



# BOARD OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 61 (GREATER VICTORIA)  
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Via email [educ.minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:educ.minister@gov.bc.ca)

December 17, 2012

The Honourable Don McRae  
Minister of Education  
P. O. Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, British Columbia  
V8W 9E2

Dear Minister McRae:

I am writing to provide you with information from our Board's point of view regarding your concept of the Cooperative Gains Mandate and the savings plans needed to support this round of collective bargaining with the K-12 education sectors' support staff. I understand that the Minister of Finance's priority for the government is to balance the budget. I am aware that government faces increased fiscal pressure at a time when public sector workers expect to negotiate wage increases. I am not sure that you are aware that Boards of Education face increased fiscal pressure at a time when demands for student support are increasing.

The Cooperative Gains Mandate is intended to protect the Province's fiscal plan while increasing employers' flexibility in funding wage increases and assisting them in reaching voluntarily negotiated collective agreements. Our Board of Education's mandate is to provide quality education for each and every student. This means that we employ the appropriate number of teachers, administrators and support staff and provide programs to fulfill our mandate. To accomplish our goals, annually our needs exceed the present funding structure.

Minister McRae, you ask that the savings be real and measurable. I would like to explain what is real and measurable. Real and measurable is the unexpected and presently unfunded employer contribution increase of 1.3% of salary for the Teachers' Pension Plan totaling \$1.2 million per year for the Greater Victoria School District. Real and measurable is the \$507,000 out of this year's budget as well as an additional \$507,000 out of the 2013/2014 budget for the Cooperative Gains Savings Plan. Minister McRae, let me assure you that if there were savings to be had, we would be using them to support student learning in classrooms. You asked that savings be incremental. I trust you understand that our needs are also incremental. You ask that savings not be generated by transferring costs to the public. I can assure you that we are looking for parental involvement; not parental donations or fees. And you ask that the savings not be generated by reducing service levels to the public. Minister McRae, as Board Chair, I know the staff and the School District and let me assure you that every person contributes to the service levels to our public. Nobody who works in the Greater Victoria School District is superfluous to our needs.

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To be clear, the Cooperatives Gains Mandated savings plan would negatively impact the delivery of educational programs for students.

I appreciate that you would like to have saving plans completed by mid-January in order that bargaining can continue. If we were able to create a savings plan by mid-January, it would be used to resolve our budget shortfall for the 2013/2014 school year. If our Board had an additional \$507,000 (1.5%) in our current fiscal year, it would have been directed to support education in our schools.

I would respectfully request that you rescind your letter of December 3, 2012, prior to December 21, 2012. I understand that this would be tight timelines for you; however, it is imperative that Boards of Education in this Province spend their time focused on educating our students.

Sincerely,



Peg Orchardton

Board Chair

cc Trustees, Greater Victoria School District  
All Boards of Education, c/o BCSTA  
Adrian Dix, Leader of the Opposition  
Robin Austin, Education Critic  
Brad Hall, President, CUPE 947  
Gilles Larose, President, CUPE 382  
Barry O'Neill, CUPE BC

[Letter from Minister of Education 2012 12 03](#)