

## Budget 2014

Mike compared our decisions to some of the tough ones the previous board had to make...like closing schools for example. I will express some other comparisons and analogies as I share some of my rationale and thoughts tonight.

This year's budget decisions feel even harder than when we had to choose to close 2 schools, because we knew that decision had a solid follow through...a best practice plan that kept students at the centre and in the long run would be of benefit to them. The decisions we have deliberated over, while benefit solution based, are imposed from outside beyond our control. What I kept at the forefront in those decisions as I do now is that our job is to make decisions that affect 14000 students, from the most western point of Pitt Meadows to the most eastern part of Maple Ridge. While an item like transportation by buses seems like it only affects a small number of people directly, the impact of its cost is felt across the district. The cost of transportation is almost 20% of our entire deficit, and is serving less than 500 students.

I watched a news update with the Minister of Education and Min of Adv ED talking about a new initiative regarding trades programs. We all want to best support those ideas, ideals. How can we do that when every time we turn around something else is being compromised at the k-12 level? Our career prep assistants and work exp teachers seem to me to be an integral part of the move forward plan for the province. How can I feel good about removing any of that service to students?

I see that the Vancouver art gallery will be remodeled by an internationally renowned museum architect, while school districts across the province have to cut arts programs for students.

I read that a group of parents in Coquitlam have organized a rally at their MLAs office so they can speak up about education underfunding.

As our Board's BCPSEA rep I've attended meetings to hear the former Ed minister, in so many words, tell a group of trustees, who had passed resolutions, to try whatever we like, we're going to trump you anyways. I'm increasingly dismayed in my role.

How can we do this every year? This part is certainly not why I wanted to be a trustee. I spent 20 years as a parent supporting staff and students in schools. I wanted to be a contributor to positive decisions for kids, and I believe I have. I share my other job by delivering financial literacy workshops to students in our high schools. I recognize the work of our district staff, our teachers, our clerical workers, support workers, and sympathize with the angst you feel. I have a job away from this role, and know what it means to count on a pay cheque. This board has been referred to often as one that listens, and considers and collaborates. From budget considerations like coffee and a muffin at meetings to IT expenditures, we have debated it all.

On Sunday I spent the afternoon downtown. I wandered through Gastown, enjoying the bustle of the amount of people enjoying Vancouver's sights on a spring day. For kicks we walked inside a funky shoe store and noticed those shoes were so funky, they didn't even advertise a price. We wandered down only a block or two to such contrast in society. But in that contrast I saw a community. Gathering on a Sunday for a full block at Hastings and Carrall to trade their

Eleanor Palis

possessions, to support one another, to share their stories, to survive.  
Hope in the shadows

As I walked away teary eyed I was inspired and amazed at resilience.  
Every time I go in a school I am inspired and amazed by kids. That's  
what keeps me going in this role. That's what has to keep us all going in  
our roles.