



September 22, 2016

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B. C. V8V 1X4

Dear Committee Members,

RE: Budget 2017 Consultations

The Board of Education of School District 42 (Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows) wishes to join the BC School Trustees Association, other boards of education and our education partners in expressing our support for the standing committee's previous recommendations that education funding fully address the increased costs faced by school districts throughout the province. As has been shared previously, adding unfunded increased costs to school district budgets necessarily results in significant cuts to student services.

During the past few months, progress has been made to alleviate some of the pressure resulting from the added costs experienced since the beginning of 2015. We are grateful to have received some level of reprieve with the reversal of the second year of administrative savings (announced in June 2016) and the provision of additional funding for transportation (announced in August 2016). For our district this meant that an additional \$835,000 was available to offset some of the previously identified and addressed funding shortfalls.

Unfortunately, both of these announcements were made after we had already made the difficult decision to cancel busing, and after we submitted a balanced budget for the 2016/17 year. Needless to say, our parents have been quite confused by the process. We implemented busing fees three years ago; made the decision in 2015 to cancel busing commencing in September of this year in light of increased financial pressure; reversed that decision but implemented a higher fee in June 2016; and removed the fees in August. With better communication and planning between government and local school districts, we could have avoided the angst associated with the choices we felt we had to make in April when we first adopted our 2016/17 budget.

While we believe there have been improvements in our communication and collaboration with the Ministry of Education addressing matters such as the elimination of the previous system of holding back funding, an even more enhanced level of communication and collaborative decision making needs to be considered. Those that set budgets at levels that require service cuts need to take responsibility for the consequences and not be completely buffered by local boards of education who have no say in setting the budget envelope. Better yet, boards of education should have some meaningful degree of involvement in making recommendations to government on the annual education budget for the province.

We submit there is a need for government to work more closely with boards of education through the BC School Trustees Association, 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. We proposed a resolution to that effect to the 2015 BC School Trustees Association AGM, and that resolution was adopted. It is our genuine hope that some progress can be made along those lines in the upcoming budget deliberations.

In our view, the select committee should reinforce that resolution by recommending the establishment of an education finance task force involving the aforementioned parties, the purpose of which would be to examine such matters in detail including:

- what level of funding the k-12 sector needs in order to bring stability to the system, achieve the desired progress identified in forward thinking education planning, and fund appropriate responses to some of the emerging issues which are being faced by both the health and education systems like youth mental health;
- taxation recommendations related to school property taxes and other taxation necessary to provide the required level of funding;
- the funding formula by which the Ministry's resources are distributed to districts throughout the province; and
- how those responsible for the day to day delivery of public education can have a meaningful and ongoing role in identifying the requirements for and setting the provincial education budget.

We thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Mike Murray, Chairperson
Board of Education

Cc:

Board of Education, School District 42 - Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows
The Honourable Mike Bernier, Minister of Education
The Honourable Mike DeJong, Minister of Finance
Mr. Doug Bing, MLA
Mr. Marc Dalton, MLA
Ms. Sylvia Russell, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Flavia Coughlan, Secretary Treasurer
Ms. Cathie Watkins, President Maple Ridge Principals and Vice Principals Association
Mr. George Serra, President, Maple Ridge Teachers' Association
Ms. Leslie Franklin, President, CUPE Local 703
Ms. Kim Dumore, Chair, District Parent Advisory Council
Ms. Kristi Blakeway, District Student Advisory Council
Ms. Teresa Rezansoff, President, BC School Trustees Association
Mr. Kelvin Stretch, President, BC Association of School Business Officials
Ms. Sherry Elwood, President, BC School Superintendents Association