

June 23, 2020

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services  
Room 224, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4  
Attention: Mr. Bob D'Eith, MLA and Chair

Dear Committee Members:

**RE: Budget 2021 Consultations**

Maple Ridge – Pitt Meadows School District No. 42 meets the learning needs of approximately 15,000 students of all ages in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, and is defined by its determination to keep student learning and growth at the heart of all its decisions.

We wish to express our support for the submissions you received from the BC School Trustees Association, other Boards of Education, and our education partners. We also support the standing committee's previous recommendations that education funding fully address the increased costs faced by school districts throughout the province year over year.

Previously, this Board has suggested there is a need for government to work more closely with local boards of education through the BCSTA, the BC Association of School Business Officials, and the BC School Superintendents Association to build an education budget from the ground up that truly reflects the needs of the system. In 2018, the independent Funding Model Review Panel recommended to government that:

*The Ministry should identify net cost pressures and new program expenditures and, as part of the annual provincial budgeting process, bring them forward to Treasury Board for consideration when the total quantum of public education funding is being set. (Recommendation 18)*

We hope that your committee will reinforce this recommendation with government by recommending its implementation as part of the regular budget building process.

## **Impact of COVID-19**

The impact of COVID-19 on school district budgets and operations cannot be fully quantified yet.

In 2020/21, school districts will face significant financial impacts related to COVID-19. These impacts will consist of increased sanitation and custodial costs, reduced international education tuition revenue, increased substitute staff costs, increased facilities maintenance, as well as increased student transportation costs, and increased technology costs. While some of these expenses may be covered from higher-than-expected 2019/20 operating surpluses arising from the suspension of in-class instruction from March 17 to May 31, 2020, the provincial government will have to make allowances in the 2021 budget to address the deep shortfalls that are likely to arise in K-12 education.

## **Universal Meals Program**

To mitigate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable families, the school district has worked with community partners over the past three months to provide food hampers to over 190 families (480 students).

Significantly, the new allocation of funds for vulnerable students implemented for 2020/21 resulted in a funding reduction for the Maple Ridge – Pitt Meadows School District. This unexpected reduction in funding for vulnerable students precludes the possibility of the school district creating its own funded meals program.

We are asking that the committee recommend the implementation of a universal meals program funded by the federal and provincial governments.

## **Economic Recovery**

According to the Government of Canada, in 2018, international students in Canada contributed an estimated \$21.6 billion to Canada's GDP and supported almost 170,000 jobs for Canada's middle class. <sup>[1]</sup>

Over 20,000 international students are enrolled in BC K-12 schools and their economic impact in BC is estimated to be over \$500 million. Over 70% of international students attend schools in the Lower Mainland of BC. <sup>[2]</sup>

Due to the travel restrictions imposed during the pandemic, the number of international students returning to BC in the fall is highly uncertain and school districts with robust international programs will struggle to sustain their programs and marketing efforts.

In the 2021 budget, the provincial government should allocate funds to support school district international programs during these uncertain times. Maintaining a robust program offering and a strong footprint in the international education market will allow BC to continue to benefit from this significant economic contribution after the pandemic.

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.international.gc.ca/education/assets/pdfs/ies-sei/Building-on-Success-International-Education-Strategy-2019-2024.pdf>

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://bccie.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Kunin-report-2019.pdf>

Finally, we also believe that strategic infrastructure investments will play a key role in the economic recovery of our province. With this in mind, we would like to highlight for the committee the importance of investing in our aging educational facilities. In particular, we would like to see an increased investment towards major renovations for existing facilities. For too long school districts have not received adequate funding and the deferred maintenance costs continue to accumulate while the condition of our schools continues to deteriorate. Similarly, when facilities are seismically upgraded the province should also allocate funds for completing the upgrade of these aging facilities. Not completing necessary facility renovations at the time of seismic upgrading is extremely inefficient and will add significantly to the overall cost to taxpayers if they are completed separately. We recommend that government seriously consider funding all needed and related renovations required in older school facilities at the same time seismic upgrades are being completed.

We look forward to contributing in any way we can to the further discussion of these matters and thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Korleen Carreras, Chairperson  
Board of Education

Cc:

The Board of Education, School District No. 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows)  
The Honourable Rob Fleming, Minister of Education  
The Honourable Carole James, Minister of Finance  
The Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Tourism and Culture  
Mr. Bob D'Eith, MLA Maple Ridge-Mission  
Ms. Sylvia Russell, Superintendent of Schools  
Ms. Flavia Coughlan, Secretary Treasurer  
Mr. Grant Frend, President, Maple Ridge Principals' and Vice Principals' Association  
Ms. Penny Morgan, President, Maple Ridge Teachers' Association  
Mr. Jason Franklin, President, CUPE Local 703  
Mr. Eugene Javier, Chairperson, District Parent Advisory Council  
Student Voice  
Ms. Stephanie Higginson, President, BCSTA  
Ms. Flavia Coughlan, President, BCASBO  
Mr. Chris Van der Mark, President, BCSSA