

Proposal to Board of Education
School District No. 42 - April 16, 2014
(Large Elementary Schools)

Good evening, my name is Marianne Ulriksen and I am here representing CUPE clerical, and more specifically clerical from the six Large Elementary Schools with more than 500 students. I work at Yennadon Elementary with a student population of 575 students and approximately 50 staff and 10 itinerant staff. Currently, we have 67 clerical hours per week to manage our high volume, high energy office.

The current proposal for large elementary schools reduces our office clerical time by **20-23 hours per week**. It also eliminates our right to work extra time throughout the year in order to recover the 5 days of work each of us lose at spring break. This double hit to clerical staff will be detrimental on all levels of school operation. In one school year, this proposal eliminates 3 working days per week or approximately *(3 X 39 weeks + (5 x2 spring break days))* **127 working days per year**. Think about how your business or office would function with your secretarial hours reduced by 30%. Laity View Elementary, is projected to host 640 students next year. Their enrollment will be double the size of 8 of the small elementary schools and just over 100 students less than some of the high schools and yet they are expected to operate with only $1 \frac{1}{4}$ clerical personal. Not only is this irrational, it is impossible.

For EVERY school in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, this proposal will necessitate a reduction or elimination of essential support functions that we now provide to ensure that the school office runs efficiently. This proposal puts unrealistic expectations and impossible demands on clerical staff and jeopardizes the safety of students.

We have already experienced a taste of this model in large elementary schools this year with the policy of not replacing clerical until the 3rd day of absence. **IT DOES NOT WORK**. When one clerical is away, the other spends the day treading water, stretched too thin trying to cover "priority" items, unable to complete the basic tasks of their own position. With the proposed cuts

this is basically what will happen **EVERY DAY** at a large elementary school. Most school clerical staff cannot go into an office, close the door and concentrate on a task. We are the front lines in the school, the first place where kids, parents and staff come when they need help. We **MUST** have a head secretary and a general clerk in a large school, **EVERY DAY**.

In a school office, ensuring that all students are safe and accounted for is very important. Without adequate support staff in the office, this **WILL NOT** happen. With the chaotic beginning of each school day (directing TOC's, answering phones, retrieving messages, answering questions, helping visitors, documenting late arrivals, and many more interruptions) the inevitable delay in processing student attendance in an efficient and timely manner is a serious safety concern.

Another concern is first aid. At Yennadon Elementary, we have 5 diabetics and 4 students with high seizure risk, in addition to the 12 anaphylactic and the students who are flight risks. In all we have 25 students with severe medical issues. In addition, each school has their "special" students with anxiety or behavior who come to the office to calm down and collect themselves. Students need consistency and they need to know there is always someone they can count on in the office. As well we monitor who is coming and going in the school. If there is only 1 secretary, there will be times when there is no one in the office to assist in an emergency, or with medical issues, or to notice if a stranger is in the building. Phone calls will slip into voice mail, while the secretary is dealing with other issues and important after school pick up arrangements or other critical calls may not be dealt with in a timely manner resulting in unnecessary and hazardous consequences. There may be no one to help a parent who is unable to locate their child, or verify that custody issues are not missed. When people need help, they call down to the office; what if there is no one there?

We understand that these are tough times, but **THESE CUTS ARE TOO DEEP**.

In addition to eliminating the ability for clerical personal to work/bank extra time during school days throughout the year in order to recover the 5 days of work lost at spring break, and cutting

about 60% of the clerks' hours, the purchasing department is being wiped out, the accounting department is being downsized and maintenance is losing one of its clerks. We still have yet to hear if IT will lose a CUPE position. You are taking away people that support us doing our jobs and increasing our workload.

The comment on page 23 of the Proposed Preliminary Operating Budget 2014/15 states: *"The existing staffing levels were established over a decade ago. During this time, significant technological changes have directly impacted the workload of clerical staff eliminating tasks once performed by them."* This statement is misleading. To imply that we have less to do with the introduction of technology is false. Our workload has not decreased, it has simply changed. In some ways, these advancements create more work and more issues. The introduction of the Parent Portal this year is an example, having increased our work load because, in addition to having to learn a new system, parents and staff having difficulty with this new system come to us for troubleshooting. We are now forced to work with both the old and new system in tandem since not all parents are coming aboard even though we have given some families 5 copies of their parent portal letter. It has also complicated our bank reconciliations.

We understand that cuts are needed. We ask you to carefully consider the devastating impact that reducing clerk hours in elementary schools will have on student safety, functionality of the school, and the mental health of all of the staff that work there.

The culture of any school is enhanced by the people who work there every day. We are an important part of that culture. By adopting these proposed changes, ultimately it's the children that lose. Please consider the bigger picture for our District's success.

These cuts are too harsh and need to be reconsidered.