

February 23, 2015

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

Dear Minister Fassbender:

At the public meeting held on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the Board of Education (SD42 Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows) received a report from the District's Continuing Education Department on the impacts of the policy change regarding funding for adult graduated students taking academic upgrading courses. Following discussion of the report the Board instructed that a letter be forwarded to your office expressing the following concerns.

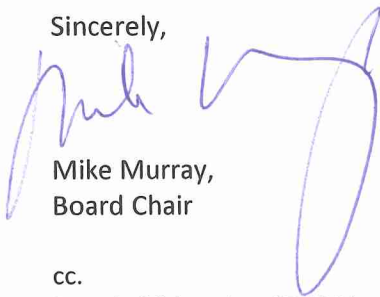
1. The policy is inequitable when it comes to supporting vulnerable adult learners with tuition free academic up-grading opportunities. We understand the commitment to supporting adult learners who are high school graduates from other countries with tuition free academic up-grading opportunities so that they can contribute more fully to our communities. These new Canadians do need assistance as they begin their lives in BC and tuition free academic up-grading is an appropriate support. However, we do not see a less compelling case for assistance and support for many BC grads who are, for example, single parents or vulnerable adults. These adults also need the opportunity to access tuition free academic up-grading in order to improve their employment opportunities and integrate more fully into the community. We serve BC graduated adults at two correctional facilities. The needs of this group of adults are apparent – and the reasons to provide access to tuition free academic up-grading would seem to be obvious. The Board ask why citizens of this province who have graduated in BC would not receive the same benefits of free access to academic upgrading courses as those graduating elsewhere?
2. The policy seems counter to the government's emphasis on jobs training since many of the adult graduated students taking courses for academic upgrading are doing so to enter trades and other post secondary employment oriented programs. In our view the policy adds a barrier to citizens accessing further training rather than providing encouragement to do so.
3. While the Board appreciates a grant program has been established to assist those unable to pay course fees we wonder at the cost of administering such programs and note that since most students are upgrading for employment purposes most are among the Province's most

vulnerable population. The Board wonders how many citizens will take advantage of the grant program since applying for the support represents yet another step necessary to achieve success in one's education.

4. The Board is having difficulty reconciling the reported increase in the grant program for low income learners of \$7.6 million with the reported refocusing of \$9 million towards its primary objectives in K-12 education. While the Board appreciates the need to look at all areas to increase the funding envelope for K-12 education we are not certain spending an additional \$7.6 million to save \$9 million while establishing new barriers for vulnerable citizens is the most effective way to achieve that end. If we have misunderstood these numbers and more funding will be available for the K-12 education sector as a result of the policy change how will that additional funding be made available for the K-12 education sector?
5. The policy change was made without consultation with Boards of Education or the BC School Trustees Association to determine the likely impacts of the policy change. The Board is concerned this is another example of the Ministry not honoring the co- governance relationship between Boards of Education and the Government.

We understand the new policy will be implemented in May of this year. Since it has not yet been implemented we wish to respectfully request that implementation be delayed and a further review be undertaken in consultation with Boards of Education throughout the Province to determine what the impact of the change is likely to be and whether or not it will achieve the desired end result or will simply result in fewer graduated adults taking academic upgrading courses. We know this is not the result the Ministry is looking for.

Sincerely,



Mike Murray,  
Board Chair

cc.

Board of Education, SD42 Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows  
Ms. Sylvia Russell, Superintendent of Schools  
Ms. Flavia Coughlan, Secretary Treasurer  
Canadian Union of Public Employees  
District Parent Advisory Council  
District Student Advisory Council  
Maple Ridge Principals'-Vice Principals' Association  
Maple Ridge Teachers' Association  
Honourable Mike de Jong, Minister of Finance  
Mr. Marc Dalton, MLA  
Dr. Doug Bing, MLA  
BCSTA for circulation to all Boards of Education