



May 1, 2015

The Honourable Peter Fassbender
Minister of Education
PO Box 9405, Stn. Prov. Govt.
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fassbender:

At our most recent public meeting, our board requested that we forward this letter to urge the government to step back from its imminent adoption of Bill 11 and listen carefully to the many messages being sent by those with whom you share responsibility for our public education system.

You have expressed your desire to consult with boards of education, the BCTF (and presumably with other professional educators from the BCSSA and BCPVPA) with respect to the implementation of the legislation and the development of the associated regulations. We have to ask why that couldn't have happened in advance of the legislation being introduced? While we agree with the comments in your April 22nd letter to BCSTA President Teresa Rezansoff that there has been consultation on some matters identified in the legislation, like the accountability framework, to our knowledge there was no consultation with the various organizations representing professional educators on the professional development portion of the legislation or with boards of education on the expansion of the Minister's power to provide greater centralization of authority. In the absence of advance consultation, that is our interpretation of the government's intentions. We have to ask if exercising more control over boards of education is the intention, why does government feel such control is required? If that wasn't the intent, then what was intended and why is that believed to be necessary? The co-governance M.O.U. suggests both parties agree consultation in advance of major policy changes is essential to maintaining a positive working relationship. Unfortunately, without that detailed discussion on all parts of Bill 11, government's intent is left to speculation and the relationship suffers.

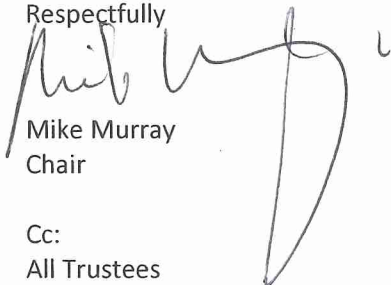
We have no doubt that your intention entering into the co-governance memorandum of understanding was based on your appreciation that the greatest progress toward any shared goal can be achieved by partners who demonstrate respect for each other and function in a positive give and take relationship. The co-governance agreement seeks to ensure our continuing relationship is strong and healthy. Unfortunately, speaking from one of the partners' perspectives, the past three months have not been positive. In our view, government's actions with the adult graduated learner's policy change, the administrative savings requirement, the lack of funding for an appropriate exempt staff salary increase following increases for all other staff and Bill 11 do not reflect the intent of the agreement. What you are hearing from so many boards of education is that the trust they had that we were true partners in education has been significantly eroded. There have been too many comments and actions from government that, in so many words, are disrespectful to the work of boards of education and their professional staff.

We know we need to work in tandem to continue delivering the best possible education for our students. In order to maintain an effective working relationship, we suggest government:

1. delay adoption of Bill 11 until full consultation can be undertaken with all of the appropriate stakeholders,
2. consider the positive suggestions coming from the BCSTA AGM to enter into detailed consultation on matters related to education finance,
3. pursue the removal of the exempt salary freeze and obtain the required funding to ensure the key leaders in our education system are treated fairly and with the respect they deserve.

As a final request, we ask that government acknowledge boards of education in the province have managed their resources very carefully under extremely challenging fiscal circumstances for many years and continue to do so while maintaining one of the best education systems on the planet.

Respectfully



Mike Murray
Chair

Cc:

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