

January 25, 2021

Honourable Selena Robinson
Minister of Finance
Government of British Columbia
Room 124 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Honourable Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Education
Government of British Columbia
Room 124 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Honourable Robinson and Honourable Whiteside,

Thank you for your advocacy with the federal government and your financial support to the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows School District for a safe return to school in September. The special purpose grants allowed us to increase staffing to provide enhanced cleaning and support family choices with respect to remote learning, enhance ventilation in our buildings, enhance cleaning and hand hygiene, build structural safety measures, increase supports for learners with unique needs, and purchase additional cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment. Staff and families in our district are feeling the emotional and physical strain of the pandemic and we are grateful that by using this additional funding we were able to ease that burden to a degree.

I write today to ask that as you prepare the 2021/2022 provincial budget to be tabled on April 20, you consider continuing the additional funding distributed in 2020/2021 to support COVID-19 pandemic management-related costs. We ask that, at a minimum, these grants match the provincial and federal funds we received for the 2020/2021 school year.

As our board begins to prepare our next year's budget, which will be tabled early in April, we are anticipating the possibility of one more school year with enhanced health and safety measures in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we are hopeful that a vaccine will relieve the need for some of these measures, we know that many are likely to remain. Families will continue to request remote learning options; students, families and staff will continue to expect higher cleaning standards; the district will need to provide educational supports for students who may have struggled or fallen behind during the pandemic; and we will also need to continue to support the mental wellness of our students and staff.

A commitment from government to provide additional COVID-related funding for the 2021/2022 school year will allow boards of education to build this funding into their budget planning and ensure that the necessary structures and supports are in place for a smooth and safe start in September 2021.

I appreciate your time in reading this letter and look forward to your response. Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



Korleen Carreras, Chairperson
Board of Education

Cc:

The Board of Education, School District No. 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows)
Ms. Sylvia Russell, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Harry Dhillon, Deputy Superintendent
Ms. Flavia Coughlan, Secretary Treasurer
The Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Citizens' Services
Mr. Bob D'Eith, MLA Maple Ridge-Mission
All Boards of Education c/o BC School Trustees Association