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### Teachers' strike vote underway

Last Updated: Jun 7 2006 09:09 AM PDT

B.C.'s 38,000 unionized teachers have begun casting ballots in a strike vote that could shut down the province's public school system this fall.

- FROM JUNE 2, 2006: [Teachers' strike plans detailed in leak](#) 

The strike vote is being held Wednesday and Thursday by the B.C. Teachers' Federation, even as the contract talks between union and management negotiators continue.

The BCTF is seeking a 24-per-cent raise over three years. The B.C. Public School Employers' Association is offering eight per cent over four years.

- LINK: [BCTF background on negotiations](#)  

Union president Jinny Sims told CBC Radio on Wednesday that the government's own studies show teachers' salaries in B.C. are 20 per cent lower than in other provinces.

"When we tabled our position, we took the 20 per cent that that research had shown, because we didn't want to get into arguing numbers during this round of bargaining," she said. "We added four per cent for inflation, because, remember, this contract is going to cover another three years.

"We feel it's perfectly reasonable, but it is our opening position,"

- LINK: [B.C. Public School Employers' Association report on bargaining \(.pdf\)](#)  

Ron Christensen, the chair of the B.C. Public School Employers' Association, agrees that B.C. teachers aren't the best paid in the country, but said the BCTF demand is not affordable.

"Our teachers sit third if you average the salaries across the provinces, and they're going to continue to be well paid. There's no rule that says they have to be the best paid," he told CBC Radio.

"They really want a lot. They want a tonne. And you know, it takes a mighty big dog to crap a ton, and we don't have that big a dog."

- INTERVIEW: [The Early Edition's Rick Cluff speaks with BCTF president Jinny Sims, and with Ron Christensen, the chair of the B.C. Public School Employers' Association.](#)  

Results from the teachers' vote are expected Friday.

The BCTF went out on strike last fall, shutting schools down for two weeks. That strike was ruled illegal, and the teachers went back to work in an agreement worked out by mediator Vince Ready.

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