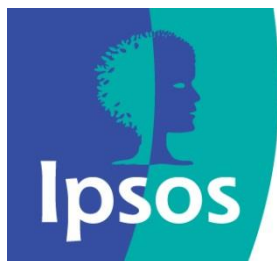


# NEITHER SIDE IS WINNING THE BATTLE FOR PUBLIC OPINION IN BC TEACHERS' DISPUTE

*Public and Parents Disapprove of Actions of Both BCTF and  
Provincial Government*

*Neither Side is Seen as Caring About the Best Interests of  
Students*

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**Ipsos Reid**

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**Vancouver, BC** – A new Ipsos Reid poll shows a lack of support among both the BC general public and public school parents for either side in the ongoing teachers' dispute.

### **More Fair and Reasonable**

BC teachers have a slight edge in overall public opinion as to which side in the dispute is being more fair and reasonable. Currently, 39% of British Columbians think BC teachers (represented by BCTF) have been more fair and reasonable in the contract dispute. This is only 5 percentage points ahead of the 34% who think the provincial government (represented by BCPSEA) has been more fair and reasonable. Other British Columbians do not view either side as being more fair and reasonable in these contract negotiations. Nearly one-quarter (23%) say 'neither' side has been more fair and reasonable, 2% say 'both' sides have been equally fair and reasonable, and 3% are undecided.

Parents of children in the public school system are even more closely divided as to which side is being more fair and reasonable, with 35% selecting the provincial government and 33% selecting BC teachers.

- There is a gender gap in perceptions of which side is being more fair and reasonable. Women choose BC teachers by 15-points over the provincial government (42% to 27%). Men slightly favour the provincial government over BC teachers (41% to 35%).

### **Approval of Dispute Participants**

British Columbians are split in their perceptions of the actions of BC teachers in general during this contract dispute. Overall, a slim majority (52%) approve of the actions of BC teachers in general, while nearly half (45%) disapprove. The margin is even tighter among parents, with 48% approving and 50% disapproving of the actions of BC teachers in general.

The BCTF does not get the same level of approval as BC teachers in general. About four-in-ten (39%) British Columbians approve of the BCTF's actions during this dispute, while six-in-ten (59%) disapprove. The results are more negative among parents, with only 31% approving and 68% disapproving of the actions of the BCTF.

The provincial government overall does a little worse than the BCTF among the public as a whole, with the approval of 34% of British Columbians against disapproval of 63%. Among parents, however, the provincial government's numbers are very close to the BCTF's numbers, with 33% of parents approving and 66% disapproving of their actions.

- There is a gender gap on all of these questions. Women are more likely than men to approve of the actions of BC teachers in general (57% of women vs. 48% of men) and the BCTF (42% of women vs. 35% of men). Men are more likely than women to approve of the actions of the provincial government overall (41% of men vs. 27% of women).

## **Caring About the Best Interests of Students**

British Columbians do not think either side in this dispute has demonstrated that it cares about the best interests of students.

Four-in-ten (41%) British Columbians agree that the BCTF has demonstrated that it cares about the best interests of students, while nearly six-in-ten (57%) disagree with this assertion. The results are even more negative among parents, with only 34% agreeing that the BCTF has shown it cares about the best interests of students and 66% disagreeing.

As poor as the results are for the BCTF, they are even worse for the provincial government. Only 22% of British Columbians agree that the provincial government has demonstrated that it cares about the best interests of students, while three-quarters (75%) disagree. The assessment of the provincial government is about the same among parents (25% agree vs. 74% disagree).

- Women are more likely than men to agree that the BCTF has demonstrated that it cares about the best interests of students (47% of women vs. 35% of men). Men are more likely than women to agree that the provincial government has demonstrated that it cares about the best interests of students (28% of men vs. 17% of women).

## **Views of Possible Provincial Government Actions to End Dispute**

There is public support for the BCTF's offer of binding arbitration. Nearly six-in-ten (58%) British Columbians say they would approve of the provincial government accepting the BCTF's offer of binding arbitration, while nearly four-in-ten (38%) would disapprove. Parents are more evenly split on this idea, with 51% approving and 46% disapproving of the provincial government accepting the offer of binding arbitration.

Only about one-third (34%) of British Columbians say they would approve of the provincial government legislating an end to the dispute by imposing a contract on teachers. More than six-in-ten (62%) would disapprove of an imposed settlement. Parents are a little more supportive of an imposed settlement, but a majority still disapprove of the idea (42% approve vs. 55% disapprove).

- Women are more likely than men to approve of binding arbitration (69% of women vs. 46% of men).

### **Students Back in School**

There is not a lot of optimism that students will be back in school this month. Only three-in-ten (30%) British Columbians think public school students will be back in school either by mid September (8%) or late September (22%). Other expectations include early October (26%), mid October (20%) and late October or later (14%). Ten percent have no opinion.

Expectations among parents are about the same as the overall public, with only 26% expecting students back in school before the end of September.



*These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll of 1,028 adult British Columbians conducted online using Ipsos Reid's national online household panel between September 8 and 10, 2014. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and sex composition reflects that of the actual BC population according to 2011 Census data. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within +/- 3.5 percentage points had all British Columbia adults been surveyed. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.*

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**For more information on this news release, please contact:**

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