



October 9, 2013

Honourable Minister, Peter Fassbender
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045 STN Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Honourable Minister Fassbender:

At a recent meeting our Trustees discussed the requirement that Boards of Education find the funding to cover the cost of the CUPE settlement. We wish to formally express our concern about that requirement, alongside the many other Boards who have sent similar correspondence.

We made significant reductions in our service levels earlier this year while adopting the 2013/14 preliminary budget to accommodate all of the fiscal challenges we are facing. One of these was the pension contribution increase which was not funded by Government and over which we had no control. At that time we made adjustments including cuts and increased revenues totaling \$5.66 million. We anticipate having to make further adjustments totaling \$4.09M over the next two years.

While we support the CUPE settlement, the additional funding requirement it represents is significant; approximately \$900,000 in this School District. Making budget cuts in that amount beyond those we have already made and anticipate having to make over the next two years will most certainly have a negative impact on our schools. While we will cover the initial year of the CUPE settlement through the use of reserves, the full impact will be felt during the 2014/15 budget cycle resulting in layoffs and reduced hours in many areas of our operation. Needless to say we believe our Provincial Government should fully fund the increased costs related to wage and benefit settlements it negotiates for support staff, teachers and exempt personnel.

We have included our exempt staff in the line above because we believe they are critical to our success. The compression which will occur if settlements are reached with support staff and our teachers without lifting the exempt staff wage freeze will serve as a significant disincentive to these key leadership personnel. With this in mind, in addition to fully funding wage and benefit settlements, we urge your Ministry to make the case to whichever authority is necessary to lift the wage and benefit freeze in education for exempt personnel, concurrent with reaching agreements with our other employee groups. Once again we request that any and all wage and benefit increases which are

negotiated (including those reached with exempt personnel) are covered with additional Provincial funding.

We appreciate the challenges both of our requests represent given the current state of the economy. Having said that we are of the view that Boards of Education have cut deeply enough already with no ability or authority to raise additional revenues sufficient to address the fiscal challenges we are facing. Surely a world class education system is critical to the future economic wellbeing of this Province and every one of our citizens. The funding we provide for this critical function of government must be considered one of the best investments we can make in our collective future.

Sincerely



Mike Murray,
Chair

All Trustees
Ms. Jan Unwin, Superintendent
Ms. Flavia Coughlan, Secretary Treasurer
Mr. Doug Bing, MLA
Mr. Marc Dalton, MLA
BCSTA (for distribution to other Boards of Education)