



BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 61 (GREATER VICTORIA)
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August 07, 2014

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

Dear Minister Fassbender:

I write today on behalf of the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria). Our Board is quite taken aback by your government's unilateral announcement regarding the repurposing of education dollars to provide \$40.00 per day for child care in the event that the current labour dispute extends into the 2014-2015 school year.

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and your government as a whole appears to have completely lost focus on the issues at hand, firstly supporting public education, and, secondly negotiating a collective agreement with the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF). Our Board has repeatedly called on your government to properly fund and resource public education. We along with other Boards and the British Columbia School Trustees' Association (BCSTA) have urged your government to focus on finding solutions to this bargaining impasse. We have called for mediation, and a renewed focus on finding a solution. We believe that there is a common purpose that is shared by the Ministry of Education and the BCTF—the recognition of the value of public education for our youth in British Columbia.

This announcement does damage to an already damaged relationship between the parties, it undermines public education and further it signals to parents and students that the government is planning for continuing uncertainty and confusion in the K-12 public education system. Your energy would be far better spent in finding a solution to this impasse.

It is ironic that on the very day that your government makes this announcement you received the BCSTA "Back to School Action Plan". Your government's actions, taken without consultation and with a seemingly complete disregard for co-governance will not lead to certainty. We urge your government to support the BCSTA "Back to School Action Plan".

We are less than a month away from the school year start-up. We now have a circumstance where everyone involved in the K-12 system in BC is unsure as to when the school year will begin. Minister our concern is for our students—they do not get a “do over” and there is no second chance for them to fully regain what will be lost.

Minister, we are very concerned that both parties are working at brinkmanship when both parties need to be advocating for public education and our students. Now is the time to be focussing on solutions and keeping education dollars in Education, for the benefit of our students, parents, teachers and public education itself.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "P. Orchardton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Peg Orchardton
Board Chair

Cc: Sherri Bell, Superintendent of Schools
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Boards of Education, c/o BCSTA
Honourable Christy Clark, Premier
Honourable Mike De Jong, Minister of Finance
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British Columbia Public School Employers' Association
British Columbia Teachers' Federation
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