



**BC Association
for Community Living**

Supporting people with developmental disabilities and their families

For Immediate Release

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Coalition Calls for Halt on Proposed Limit of Students with Special Needs in Classrooms

Members of the Coalition for Special Education call on the BC government to remove from Bill 33 the limit on the number of students with special needs in classrooms, and engage in meaningful dialogue with community groups to address classroom learning issues. Members of the Coalition met today at the BC Association for Community Living to discuss the implications of Bill 33 amendments to the BC School Act.

The bill proposes that no more than three students with special needs who have an individual education plan can be placed in a classroom, unless the principal and the school district superintendent approve and the teacher is consulted.

Coalition members are concerned that the legislation targets one group of students, while failing to address the many factors that influence classroom learning. They agree that schools face challenges teaching a wide diversity of learners, but the answer is not to limit the participation of one category of students in classrooms. “Kids are not the problem – they are our future,” said Linda Hughes of the Learning Disabilities Association of BC. “The problem is lack of funding and supports for students with a range of learning needs.”

To achieve optimum conditions in classrooms, say Coalition members, the government must fund the necessary resources, staff supports and professional training that would ensure that all students, whether identified as having special learning needs or not, have the best possible educational opportunities among their peers in neighbourhood schools.

Not only will dictating class composition fail to address the complex needs of students, but implementing the proposed limit will create an administrative nightmare for schools. There are now 11,000 classrooms in BC where there are more than three students with individual education plans, and up to 55,000 students whose access to education could be affected.

“Last year, this government made a commitment to create the best system of supports for people with disabilities in Canada,” said Clair Schuman of Autism Community Training. “We urge government to remove the limit on students with special needs from the legislation, and begin a meaningful dialogue with community members about how to achieve that goal in our schools. Parents and advocates for students with special needs have been excluded from any discussion about this legislation. We’re prepared to look at solutions, but we need to be at the table with government,” said Schuman.

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Coalition members will be communicating their concerns directly to the Minister of Education and to MLAs, and urging their individual members to do the same.

Members of the Coalition for Special Education include:

- BC Association for Community Living
- Autism Community Training
- Learning Disabilities Association of BC
- Special Needs Adoptive Parents
- Family Network for Deaf Children
- Gifted Children's Association of BC
- Family Support Institute

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