



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Liberal privatization agenda: CUPE conference examines the risks to public education

VANCOUVER—Well-known Canadian educator Heather-jane Robertson will present the keynote address opening CUPE BC's education conference *Defending Public Education* in Vancouver at 8:00 p.m., Thursday evening. The conference continues through Saturday, November 20.

Robertson's presentation will focus on the conference theme, which is the impact of privatization on public education in B.C.

On Friday and Saturday, conference delegates will meet in sectoral groups to discuss how privatization is affecting all aspects of public education in BC—from K-12 to post-secondary and to develop strategies for defending public education in the lead up to the provincial election.

"Government funding of public education in BC purports to be increasing," says Barry O'Neill, president of CUPE BC. "However, on close examination it is clear that real funding of education in BC, like social services and health has declined under the Liberals. As with health care the education sector is extremely vulnerable to Liberal privatization schemes."

Guest panellists will include Robert Chisolm from Nova Scotia where there has been an intense battle to thwart privatization in K-12, Heather-jane Robertson who brings in a pan Canadian perspective and from BC, Robert Cliff, representing the Coalition for Public Education.

On Saturday, November 20, CUPE BC will launch a new one hundred and thirty page book entitled *BC School Watch: Examining the fine print in K-12 education*.

The book examines the Liberal legacy of cuts in K-12 funding and compares the results in BC to date with jurisdictions throughout Canada and the U.S.



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Information: Barry O'Neill, CUPE BC President, 604-916-8444 or Louise Leclair, CUPE Communications, 604-454-4711.

Heather-jane Robertson specializes in exploring the relationship between education reforms and the social, economic and political environments that shape them.

Her career in education has included classroom teaching, working for a provincial teachers' organization and serving as director of professional development for the Canadian Teachers' Federation. Ms. Robertson was named as 'a distinguished educator' of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and has also received the Teacher of the Year Award from the Canadian College of Teachers.

With co-author Maude Barlow, in 1994 she wrote the best-seller *Class Warfare: The Assault on Canada's Schools*. Her second book, *No More Teachers, No More Books* deals with the effects of the convergence of slashed budgets, globalization, technology and commercialization on education. She has contributed chapters to another half dozen books, many articles to professional journals and since 1998 she has written the controversial column "In Canada" for the US-based *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine. Her opinions are sought out frequently by media, academics and community activists.

She has run as a federal election candidate, performed a leading role in a theatre production in Ottawa, writes humour (under a pseudonym, of course) and is a regular on a weekly political talk-radio program.

In between, she writes for and consults to a number of organizations, and acts as National Vice-President of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. She serves on the Boards of *The Polaris Institute*, the e-magazine *StraitGoods*, and the education journal, *Our Schools / Our Selves*. Her most recent adventure was back-packing in Peru.

She lives in Ottawa, and implores you not to hold that against her.