



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Privatization could be coming to a school near you

VANCOUVER—Discussions among Fraser Valley School Districts aimed at finding more ways to compensate for provincial under-funding have been excluding stakeholders in the K-12 sector including senior staff, support staff, teachers and parents. CUPE BC has learned that talks originally planned for last Thursday, November 18 will now take place during the course of the BC School Trustees Associations' Academy schedule for early December.

The proposals under discussion could result in the privatization of as many as 2000 K-12 support staff jobs in the Fraser Valley. The planned secret meeting of members of the Fraser Valley School Districts was scuttled after word of the meeting was mistakenly sent to the BC Federation of Labour.

"Once the secret meeting was cancelled the Chair of the Maple Ridge school district seems to have covered the tracks of secrecy by advising the Vancouver Sun of discussions via a brief community report of the discussions," says CUPE BC president, Barry O'Neill. The Sun reported on it Saturday as though it was simply community news, not the threatening news that is really is."

But here is just one paragraph from documents obtained by the BC Federation of Labour on the subject of the development of a School District Corporation (SDC) being touted by Fraser Valley district representatives.

"This is not a topic to add to your normal meeting agenda. It is further recommended that trustees and boards participating in this meeting refrain from engaging their respective staff in any discussions about this topic."

O'Neill expresses concern that "The loss of as many as many as 2000 support staff jobs in the K-12 sector would have a devastating effect on the economy of those communities, not to mention the learning conditions for children and students from Kindergarten to Grade 12."

The CUPE BC president wants to know why Fraser Valley trustees are attempting to implement a plan from behind closed doors. It is he suggests, "A plan which they've (trustees) known from the beginning is opposed by many of the people they have hired to run the districts and give them advice on matters of education, finance and maintenance."

The clandestine discussions also raise the question as to whether this agenda originates with these particular school districts or from Victoria. "What are the origins of this plan?" says O'Neill. "Do school trustees now plan to become School District Corporation board members?"

A summary and analysis of the "secret" documents will be available on the CUPE BC website at <http://www.cupe.bc.ca>.



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