

Teachers strike: support for government, union tied; BC parents resigned to no school Tuesday

89% respondents say it's unlikely both sides will reach a deal by Sept 2nd

August 29, 2014 – A softening of public support for teachers in the ongoing labour dispute between the BC Teachers' Federation and the BC Government now puts backing for both sides in a virtual tie with days to go before the scheduled start of the new school year.

These are the findings of a new survey, commissioned and paid for by Angus Reid Global, that also show British Columbians have little hope for a deal before schools are supposed to open Tuesday September 2nd, and show parents making alternate plans.

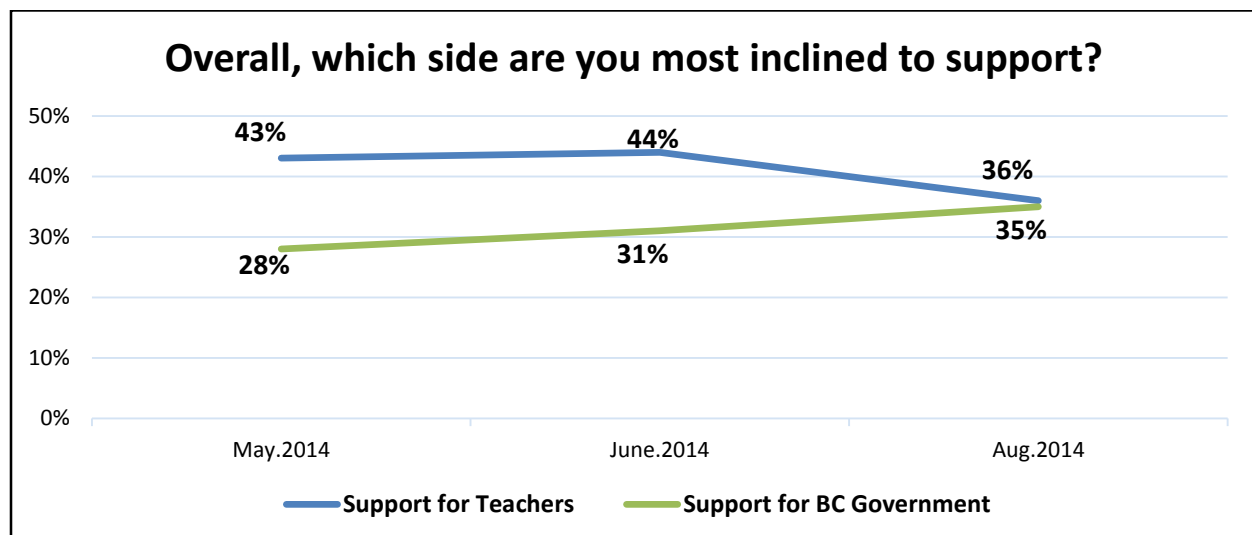
Support:

The online survey shows 36 per cent of respondents are most inclined to support teachers in the dispute while 35 per cent back the BC Government. One-quarter (23%) say they support neither side. Support for teachers among parents or direct caregivers to children in school is also split, with 38 per cent taking the teachers' side over government's (34%). This represents a softening of support for teachers among parents/caregivers from an earlier [ARG poll conducted in June](#), when they said they supported teachers two-to-one over government (49% to 25%).

METHODOLOGY:

Angus Reid Global (ARG) conducted an online survey among 800 randomly selected BC adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists on August 27-28, 2014. A probability sample of this size carries a margin of error of +/- 3.5%, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

Detailed charts, tables and regional results are found at the end of this release.



MEDIA CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Vice President, Angus Reid Global: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angus-reid.com @shachikurl

Wages:

Consistent with findings from June, most respondents (46%) want both sides to compromise on wage negotiations, while 42 per cent say teachers are asking for too much money, and 12 per cent say the government offer is too low.

The latter marks a definite shift in opinion over the summer. In June, 36 per cent felt teachers were seeking too much, and one-fifth (21%) felt government was low-balling its offer.

Class size and composition:

There is also a noticeable shift in opinion on the other key bargaining issue in this dispute: the size and student-teacher makeup - or composition - of individual classes. This decade-old issue has included orders by the courts to restore previous class size and composition requirements. The BC Government is appealing the latest court ruling, arguing the costs involved in restoring previous standards are too high.

In June, nearly two-thirds (62%) of all respondents said the BC Government should “fund the education system in the way the court has ruled”, while two-in-five respondents (38%) said the “BC Government is right to appeal the court decision.” Today, opinion is more evenly split, with 55 per cent saying government should obey the courts, and 45 per cent supporting the decision to appeal.

No hope for a deal:

The latest numbers also clearly indicate that British Columbians - including those with kids in school – have little faith in a settlement between both sides by September 2nd. Fully 89 per cent say it’s unlikely the BCTF and the BC Government will reach an agreement by Tuesday. 11 per cent believe an agreement in the next 96 hours will be achieved.

Impact on families, alternative plans:

When asked about the expected impact a looming strike would have on parents and their families, half (51%) said the job action would have an impact, but they would be able to manage around it, while about a third (29%) said the strike would have a “major” impact, and one-fifth (20%) said the strike would have “not much impact” on them.

