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I am Wendy Hyslop, Administrative Coordinator at Garibaldi Secondary

I am speaking on our high school offices, which require 4 essential positions for their safe and effective operation. You are not acknowledging the receptionist, the **one key position** for communication and safety. When you remove this crucial part of staffing, you leave the myriad of responsibilities and safety related issues associated to this position, completely to chance.

Having no one to monitor the comings and goings of those in the building gives strangers more opportunity to wander the school. With no-contact and custody orders in place for many students, it's necessary to screen those requesting contact with them. With no one in reception, they have the opportunity to chat with students in the vicinity, many who see themselves as helpful young adults, and as they happen to know where the requested student is, they volunteer to escort this unknown adult directly to the student. These incidents can happen in a matter of seconds, and without a receptionist, they can happen before other staff can intervene.

God help us, but what if a parent calls a school to say they see someone walking up the driveway with a gun in their hand – with the situation you are putting us in, chances are very good that call will go to voice mail. What if the school should receive a bomb threat or a warning of any imminent emergency – it too, could end up in voice mail.

Not only outside callers, but those within the building often receive voice mail when attempting to contact the office. Teachers, staff working onsite from other agencies and parents have all voiced safety concerns in this regard. Anyone requiring first aide, an administrator's presence in a classroom, or assistance with any type of emergency may or **may not** receive a live person when contacting the office.

It's been said that to eliminate these risks, existing staff shall answer all incoming calls. This statement becomes a wonderful fantasy when you look at reality – these staff are **already** answering as many incoming calls as humanly possible, even with the heavy demands and huge work loads placed on them. There is no way around the fact, that without a receptionist, many calls will continue to make their way to voice mail.

My office has struggled to operate with declining hours in this position for several years, with the current year being the most challenging. We have found that in eliminating this position, you are successfully **reducing the efficiency** of every other secretary in the office, as they are **all** forced to keep abreast with the daily facets of this position. If the documentation of student attendance is to be maintained next year, this is the only position in the high school office that is able to incorporate it into their work day.

It appears that as we have been very fortunate . . . at least so far . . . that there hasn't been a major catastrophe, or serious impact on a student, you are now making the decision that it shall become **standard and acceptable practice** to not have a receptionist in any high school. This decision is leaving the door wide open for a devastating catastrophe to occur.

Parents expect that when they send their children into one of our facilities, **every** precaution has been put in place to ensure their safety. As employees in those same buildings, we have the same expectations but they are **not being met** by eliminating the front line person – the very eyes and ears to the school. This is one of the lowest paid positions in the entire district and you are refusing to acknowledge how vitally important it is just to save a few dollars. Is that the price you're putting on safety?

I work in a building that presently houses almost 800 people. I don't know of any another industry where decision makers would think that to eliminate their receptionist was either a safe or an acceptable way to conduct their business. In ripping this position out of a high school office, you are inviting a serious consequence.

This decision comes with huge safety risks to everyone in the building. Our staff and our students deserve so much better than what is being offered. **Please** recognize the paramount need of high school receptionists.

Thank you.