

## **Class Size FAQs**

### **Why was class size removed from teacher collective agreements?**

- Every class, every school, every community is unique and has unique priorities. There is no magic number of students in a classroom.
- The ideal class size depends on who the students in the class are, who the teacher at the front of the class is, the additional resources that may be available to assist that teacher, and the subject matter being taught.
- It's important that discussions around class size take place at the school level and involve parents, teachers, principals and trustees – not just union and school district negotiators.
- We also believe there must be overall limits – and that's why we put class-size restrictions in the *School Act*.
- This balanced approach ensures school districts have the flexibility to meet the varied needs of students while recognizing the importance of class size.

### **Why don't you just return to having class sizes in collective agreements like the BCTF wants?**

- This government remains firmly committed to making sure class sizes are a matter for parents and the citizens of BC to decide rather than at the bargaining table. That's why we acted three years ago to put class sizes in the *School Act*.
- Enshrining class size in the *School Act* also has the added force of being a law. The BCTF position would see class sizes determined at the bargaining table, and parents and other educators do not have input in that process.

### **What are you doing about teachers' concerns over class size?**

- Government and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation have always agreed that class size is important and should be discussed.
- That's why we have invited education stakeholders to take part in a permanent learning roundtable to discuss class size and composition and other issues related to learning conditions in public schools.
- The roundtable will include representatives of the BCTF, the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, BC School Trustees Association, BC School Superintendents Association and the BC

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Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association. Participants will be invited to jointly develop terms of reference.

- Our government has also committed to hold an annual Teachers' Congress to invite classroom teachers and others from across BC to directly communicate with government.
- The Premier and I look forward to hearing directly from classroom teachers about issues such as class size at the Teachers' Congress.
- We also recently announced that all public schools are now required to report annually on class size.
- Starting this year, districts will be required to submit class-size data for each class in every school in their annual district accountability contracts and report this information publicly.
- School boards will be required to report class sizes to help ensure they are meeting existing legislation and so that parents and students will have easy access to class-size data about their school.

### **What do other provinces do about class sizes?**

- Class size is not a part of collective bargaining in five other provinces (Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, PEI, Newfoundland). In some cases, class sizes are a decision of school boards and in other cases there is some form of provincially legislated protection like we have in BC.

### **Aren't BC classes larger than ever?**

- In fact, average elementary class sizes have remained virtually unchanged for the past decade.
- Last year, there was an average of 23.2 students per elementary class – a slight decrease from the year previous.
- Since 2000/01 the average elementary class size in BC has increased by only .6 (zero-point-six) students – or less than one student.
- For the first time ever, class size has been put in legislation, with limits on individual classes and district-wide averages.
- No kindergarten class is allowed to have more than 22 students. No Grade 1-3 class is allowed to have more than 24 students.

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- District-wide class size averages must be no more than 19 students in kindergarten, 21 students in Grades 1-3, and 30 students in Grades 4-12.
- When rigid class-size limits were in contracts, if a class was even one student over it resulted in disruptions for children. Students were forced to attend different schools, courses were cancelled, and entire programs were eliminated.

### **Has removing class size from teacher contracts resulted in much larger classes and a lower quality of education?**

- Actually, BC's students are succeeding like never before.
- 79 per cent of students graduated last year – a B.C. record for the second year in a row.
- B.C. students are among the best in the world in math, reading and science, according to results from the 2003 International Student Assessment.
- B.C. students are among the best in Canada in science, according to results from the School Achievement Indicators Program in 2004. Only Alberta outperformed B.C.
- 74 per cent of Grade 10 students, up four per cent from 2003-04, and 34 per cent of Grade 12 students, up three per cent from last year, say they get exercise at school most or all of the time.
- The average elementary class size in B.C. schools declined last year, and we expect that decline to continue again this year.
- That's because school boards have made good use of the \$150-million increase in funding this year – hiring 1,600 additional teachers, education assistants and support staff, focusing on reducing class sizes and putting more resource into special needs supports and school libraries. All of this at a time when there are an estimated 6,700 fewer students this year than last year and 30,000 fewer than there were in 2000/2001.

### **Why must class size ratios be flexible?**

- The previous restrictions led to situations where going just one student over the 'imposed' limit might have meant:
  - Classes and/or entire schools had to be re-organized
  - Students had to be bussed away from their neighbourhood school; and,
  - Brothers and sisters were split up and sent to different schools

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- School boards and individual schools must have the flexibility to organize classes to meet students' needs.