In terms of length of strike, most respondents with children in public school say they can manage for as long as it takes (41%) while roughly one-fifth (17%) each say they can manage a few days or a few weeks. Eight per cent say they’re already at a breaking point and can’t manage.

Among parents who indicate they will need to make alternate plans for childcare, most say they’ll rely on friends and family, or haven’t quite figured out what to do to yet.

The BC Government has said it will make available a \$40 per day, per child payment for parents under the age of 13 to offset the costs of alternative child care. However, public sentiment towards this gesture is dismissive: 39 per cent of parents - and 37 per cent of respondents overall - describe the gesture as a genuinely helpful offer for parents, while 61 per cent of parents - and 63 per cent of respondents overall - believe the government is playing politics with the offer.

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How should the dispute be resolved?

Respondents are almost evenly split on three possible ways to resolve the dispute. One-quarter (26%) say both sides should go back to the bargaining table and negotiate. 28 per cent say a mediator should be involved (mediator Vince Ready began discussions between both sides this week) while one-quarter support arbitration. 16 per cent say teachers should be ordered back to work through legislation.

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Detailed tables are on the following pages.

Overall, which side are you most inclined to support in this dispute between the teachers and the BC Government?						
	August 2014			June 2014		
	Total	Have children in school	No children in school	Total	Have children in school	No children in school
Teachers	36%	38%	36%	44%	49%	41%
The BC Government	35%	34%	36%	31%	25%	34%
Neither	23%	23%	23%	22%	24%	21%
Don't know/Can't say	5%	6%	5%	3%	2%	4%

Overall, who do you blame for this dispute between the teachers and the BC Government being dragged out over the summer and threatening the start of a new school year?			
	Total	Have children in school	No children in school
Teachers	38%	37%	39%
The BC Government	39%	44%	37%
Neither	8%	8%	8%
Don't know/can't say	14%	10%	16%

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How likely or unlikely do you think it is that the BC Government and BCTF will reach an agreement by the time schools are scheduled to open on September 2nd?

	Total	Have children in school	No children in school
Highly likely	1%	3%	1%
Likely	10%	10%	10%
Unlikely	49%	42%	52%
Highly unlikely	40%	45%	37%

Based on what you've seen or heard so far, what impact has this labour dispute had on you and your family?

	Have children in school		
	Late August	Early June	Late May
Major impact on us	29%	19%	17%
Impact, but we managed around it	51%	53%	62%
Not much impact at all	20%	28%	21%

If this strike continues into this new school year, what is your immediate plan, if any, for child care?

	What impact will this have on your family			
	Total	Major Impact	Impact but we can manage	Not much impact
The kids are older/I don't need child care	43%	32%	42%	62%
I'm not sure at this point	22%	21%	26%	10%
I'll try to leave the kids with family or friends	19%	16%	19%	25%
The kids will be enrolled in day camps or other child care services	10%	15%	10%	2%
I'll have to take time off work	6%	15%	3%	0
I'll have to bring the kids to work	1%	2%	0	0

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How long do you think you and your family can manage the impact of a teachers strike heading into this new school year?				
	What impact will the teachers strike have on your family			
	Total	Major Impact	Impact but we can manage	Not much impact
Can't manage, we are already at a breaking point	8%	25%	1%	0
A few days to a week	17%	35%	13%	4%
A few weeks	17%	7%	28%	3%
A few months	4%	6%	5%	1%
We can manage for as long as it takes	41%	9%	44%	83%
Don't know/can't say	12%	19%	9%	10%

The BC Government has announced it will provide \$40 per day per each child under the age of thirteen to assist with child care costs during the dispute in the new school year. Which statement best describes your view about this:			
	Total	Have children in school	No children in school
This is a genuinely helpful offer for parents	37%	39%	37%
The government is just trying to play politics	63%	61%	63%

Which of the following best describes how you feel about the issue of teachers' wages?						
	August 2014			June 2014		
	Total	Have children in school	No children in school	Total	Have children in school	No children in school
The teachers are asking for too much money	42%	41%	42%	36%	35%	37%
The BC government wage offer is too low	12%	14%	11%	21%	25%	19%
The two sides should compromise on the issue of wages	46%	45%	46%	43%	40%	44%

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Which statement best describes how you feel about the BC Government challenging the court's decision ordering it to restore past class size and composition standards and funding?						
	August 2014			June 2014		
	Total	Have children in school	No children in school	Total	Have children in school	No children in school
The BC Government is right to appeal the court decision, there's no way taxpayers should pay so much to meet these former standards.	45%	42%	46%	38%	34%	40%
The BC Government should respect the previous court decision and fund the education system the way the court has ruled.	55%	58%	54%	62%	66%	60%

At this point, how do you think the issue between the BCTF and the BC Government should be resolved?			
	Total	Have children in school	No children in school
Mediation (intervention of a third party mediator)	28%	22%	30%
Both sides need to get back to the table and negotiate an agreement	26%	28%	25%
Binding arbitration (a third party imposes a deal)	25%	28%	24%
The government should order the teachers back to work	16%	15%	16%

Angus Reid Global is headed by Dr. Angus Reid, Canada's best known and longest practicing pollster. He's spent more than four decades asking questions about what people feel, how they think and who they will vote for. He is supported by a team of practitioners conducting high quality research for corporations, governments and non-profit organizations.

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