



BOARD OF EDUCATION

August 1, 2014

The Honourable Peter Fassbender
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fassbender:

We are clearly in troubled times for education in British Columbia. Like many school districts across the province, School District No. 46 has written you several times asking for a commitment to reach a freely negotiated collective agreement with teachers. Yesterday's announcement of a \$40/day program for parents is an appalling step in the wrong direction.

We are dismayed that, like your Ministry's announcement on July 31, 2013 that the BCPSEA Board of Directors would be replaced with your own appointed administrator, the announcement timing of a parent subsidy on July 31, 2014 prior to a long weekend appears to justify the opinions of many that you are not interested in supporting a healthy relationship with all partners in education.

To take funds that all citizens contribute to public education and use them to continue a game of "gotcha" with the BCTF is misguided at best. Parents already express concern about the tax implications, administrative costs and how this subsidy will likely never reach those who need it most. There is no surplus of daycare spaces available in BC at any price. To single out students 13 and under also reductively emphasizes the custodial aspect of our system when families throughout the province are clearly more upset and alarmed about their children not receiving their fundamental right to public education. This is another hasty, ill-conceived decision.

It is not too late to change direction. We urge you to:

- rescind the offer of \$40/per day and keep the funds in education where they will benefit all students;
- ensure your negotiator has the resources at the table to negotiate in the interests of public education in British Columbia;
- keep bargaining out of the media until an agreement is reached; and
- bring some flexibility to enable a mediator to assist the parties to find an agreement.

It is our sincere hope that some of the commitment and pride that your government brings to the goal of a balanced budget can be brought to the goal of a functional, world-class education system. Please change your course and put the students of British Columbia first. It is they who suffer the longer you fail to negotiate but who can succeed beyond our expectations if we all determine to work together.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Betty Baxter
Chair, Board of Education
School District No 46 (Sunshine Coast)

p.c. Board of Education of School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast)
Patrick Bocking, Superintendent of Schools
Nicholas Weswick, Secretary-Treasurer
Louise Herle, SCTA President
Carolyn Smith, CUPE Local 801 President
Nicholas Simons, MLA, Powell River-Sunshine Coast
All Boards of Education, via BCSTA