

by
Bruce L. Anderson
CEO, BCPSEA



BCPSEA's new CEO Bruce L. Anderson reflects on his return to the public service, the challenges of the pandemic, and how BCPSEA is moving forward

I have not been disappointed since I joined BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) six months ago. I see my new CEO appointment as an exciting and challenging opportunity to be working for the K-12 public education sector. I look forward to working with all key stakeholders to ensure a positive, rewarding, engaging, and productive human resources and labour relations environment.

As the new CEO, my job is to help leadership in school districts manage and support their teachers, staff, and school communities through effective human resources and labour relations services. My job is about people: the people that work hard every single day to make the K-12 sector the best education system possible. It is about people whose dedication to student success is truly inspiring. People like you – the Principals and Vice-Principals who ensure students and staff are thriving, while upholding educational priorities and goals.

I have worked for a number of public and private organizations, and have seen many people with great passion and commitment. The devotion and heart in the public education system in BC is second to none. My career includes 13 years in the post-secondary education sector. I was Manager of Employee Relations at the University of Guelph, Director of Employee Relations and Employment Services at the University of Alberta, and Executive Director of Human Resources for Simon Fraser University. I then moved to municipal work as the Executive Director of Human Resources for the City of Toronto. Finally, just prior to joining BCPSEA, I worked in the private sector for the Corix Group of Companies. Corix is a North American community-based water utility company that is owned 100% by the BC Investment Management Corporation (BCI), which manages most of BC's public sector pension investments. I worked there first as Chief Human Resources Officer and

then as Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer. My new position with BCPSEA is a great opportunity to return to the public service and apply my knowledge and experience for the advancement of a progressive and rewarding education sector.

I have joined the K-12 sector at a very challenging time. COVID-19 has impacted everyone's work, schooling, and personal lives. The challenges of the pandemic have placed additional strains on people's well-being and mental health. However, despite the circumstances, employees in K-12 have remained focused on ensuring students continue to receive high-quality education.

For you, as the ones who lead your school communities, the pandemic has not been easy. There wasn't a step-by-step guide for what to do. You have been juggling new health orders; restructuring schools, new school district processes, and teaching channels; educating and working with your employees through constant changes; answering hundreds of parent questions; and going above and beyond to keep students safe. Across the K-12 sector, Principals and Vice-Principals, along with teachers, support staff, management, and parents, have stepped up to ensure the success of the education system. I think everyone should stand up and take a bow!

Moving forward, we know that COVID is not over and that it has permanently impacted our work and lives. We know a post-COVID world will be different, but we have learned from our experiences, and BC is a vibrant community that has shown how it can adapt and change to meet any challenge. We also know that the resilience of the K-12 public education sector has been a beacon. We are confident that when the storm breaks, we will come out stronger and brighter. This recognition of current uncertainty, yet optimism for the future, will underpin BCPSEA's strategic planning

and work over our future together. We will continue to recognize the challenges employers and staff in the sector are facing, while also looking for ways that we can assist them. While I am not an educator, I will do my part to help put in place human resources initiatives and labour relations services that support the work and its success.

The latest round of bargaining has just begun this month with local teacher bargaining. Provincial teacher bargaining and support staff bargaining will begin in March 2022. Our teams are hard at work assisting employers to navigate and lead these processes.

We continue to support school district leadership with various human resources and labour relations training opportunities (ONCORE). Based on feedback from school districts, we have adjusted several of the advanced learning series courses to better align with virtual delivery. Our popular hands-on Collective Bargaining Academy course remains in-person, with six sessions scheduled from October to January at various locations across the province.

Through the Workplace Health Promotion initiative, BCPSEA provides a district-centered provincial framework for school districts to enhance their efforts for improving the health and well-being of employees. We are working to enhance mental health supports for BC K-12 employees through identification of virtual mental health care options and delivery of mental health awareness training for leaders.

We have been working with leadership from WorkSafeBC – in partnership with the BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association, BC Teachers' Federation, CUPE, BC School Superintendents Association, and School Safety Association of BC – on workplace violence prevention. Through a working group, a number of documents and tools were created that will assist the K-12 education sector with workplace violence prevention and compliance. A new website section has been created on the BCPSEA website regarding workplace violence prevention: bit.ly/BCPSEA_OHS

School districts receive ongoing human resources and labour relations services through our direct support and liaison with our Coordinated Legal & Arbitration Support Services (CLASS).

Make a Future is hard at work helping school districts recruit employees. Recruitment advertising support has seen a 53% increase in service requests compared to last year. Two part-time Bilingual Recruitment Managers have been recently hired for a French teacher recruitment campaign. Make a Future's Sustainable Workforce Steering Committee is conducting an environmental scan regarding diversity and inclusion as part of a diversity project.

Just as schools are focusing on equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging, so are we. We are committed to helping the school system be a welcoming and caring place for everyone. We are equally committed to Reconciliation, with diversity and decolonization training planned this school year for the entire BCPSEA team.

While the work described above is but a highlight of the efforts underway at BCPSEA, I hope they demonstrate that our overall purpose is to support the K-12 public education sector to thrive. We are here to help school districts and their leadership with best-practice expertise in human resources and labour relations. Our work connects what is happening in schools with the Ministry of Education's goals.

I am humbled and honoured to be a small piece of this meaningful and impactful sector. K-12 public education is admirable and shapes our society in profound ways. Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself. I look forward to meeting many of you virtually and in person.

Bruce Anderson holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Alberta, and a Master of Arts in Labor and Industrial Relations from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He also holds his professional designation as a Certified Human Resources Executive (CHRE).



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BCPSEA is a full service employers' association and is the accredited bargaining agent for the province's 60 public boards of education, for unionized teaching and support staff in the British Columbia K-12 public education system.

BCPSEA provides a full range of human resource services with a focus on the development, coordination and facilitation of human resources best practices.