision-making body but one that would provide advice to the Premier and the Minister on matters relating to class size.

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- BCPVPA and BCCPAC expressed concern with the manner in which discussion had been characterized in BCTF **Issue Alert** publications to BCTF members. Concern was expressed that the communication practices may have an adverse effect on open dialogue.
- BCTF expressed the view that all members of the Roundtable should be accountable for their statements and prepared to justify their positions if asked.
- BCSSA underlined the need for respectful approaches that encourage dialogue – reports taken out of the context of discussion known to those at the Roundtable can be misleading.
- BCCPAC – Expressed concern that communications go out with a “spin” that is not helpful.
- BCSTA – Noted it was clear that some members felt they had been treated in a disrespectful manner in communications and that all members should learn from that and be prepared to move on.
- The Premier closed the discussion noting that it was important both what is reported and how it is reported. The Premier reminded Roundtable members the goal was to deliver better conditions for students.

5. **Other analysis and discussion of class size data**

- BCSTA – In order to make meaning out of the data – we have to look at it in connection with the other factors that affect learning. To leave it unexamined leaves the impression that class size and composition are all that is important. Where class sizes are quite low the best way to support learners may actually be to increase class size and provide alternate learning supports. There needs to be an in-depth look at class size in the context of everything else that affects student learning.
- BCSSA – Before we jump to solutions, we need to think more about factors effecting composition. It would be helpful to have a knowledgeable expert speak with all of us on this issue.
- BCTF – We have a substantial degree of experience in this room already. 38,000 teachers have identified with one voice that class size and composition is the issue. For us to suggest that there are other issues seems arrogant. How long are we going to consider this problem? 9,200 students over 30 are too large. Many special needs students are in those classrooms. If we can’t agree on this, what are we doing?

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- Minister Bond - I want to understand those 9,200 classes. I need to understand why 31 is too large and is it always too large? What about the thirty-first student in the Chemistry 12 class who otherwise would not be able to take Chemistry? Teachers have said to me that they are actually OK with this class of 31 in some cases.
- BCTF – What we are saying is that class size and composition is primary.
- Others comment that further analysis of the data and consideration of other variables would be helpful.
- BCTF – Expressed view that teachers are not involved in discussions of class size and composition in schools. Suggest that a well known researcher (Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl) may be asked to advise the Roundtable with research findings. Surely there is some number we should not go over and then we can talk about class composition.
- Minister – How do we really know whether teachers and parents are involved and consulted? We need to find out. We know as well that class size is less significant in some places than others and less significant than the teacher who is the most important factor.
- BCCPAC – Speaking to consultation. Parents are partners. Teachers are professional – Parents are repeatedly left out of the consultations and the IEPS. Parents can play a respectful and important role in being consulted about the programs of their children.
- BCTF – Raises question with respect to legislation and the timing for legislation to impact September 2006.
- Minister – The legislative window remains open, but the Minister and Premier are not at a place where there is a clear direction to take back to government for consideration. There are many options and much room for further discussion.
- BCTF - Asks that proposals/options be brought back to the table.
- Minister - Needs to hear more from the partners. I have not had concrete advice except the BCTF position – We have already said we will consider legislation. We made no promise that legislation would be brought forward. I will be very clear on the record that we did not guarantee legislation but it remains an option.
- Deputy Minister – Undertakes to look at a variety of options.
- Minister - Government does not have a position on class size and composition legislation at this time. There is a need to talk about potential ideas – we are coming back. We need more information and discussion of that information.

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- Others – further discussion regarding additional information and dialogue necessary to arrive a point where advice can be clear.

- Minister - How would you like to structure the next meeting? My staff will confirm the items and how we will proceed.
- BCTF – Expressed concern with the representation of the outcome of the Ministry/BCTF bilateral meeting. BCTF is not interested in spending weeks and months analyzing data. Legislative options are imperative. Lack of progress towards legislative options creates challenges for reporting back on Roundtable meetings. Member expectations are high.
- Minister - I will be reporting that we are looking at a number of options including the legislative option. We need more study and dialogue. The minutes of our previous meeting will be sent out with the next agenda as soon as a date is set.
- BCTF – Committed to provide secretariat with meeting schedule to avoid conflicts.

Meeting Adjourned.