



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Delivered via email: FinanceCommittee@leg.bc.ca

October 8, 2015

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 2016–17 provincial budget. We appreciate the committee's careful deliberations and the inclusion of public input.

School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast) includes the coastal communities of Langdale and Gibsons, northwest through Roberts Creek, Sechelt and Halfmoon Bay to Pender Harbour and Egmont. Our district has gone through several years of declining enrolment but through creativity and the support of our communities we have consistently balanced our budget and provided outstanding educational opportunities for our students. Although enrolment decline seems to have levelled off, years of program cuts and staffing reductions have left their mark. To continue to offer excellence in all we do, we respectfully submit the following for your consideration.

Funding Stability

Rising operational costs for schools of all sizes need to be considered for education in British Columbia. Now that we are in a stable labour environment we ask that government recognize that collective agreements are not the only cost increases impacting our annual budgeting processes. Benefits and employment related fees like MSP or Worksafe BC premiums continue to impact our budget and we need the provincial funding to cover these costs. For several years past, there have been changes to capital funding, required administrative savings, and costs imposed on school districts in BC mid-budget year. We request that the Ministry of Education establish funding for the needs of education in British Columbia once per year and avoid changes to funding formula within the school year.

New Curriculum Implementation

We appreciate the contribution announced in the fall of 2015 for non-instructional time support for the professional development of teachers on the new curriculum. Personalized learning, trades and technology, the arts 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.

Investment in “Non-Enrolling” Teachers/Special Needs

Due to the enrolment decline and funding levels over the past dozen years, our district has had to reduce “non-enrolling” teachers including special education teachers, fine arts/music teachers and librarians. These positions are absolutely necessary to support the educational excellence and individualized learning

advocated for in the new curriculum. Many researchers support that the current international labour market, and indeed the future of our province, most desperately needs graduates with creativity, curiosity, perseverance and character to succeed in today's society.

In special education more generally, 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. While enrolment has declined provincially, the proportion of special needs, and vulnerable students, has been rising everywhere, including 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. To even consider the removal of targeted funds for testing, identifying and addressing the special, individual challenges of a growing proportion of children in our province would constitute a huge step backwards for BC.

Adult Basic Education

We recommend reinstating tuition free upgrading for adult basic education. Young adults need the incentive to complete post secondary entrance requirements to prepare for better employment and career opportunities. Sometimes it takes several years after graduation to tackle those courses. 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 recommendations 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 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 the best way to assure a prosperous, healthy future. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Betty Baxter
Board Chair

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