

For Immediate Release
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Why is Government looking for a Fight with its Unions In Post-secondary Education?

“Bill 18, the Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, tabled without any consultation on November 3rd, is either an admission of incompetence or a direct attack on the union association rights of faculty throughout BC,” said Frank Cosco the president of the Vancouver Community College Faculty Association. “Since 1995, four of our seven faculty reps on the Board of VCC, including myself, would not have been able to serve on the VCC Board under this legislation.”

Amongst other provisions, Bill 18 would immediately remove from the Board of VCC and similar institutions any faculty member who serves as a bargainer, steward, or on their union’s executive. All boards consist of a majority of government-appointed members and a minority of elected members from students, staff and faculty. All faculty and staff in the province’s colleges are unionized.

What’s the Problem?

“Such a draconian measure presumes an irresolvable conflict where there is none. Under current practices and rules, elected members routinely remove themselves from discussions and votes when there’s a conflict. Conflicts of interest should be narrowly defined as personal advantages related to college contracts, financial, or personnel matters. If they want to define these faculty union roles as such inherent conflicts that removal is justified, then they have to define all government-appointed members as also being in an inherent, unavoidable conflict. It’s unheard of for an appointed member to vote against a college budget because the government has not provided adequate funding. They know they would be removed before the next meeting,” added Cosco.

“Boards should be resourced and skilled enough to handle such infrequent issues as conflicts of interest. To go to this simplistic scorched-earth solution that makes it more difficult for informed, resourced members of the college community to serve just demonstrates the brittle -- ‘with us or against us’ -- attitude of this government. The Supreme Court of Canada had to educate the BC Liberals about the rights of other unions in BC, let’s hope they realize that there are other ways to deal with whatever it is they think is problematic,” said Cosco.

Amend Bill 18

“The VCCFA has written Advanced Education Minister Yamamoto and asked her to amend the parts of Bill 18 that attack our rights. We hope she takes that advice. She does not need to provoke a fight that the system does not need,” concluded Cosco.

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