

Written Submission to the Board of Education
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For the past 15 years, the current Liberal government has dismantled public education through chronic, consistent underfunding. This has resulted in increased class sizes due to understaffing, and dismal, out of date resources from atlases that don't have Nunavut in them, to computers that can't connect to the internet. All of this, because the Liberal government chooses not to make public education a priority.

Over the years we have seen the trustees face the unenviable choices and decisions when it comes to meeting the financial requirements to create a balanced budget. Numerous staffing positions have been cut, both teaching and support staffing. Courses and programs have been removed, facilities and maintenance work is being limited and under-resourced, resulting in poor and shoddy learning and working environments. The list goes on, and has been going on for well over a decade now. Again, thanks in part to the Liberals' continued disrespect and lack of support for public education and the children of BC. Evidently, BC's school children are funded \$1000 LESS than the national average. BC's children are the second lowest funded students across the country. PEI has us beat.

This brings me to why we are here tonight. The decision to completely eliminate busing for the students of Maple Ridge / Pitt Meadows is one that will have serious repercussions to the communities of all those involved. Families located in Whonnock, Albion, Thornhill, Rock Ridge, Silver Valley as well as rural Pitt Meadows communities, will all be asked to find alternative forms of transportation for their children, to ensure they get to school each day. In removing busing, the board is forcing parents to alter their work schedules where parents may have to shorten their work days in order to get their kids to and from school. This inevitably can result in less income for a family and puts a further strain on them. Parents may be forced to pay for private transportation, again, another financial strain on families because this board voted to remove busing, again, thanks to Liberal underfunding of public education. Additionally, parents will be forced to find before and after school child care, but again, at a cost. So basically this decision to remove busing is only going to cost parents and families more money.

I'd like to touch upon the safety aspect of this decision. Removing buses will force parents to drive their kids to school. Have you seen school parking lots? Can you imagine more cars of families dropping their kids off in those parking lots? Buses can carry upwards of 50 students. With no busing, that is nearly 50 more cars on Maple Ridge roads, in school parking lots, during the busiest times of day. Honestly, it's just a matter of time until something tragic happens. SO I ask you, why are we not considering the health and safety of our most precious resource, our children, first and foremost? Speaking of safety, by eliminating busing, are you asking those families affected to have their children walk to school? Walk nearly 10km to their nearest school? Is that realistic, is that safe?

Was this considered and discussed before coming to the decision of eliminating busing? How will you approach and consider those families affected by this brutal decision?

One last piece I wanted to touch upon is the basic provision of education, more so, the access to public education. We have a duty to provide public education to our children. We pay for this education through our taxes, and therefore put trust in the government that they will direct those tax dollars towards education, to better our society and create a strong, educated and skilled workforce for the future of this province. This has not been happening with the current Liberal government. MLA Marc Dalton, along with MLA Doug Bing continue to ignore the pleas of the public when it comes to funding public education. I urge everyone in here to hold our MLAs accountable. Demand increased funding for our children, for our future. It is up to both Marc Dalton and Doug Bing to fight and advocate for our children, and this is clearly not happening. Let us not forget that we are heading in to an election year. And despite any last minute election promises and miraculous discoveries of funding for new schools and whatnot, we can not forget the last 10 years of Liberal governance and what it has done to our public institutions.

I urge you all here tonight to reverse the decision to remove busing, let's fund transportation and let's get our kids to school.