



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Delivered via email: FinanceCommittee@leg.bc.ca

October 6, 2017

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

Dear Chair D'Eith and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit input for the 2018–19 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 a slight uptick in 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 recent years the Ministry of Education has introduced a number of sudden and surprising policy changes for funding re capital projects, small rural schools and transportation. Announcements of several positive changes were made mid year in 2016/17 well after we have done extensive community consultation and made difficult decisions re the allocation of limited resources. This has been disrespectful of our communities and of the tremendous efforts of our staff to meet Ministry imposed deadlines for budget and calendar. We need increased funding for operational costs and we need equity in how those funds can be accessed across the province. The Hydro increases, Next Generation Network, MSP premium increases, WorkSafe BC premiums, 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. 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.

Capital Funding

We have aging facilities, some of which are very overcrowded. There is continues to be uncertainty regarding funding for capital projects. We need clarity regarding capital funding and clear criteria to be able to access funds 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 upgrades in a much more efficient and inclusive manner.

New Curriculum implementation

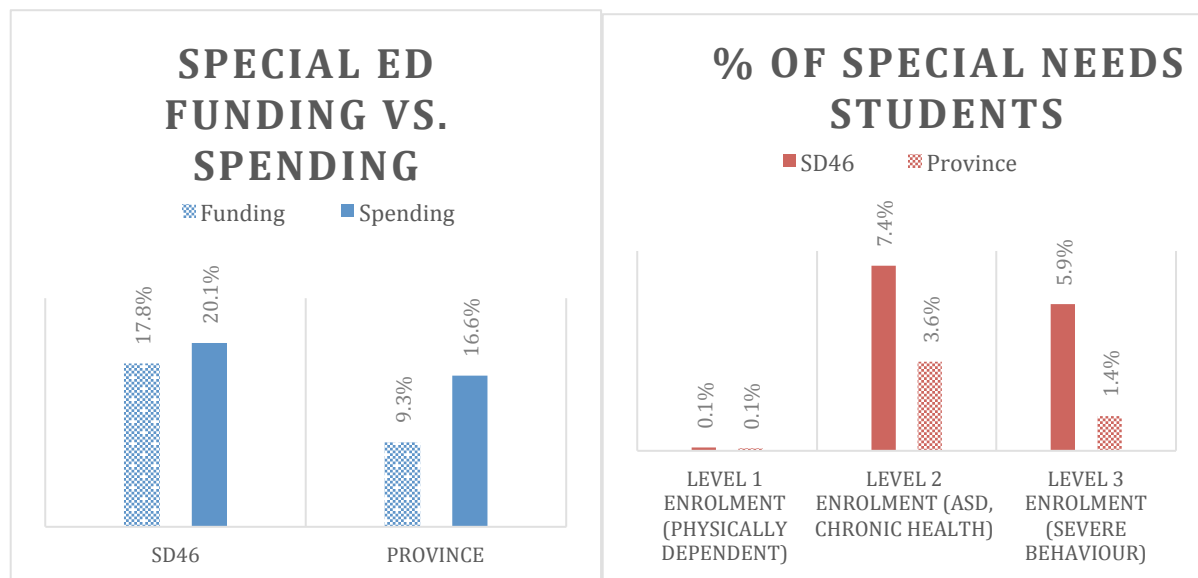
We appreciated the contribution for funding support for the training of teachers on the new curriculum. Personalized learning, trades and technology and English language support are areas that need stable funding in addition to the training of teachers in the new curriculum. We recognize that these requests have been made in the past and the need is still rising every year. In particular we need to focus on the needs for those subject specialists teaching secondary Grades 10 – 12.. Teachers will be implementing a new curriculum for the next few years, so funding for new curriculum materials would help immensely to move through this major change. 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 professional development funds to train Education Assistants in the new curriculum would ease the transition.

Investment in Special Education

School districts in BC receive targeted funding for students with special needs in order for districts to provide additional supports to those students. This funding is not nearly enough to provide sufficient resources for these students, so as a result school districts spend, on average, double the amount they receive to support these students. Districts do this by using general funding, provided for basic programming, to hire additional special education teaching and support staff.

Some districts, such as School District No. 46, have a significantly higher proportion of their students requiring additional supports, which can either place pressure on general operating budgets, or lead to inequitable service levels. The resulting potential for failure in properly serving students with special needs may lead to human rights violations and broader societal costs in the long term.

The implementation of the old contract language has led to allocation of staffing in ways that further limit our ability to support students. Our operating funds are stretched thin to reduce class sizes and the denial in our district of over \$700,000 in necessary Classroom Enhancement Funding to support non-enrolling teachers could mean future layoffs across all program areas.



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. We still need additional funds to establish a local

curriculum and enhance opportunities for students to learn and celebrate the shíshálh language. We recommend increased funding to allow school districts to move ahead in helping communities learn and change by implementing the education proposed in the TRC recommendations.

To continue our delivery of excellent 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

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