



For Immediate Release
2003SDL0005-000258
March 12, 2003

Ministry of Skills Development and Labour

COOLING OFF PERIOD ENSURES UBC STUDENTS GET TO CLASSES

VICTORIA – New legislation introduced today imposes a 20-day cooling off period for striking CUPE members at the University of British Columbia and orders UBC and CUPE to return to the bargaining table immediately in an effort to settle their contract.

Bill 21, the University of British Columbia Service Continuation Act, orders teaching assistants/ESL instructors (Local 2278) and support and library workers (Local 2950) to suspend picketing through March 31, and it orders UBC and CUPE to start bargaining within 72 hours.

“Our first concern is for the 23,000 students who could be in jeopardy of losing the school year because of the strike,” said Bruce. “With this legislation in place, the parties can return to the bargaining table and the students can attend classes without crossing a picket line.”

The introduction of the legislation followed separate meetings with the parties to see if the issues could be resolved.

“I met with CUPE’s and UBC’s negotiating teams earlier this week to determine if there was any chance the dispute could be settled through the collective bargaining process,” said Bruce. “We are hopeful both parties can come to an agreement, but they must get back to the table and discuss the issues face-to-face.”

A mediator provided by the Labour Relations Board has been involved for two months. Richard Longpre, assistant deputy minister for the Ministry of Skills Development and Labour, will now assist the collective bargaining process with the aim of seeing agreements reached that are fair for the employees, the university and the students.

“We expect both UBC and CUPE to be back at the bargaining table by Saturday and to bargain in good faith,” said Bruce. “We will be following the progress of these talks over the next three weeks.”

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