



BOARD OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 61 (GREATER VICTORIA)
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April 19, 2010

The Honourable Margaret MacDiarmid
Minister of Education
Province of British Columbia
PO Box 9045 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC
V9W 9E2

Dear Minister MacDiarmid:

The Greater Victoria Board of Education maintains an unwavering commitment to provide high quality educational programs and services to our students. The purpose of this letter is to propose a change in the financial structure of public education. We are concerned that expanded mandates and insufficient program funding have placed such a financial pressure on this school district that our Province's valuable investment in education is being eroded.

The Greater Victoria Board of Education is engaged in an extensive consultative process with partner groups, school planning councils and the public regarding budget priorities. The comments received to date have indicated the need to provide an increased budget for additional learning resources, teacher and support staffing. However, current funding does not allow us to enhance the learning conditions for all of our students. It is clear that:

- the current per pupil funding formula impacts negatively on school districts with declining enrolment.
- for each reduction in a full time equivalent student, the 2010-2011 funding formula allocation will decrease by \$6,740; however, it is estimated that we can only save about \$3,000 per pupil due to fixed overhead costs leaving a shortfall of \$3,740 per pupil.
- due to unfunded statutory cost pressures, Boards of Education find it difficult to maintain stability in the educational system.

As co-governors of the public education system, we request that you work jointly with Trustees to develop a funding formula that fairly and equitably supports our students and addresses the needs of our communities. Adequate, stable and predictable funding is critical to high quality educational programs. This means that school districts should expect:

- a predictable three-year funding framework.
- funding that supports infrastructure costs for districts with declining enrolment.
- funding that allows educators to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student population.
- funding to address annual cost pressures.
- collaborative planning with government prior to any changes regarding the funding formula.

The Greater Victoria Board of Education, in conjunction with the BC School Trustees' Association, would like to work with the Ministry of Education to ensure the allocation of appropriate resources that meet the requirements of educating children to be contributing members of our society. We believe that a focus on education is a focus on the future.

Although the provincial education budget has risen, costs continue to outstrip funding increases. Cuts to programs and services will be required, but they are not as a result of poor planning or lack of foresight on our behalf. Rather as real-dollar funding has declined, the challenges and expectations we face have consistently increased. The cost of providing special education services is but one example of the challenges faced by our School District. We, as Trustees, have seen an increase in the level of stress placed on staff as they strive to ensure student success in the absence of sufficient resources. Higher real-dollar per capita funding will enable our district to more fully address the needs of all students.

We must find a way to work together to respect each other's budgetary pressures. It is imperative that there is cooperation and mutual understanding rather than an off loading of financial pressures such as teacher pension contributions, carbon offset payments, medical services plan premium increases and new educational mandates. We need to be invited to the table for a dialogue prior to any decisions that impact our expenditure levels.

The Greater Victoria Board of Education formally requests that the Ministry of Education work with Trustees from across the Province in order to re-prioritize available provincial resources to address the needs of public education. The future depends on our willingness to work cooperatively to improve the structures necessary to address the needs of our most valuable resource.

We welcome an opportunity to meet to discuss these matters. We look forward to hearing from you regarding meeting dates by June 1st, 2010. We feel that it is essential to start this process prior to the end of the school year.

Yours truly,



Tom Ferris
Chair

cc Gordon Campbell, Premier
Maurine Karagianis, MLA, Esquimalt-Royal Roads
John Horgan, MLA, Juan de Fuca
Ida Chong, MLA, Oak Bay – Gordon Head
Lana Popham, MLA, Saanich South
Carole James, MLA, Victoria – Beacon Hill
Rob Fleming, MLA, Victoria – Swan Lake
Board of Education
John Gaiptman, Superintendent of Schools
George Ambeault, Secretary-Treasurer
BC School Trustees Association