



# BOARD OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 61 (GREATER VICTORIA)  
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October 9, 2013

The Honourable Peter Fassbender  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fassbender:

**RE: Funding for Support Staff Collective Agreement Increases**

Our Board has received your letter dated August 26, 2013 providing information about the savings plans needed to support this round of collective bargaining within the K-12 education sector.

The Greater Victoria Board of Education continually strives to maximize programs and services for students. Our district has had to develop an annual savings plan just to maintain service levels. The basic principle of our budget process parallels the principles of the cooperative gains mandate and these measures have already been used to achieve previous budget reductions. Over the past ten years, this Board has closed schools, reduced staffing, cut discretionary budgets, participated in shared services initiatives and worked to develop additional sources of revenue. While we believe that our employees are due a fair wage increase, your request that we find additional savings to pay the wage increase presents us with a significant challenge.

Our district is carrying a structural deficit estimated to be \$9.8 million for the 2014/2015 school year due to the impact of declining enrolment and the fact that funding increases provided by the Ministry have not kept pace with cost pressures. Add to this the on-going cost of the support staff compensation increase of \$1.2 million, the structural deficit increases to \$11.0 million. A key strategy for our board in minimizing the budget and service reductions required to balance the 2014/2015 budget will be to apply any cost savings and additional revenues from the current year to help offset a portion of the funding shortfall, however budget reductions will be required.

While we understand that most of the public sector has concluded collective agreements under the cooperative gains mandate, it is our view that the education sector is unique. School boards throughout the Province have been facing annual provincial funding shortfalls, declining enrolment and additional costs, including for example, the teachers' pension plan rate increase, MSP premium increases, higher B.C. Hydro costs and general inflation, which have led to service level reductions in the K-12 sector. Since the Province has controlled the negotiations, it is essential that the Province provides funding to school districts to cover the costs associated with agreements reached with support staff unions.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "P. Orcheron".

Peg Orcheron  
Board Chair

Cc: Board of Trustees  
John Gaiptman, Superintendent of Schools  
BCSTA  
All BC Boards of Education