

Information about Bill 11 and Teacher Professional Development

Teachers in BC are concerned that Bill 11 could limit professional development opportunities for teachers, and remove or restrict their autonomy over their professional development choices.

Background

Throughout the history of public education in BC, teachers have supported each other by creating and offering a wide variety of professional development (PD) opportunities. There currently exists a vibrant and responsive network of support for teacher-directed PD.

Members of the BC Teachers' Federation believe that

- Teachers have an ongoing responsibility to engage in professional development. This process of growth enables teachers, individually and collectively, to enhance their professional practice.
- Professional development plans must be guided by teachers' needs and those of their students.
- The most appropriate and effective professional development for teachers is only possible if they have the professional autonomy to choose it.
- Professional development must be adequately funded with the necessary supports to access it.
- The personalized, inquiry-based learning for students emphasized by the Ministry of Education in the new curriculum should be the same as that for teachers' professional learning.

Many teachers who provided PD activities in their district have had their positions reduced or cut completely. Inequities in the province include access to PD resources between rural and urban areas.

Current BCTF support for professional development in BC

The BCTF supports and delivers professional development for all BC teachers through:

- more than 30 Professional Specialists Associations and their learning communities
- PSA Chapter and Local Specialist Association activities throughout the province
- programs developed by local PD chairs, encouraging reflective self-directed PD
- the BCTF workshop program offering a wide range of PD all over the province.

Concerns about Bill 11

Bill 11 is a manufactured solution for a non-existent problem. A government-mandated approach to professional development that focuses on compliance and validation from external bodies does little to support teacher professional learning. Considerable unnecessary costs would be incurred developing the bureaucracy needed to administer this imposed top-down, "one-size-fits-all" model, a model both ineffective and uninformed by the actual needs of classrooms.

Teachers already take part in a minimum of 25 hours of professional development per year, so it is difficult to understand the need for more regulations. Many BC teachers have degrees and qualifications beyond certification requirements, often achieved through weekend and summer courses. Compulsory types or hours of professional development does not encourage meaningful professional learning.

The Ministry says there will be an extensive two year consultation process about Bill 11 and professional development. Teachers hope that these discussions will deal with the real needs of teachers and students, rather than imposing an expensive and ineffective process on an already stretched system.