



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Delivered via email to: FIN.Minister@gov.bc.ca

March 23, 2015

The Honourable Michael de Jong
Minister of Finance
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister de Jong:

The Board of Education of School District No.46 (Sunshine Coast) passed a motion on March 10 to write to request removal of the requirement from the provincial budget that “administrative savings” of \$54 million over two years be found in the budgets of the sixty school districts in the province.

Each year for several years, our district has had to run our 14 schools on less money due to rising costs passed on to us from the province. Just a few examples are increases in hydro, MSP and WorkSafe BC premiums, and the unfunded salary increases for CUPE employees two years ago. Even in a small district with approximately 500 employees that means we struggle to find savings of approximately \$500,000 each year to ensure cuts have minimal effect on student learning. Any administrative savings were used long ago and our current administrative costs on a \$35 million budget are about 4%.

Each fall we send input to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services about the need for additional funding for programs in the K–12 sector and enhanced support for special needs and trades programs. In the past two years, the standing committee has agreed and included those needs in their report. In the past two years, those needs have not been reflected in the provincial budget or in the allocation from the Ministry of Education. We strongly urge you to change this approach and follow the recommendations of the standing committee to address education in the province.

Our provincial education system is at very serious risk and it appears you are balancing the budget on the backs of the weakest: those children and families who need public education to improve their lives and become fully engaged, productive citizens. How can young people get the basics to prepare for jobs in industries your government is inviting to our province if they don't get full support and learning opportunities in their early schooling? Our school system does a remarkable job on a very lean financial base.

We urge you to find savings at the executive level in Victoria and leave education funds in education where those dollars can help students. A small shift in priorities from your office could make a difference in many communities. Reconsider the administrative claw back from school districts and let us continue to manage efficient, strong education programs in our communities.

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