

B.C teachers' strike: parents to get \$40 a day if strike continues ^[1]

Finance Minister Mike de Jong says cash will come from savings during ongoing strike

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EXCERPTS

The B.C. government is offering the parents of each public school student under the age of 13 years \$40 a day if the provincial teachers' strike is not over by the start of classes in September.

Finance Minister Mike de Jong announced Thursday the cash will be paid using savings made from not having to pay teachers during the strike.

The program will cost the government about \$12 million a day, which is about the same amount of money it costs to run the school system, said de Jong.

De Jong says parents will be able to claim their \$40 per day per child through a website set up by the provincial government and may use the money however they see fit.

"There are costs that occur to families and parents when their children aren't where they should be, which is in school," said De Jong.

"Parents can utilize that money to acquire tutoring for their children, they can use the money to explore other educational opportunities as they see fit and for some parents, it'll be basic daycare."

De Jong said the government would pay out the money quickly, possibly in early October, although he hoped the contingency plan wouldn't be needed and a settlement would be forthcoming.

"The message I hope that's being conveyed is that there is a requirement, there is a need to end this recurring trend of not negotiating agreements."

De Jong said he hoped the move would help end the teachers' strike without legislation and accepted partial responsibility for the fact governments he had been a part of had "perhaps moved too quickly to use legislative tools to impose agreements."

"I think the BCTF has come to expect that, and it has characterized and influenced the relationship in negative ways," said the minister.

"It's time as parties, parties representing the public, parties representing teachers, that we sit down and hammer out a negotiated agreement."

De Jong said the government deemed students older than 13 ineligible for the payments because the province considers they are more able to access online or other educational resources and do not need as much supervision as younger children.

"This announcement from the government to strip education funding from B.C. students is a blatant and divisive attempt to prolong disruption in B.C. schools," said Iker.

"This scheme will not help improve class sizes, increase support for children with special needs, or provide more one-on-one time for all students."

"It is my hope that the government will redirect its energies into reaching an agreement with B.C. teachers through mediation this summer."

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