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604-341-0197

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PUBLIC BOARD MEETING – APRIL 24, 2012

Last month, our Board passed a motion asking the Minister of Education and Premier to delay the passage of Bill 22 and to appoint a mediator, with no restrictions on their mandate, to work toward resolving the current labour dispute with teachers. Unfortunately, Bill 22 was passed on March 15, thus seriously threatening the prospects of a fair and negotiated settlement. As well, the Government appointed Dr. Charles Jago, a relatively unknown commodity, to work his magic and try to accomplish what very few have been able to do in the past.

The appointment of Dr. Jago has raised many concerns both inside and outside the B.C. Teachers Federation. While an experienced educational administrator, the “optics” of him being an impartial third party just aren’t there. Although downplayed by Education Minister George Abbott, the facts show an individual with little to no mediation experience ... someone who has done work for the Liberal government in the past ... and someone who has even donated to Liberal Party fundraisers. It has now been admitted that Dr. Jago had been approached about taking on this job more than a month prior to his appointment and was then given a “sneak peek” at Bill 22 while it was being prepared. Even the most trusting among us can’t say that eyebrows weren’t raised even a tiny bit. That is not what this process needs.

I’m sure that Dr. Jago is a well-meaning and generally good man, so I hope I am wrong, but it’s not a good start to making for a better education system in our Province. My fear is that six months from now, we’ll have gained little, the Government will “save the day” and do what’s been done so many times in the past and legislate a contract, and we’ll have lost another opportunity to move forward.

Dr. Jago is not the right person for this very important job ... **IF** the goal is to create a trusting and fair environment in order to engage in meaningful dialogue to work toward a settlement. At this point, assurances of impartiality by the Government and Dr. Jago just don’t cut it ... and the teachers, administrators, parents and students of our Province will be the ones who will suffer.

Larry Hayes
Board Chair / Trustee
Burnaby Board of Education SD41