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## **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Delivered via email: [FinanceCommittee@leg.bc.ca](mailto:FinanceCommittee@leg.bc.ca)

October 6, 2016

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services  
Room 224, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, B.C., V8V 1X4

Dear Chair Hamilton and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit input for the 2017–18 provincial budget deliberations. We appreciate the committee's careful discussion and the inclusion of public input.

School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast) includes coastal communities of Langdale and Gibsons northwest through Roberts Creek, Sechelt and Halfmoon Bay to Pender Harbour and Egmont. Like elsewhere in British Columbia, there is evidence in our district of decreased resources for public education. Through careful strategic planning, tremendous community support and level enrolment numbers for the past couple of years, our district has consistently balanced our budget and provided outstanding educational opportunities for our students. To continue to offer excellence in all we do, we respectfully submit the following for your consideration.

### **Funding Stability**

In 2016 The Ministry of Education has continued a recent trend of sudden and surprising policy changes for funding re capital projects, small rural schools and transportation. Although it was a great relief to see the end of administrative savings requirements, this and other positive funding announcements have been made mid year well after we have done extensive community consultation and made difficult decisions re the allocation of limited resources. This is disrespectful of our communities and of the tremendous efforts of staff to meet Ministry imposed deadlines for budget and calendar. We need increased funding for operational costs, such as Hydro increases, Next Generation Network, MSP premium increases, and WorkSafe BC premiums. These costs have been downloaded to the local level with a big impact on our budget. These pressures and the unpredictability of Ministry decisions impede community confidence in public education and strong relationships within our district with community partners.

Like other school districts we have aging facilities and there is increasing uncertainty regarding funding for capital projects and upgrades available. Once again, we request that the Ministry of Education increase funding for public education in British Columbia, establish that funding once per year and avoid policy changes within the school year. We need clarity regarding capital funding provided by the Ministry of Education. The past few years have seen several policy changes and created great uncertainty. A predictable multi-year funding model would help us to plan and implement facility replacements and upgrades in a much more efficient and inclusive manner.

### **New Curriculum Implementation**

We appreciated the contribution announced in the fall of 2015 for funding support for the training of teachers on the new curriculum. Personalized learning, trades and technology and English language

support are areas that need stable funding in addition to the training of teachers in the new curriculum. We recognize that these requests have been made in the past and the need is still rising every year. Given that teachers will be implementing a new curriculum for the next few years, funding for new curriculum materials would help immensely to move through this major change to our education system. Greater and consistent funding for professional learning is essential and it must include more than teaching staff. Education assistants are important players in the support of students. Additional funds to train Education Assistants in the new curriculum would ease the transition.

### **Investment in Special Education**

Our district regularly spends more money than we receive from the Ministry to ensure the needs of our most vulnerable students are met. The most severe structural deficit in the K–12 funding formula is the targeted funding we receive compared to the costs of sufficiently supporting students with needs that cannot be met with a regular program. The Learning Improvement Fund does not cover the shortfall. The proportion of special needs and vulnerable students has been rising on the Sunshine Coast (confirmed by provincial audits and UBC’s Early Development and Middle Years Development Indicator data).

We recognize and support the Ministry of Education’s study of self-regulation as an effective intervention for special needs students. This approach should be adopted as a universal classroom practice. Student mental health is a growing concern throughout the province. Preventative measures to help young people cope with these issues, particularly stress and anxiety are far more cost effective than trying later to support them as adults who lack coping strategies. As a rural district we do not have access to specialists such as psychiatrists to help youth. Greater funds dedicated to prevention in the early years would be a big step forward.

In contrast, the cancellation of funding available for specialized equipment makes it more difficult to support students on an individualized basis.

### **Adult Basic Education**

We recommend reinstating tuition free upgrading for adult basic education. When adults want to upgrade to improve their prospects for good employment we want to support them however we can. The tuition requirement puts one more hurdle in front of these students and adds administrative load of regulating and collecting fees to our district.

### **Aboriginal Education**

A commitment to implementing the actions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission regarding indigenous people in Canada is a worthy step for every stakeholder in public education. We are proud of our district’s program for Aboriginal Education but recommend funding to allow school districts from across the province to move further ahead in helping communities learn and change by implementing the education related points proposed in the TRC recommendations.

To improve our delivery of fine education our province needs improved government investment. Public education for the children and families of the province is best way to assure a prosperous, healthy future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Betty Baxter  
Board Chair

pc: Trustees, Board of Education of School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast)  
Patrick Bocking, Superintendent of Schools  
Nicholas Simons, MLA, Powell River-Sunshine Coast  
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