

June 1, 2023

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

Dear Committee Members:

RE: Budget 2024 Consultations

School District No. 42 meets the learning needs of approximately 16,000 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 are writing to you today to urge the inclusion of critical priorities in Budget 2024 that will positively impact the education system in our province. As you know, our education system is the backbone of our society, and we must ensure that it receives the necessary funding to meet the needs of all students.

We also wish to express our support not only for the submissions you received from the BC School Trustees Association, other boards of education and our education partners, but also for the standing committee's previous recommendations that education funding fully address the increased costs faced by school districts throughout the province year over year.

Capital Investments

We recognize the significant investment this government has already made related to capital infrastructure; we recommend that this investment be continued and where possible increased in the future. In particular, we would like to see an increased investment towards proactive acquisition of school sites, major renovations for existing facilities, creation of new classroom and specialized spaces, playgrounds and administrative buildings.

Budget 2023 included *Feeding Futures* funding for food programs in schools across the province. We are thankful for this important investment and in Budget 2024 we encourage you to provide the necessary capital funding to create and equip spaces in schools that will ensure delivery of quality, stigma free food programs in all schools.

For too long school districts have not received adequate funding. Deferred maintenance costs continue to accumulate while the condition of our schools continues to deteriorate. When facilities are seismically upgraded, the province should 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. We are asking the committee to

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.

The current capital funding model does not include funding for the administrative or maintenance facilities required to support the delivery of educational services in school districts. This means that in order to build new facilities or renovate existing facilities, school districts have to generate local capital by selling unused properties or direct operating allocations towards such capital investments. We are asking the committee to recommend that government start funding all school district capital needs, including schools, administrative and maintenance buildings.

1

Additional capital budget allocations to support:

- creating dedicated, fully equipped food program spaces in schools
- all needed and related renovations required in older school facilities at the same time seismic upgrades are being completed
- all school district capital needs, including portable classrooms, additional specialized spaces in schools, administrative and maintenance buildings

Students with Diverse Needs

Increased funding for diverse learners must be a priority in Budget 2024. Our education system must be inclusive and welcoming to all students, regardless of their background or individual needs. Our experience over the past two years and coming out of the COVID context has shown that the level of support that students with diverse needs have required has been extraordinary, particularly at the early primary levels. Many early primary students are awaiting medically-based assessments due to long wait lists. While many of these students will eventually receive a diagnosis that both provides programming recommendations/guidance and allows the school district to claim supplemental funding to support programming needs, the district will continue to support these students within available budgets. Additional resources must be provided to support students who require specialized attention, such as those with diverse abilities or mental health challenges. With the right investment, we can ensure that all students receive the support they need to achieve their full potential.

2

Additional operating budget allocations to the Ministry of Education and Child Care to support:

- early intervention/programming to support the increased and evolving needs of students
- expedited assessments for students with special needs
- enhanced access to community-based programs for students with diverse needs

Technology Transformation

Finally, we would like to emphasize the importance of technology transformation in our schools. Our education system must keep pace with the rapidly evolving technological landscape to ensure that students are prepared for the future. Funding for infrastructure, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence ("AI") is critical to ensuring that our schools are equipped to provide the best possible education to our students. Generative AI is poised to revolutionize how we learn, work, live and interact. The education system needs to be able to equitably support students in developing the skills they need for the future - one in which AI plays a bigger role.

3

Additional funding to the Ministry of Education and Child Care to support:

- adequate technology infrastructure in all school districts
- enhanced cybersecurity
- artificial intelligence guidance and equitable access for all students

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

Sincerely,



Elaine Yamamoto, Chairperson
Board of Education

Cc: The Board of Education, School District No. 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows)
The Honourable Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care
The Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Finance
The Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Citizen Services
Bob D'Eith, MLA Maple Ridge-Mission
Harry Dhillon, Superintendent of Schools
Flavia Coughlan, Secretary Treasurer
Trevor Takasaki, President, Maple Ridge Teachers' Association
Martin Dmitrieff, First Vice President, Maple Ridge Teachers' Association
Jason Franklin, President, CUPE Local 703
Trish Coft, Chairperson, District Parent Advisory Council
Carolyn Broady, President, BCSTA