



BOARD OF EDUCATION

*Chair: Edith Loring-Kuhanga Vice-Chair: Diane McNally
Trustees: Tom Ferris, Elaine Leonard, Deborah Nohr, Peg Orcheron
Rob Paynter, Jordan Watters, Ann Whiteaker*

**SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 61 (GREATER VICTORIA)
556 BOLESKINE ROAD, VICTORIA, BC V8Z 1E8
PHONE (250) 475-4106 FAX (250) 475-4112**

May 16, 2016

The Honourable Mike Bernier
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Bernier:

RE: School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) Needs Budget

Each year School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) engages in a broad based consultative process requesting input from our educational partner groups, parent advisory councils and the public regarding the delivery of learning services to our student population. Each year through our process the groups involved reach the same conclusion: the Ministry of Education is not providing the level of funding required to meet the educational needs of our students.

The district spends its funds efficiently and effectively but there is a gap between what the district receives in provincial government funding and what is required to provide the necessary programming and supports to ensure continued student success. The Board of Education encourages the Minister to support the November 2015 recommendation of the government's own Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for the K-12 Public Education sector to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia to:

"Provide stable, sustainable and adequate funding to enable school districts to fulfil their responsibility to continue to provide access to quality public education, with recognition of the increased costs that school districts have incurred."

This recommendation is consistent with the needs expressed by our school community. In past years, the Greater Victoria Board of Education has made numerous challenging budget decisions that included closing eight schools, eliminating administrative positions and supplies, reducing facilities supplies budgets and relocating educational programs. The school district has been on the leading edge of participating in shared service initiatives in order to realize cost savings. Every effort has been made to maintain a focus on the best possible outcome for students.

The Board of Education acknowledges the increase in the Learning Improvement/Teacher Education Fund grant from \$60 million in 2013-2014 to \$100 million in 2015-2016. This has enabled the district to hire 33 more teachers and 17 more educational assistants during the current school year to support the needs of our students as compared to 13 additional teachers and 17 additional educational assistants in 2013-2014. This increase in funding is beneficial; however, it still does not address all of the student needs that exist in the school district.

As part of the process to allocate the Learning Improvement/Teacher Education Fund, principals, teachers and support staff engaged in a collaborative approach to identify the additional services needed to adequately meet the needs of their students. The Board of Education also asked its education partner groups for input about unmet needs that will make a difference to our students. After allocating the Learning Improvement/Teacher Education Fund of \$3.3 million for teacher and

educational assistant time to schools, the unmet need identified by the schools and education partner groups to support students was 52 teachers, 50 CUPE support staff, 1 behavioural consultant, 9.8 speech language pathologists, and 3 centralized support staff for a total cost of \$8.3 million. Needs were expressed in the following areas:

- Special Education: teachers for learning support, special education and English Language Learning and educational assistants
- Specialist support such as an increase in speech language pathologist and psychologist positions
- Extra teachers including an instructional focus on literacy, numeracy and technology and to reduce class size
- Counselling and Teacher-Librarians
- Technology integration into classrooms
- Ensuring that schools are clean, safe and well-maintained

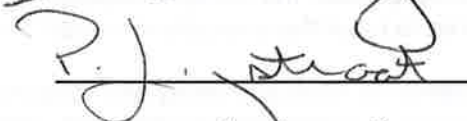
Without appropriate funding, it is extremely difficult to meet our legal obligations, particularly with respect to students with individual education plans, to create innovative programs, and to provide the technological and skills training, and personalized learning opportunities that keep students engaged and best prepares them for a world beyond the classroom. We urge the Government to meet their obligation to fully fund public education to ensure that the diverse learning needs of our students are met.

Sincerely,

Edith Loring-Kuhanga, Board Chair
Greater Victoria School District



Piet Langstraat, Superintendent
Greater Victoria School District



Chief Ron Sam
Songhees First Nation



Jason Gammon, Acting President
Greater Victoria Teachers' Association



Melanie Houston, President
Allied Specialists' Association



Jane Massy, President
CUPE Local 947



Fred Schmidt, President
CUPE Local 382



Read Jorgensen, President
Victoria Principals' and Vice Principals' Association



cc: Board of Education
All BC School Boards, c/o BCSTA
GVSD Unions and Associations
Local Media
Piet Langstraat, Superintendent of Schools
Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer

