



November 25, 2016

Ref: 191383

Edith Loring-Kuhanga, Chair
Board of Education
School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
Email: vhanley@sd61.bc.ca

Dear Ms. Loring-Kuhanga:

Thank you for your letter of October 28, 2016, recommending amendments to the *School Act* to require a by-election within one year of the appointment of an official trustee.

I understand the recent appointment of official trustees to two school districts in the province has raised concerns for boards of education and the broader education sector as a whole. School trustees are best placed to represent the needs and views of their local communities, and as such, democratic representation is at the heart of the public school system in British Columbia.

However, in both recent cases, there were serious issues with the boards' governance practices, as well as with their respective approaches to financial matters and fiscal management. I would like to emphasize government's decision to appoint an official trustee in these circumstances was not taken lightly. It is our belief these appointments will help to ensure continuity and stability within the school districts, and ultimately to support the needs of students going forward.

With respect to your request to amend the *School Act*, please be aware the legislation currently allows an election to be called at any time after the appointment of an official trustee. As I am sure you will agree, the appointment of an official trustee is a significant governance change for these school districts. It is important to allow the districts sufficient time to ensure their financial affairs are in order and to adapt to their new governance structure before a by-election is contemplated. In the case of the Vancouver and North Okanagan-Shuswap School Districts, both appointments will be in place for at minimum one year, at which time government will re-assess the status of appointments and the prospect of a by-election.

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Again, thank you for writing about these important issues. If you have any further concerns or questions regarding this matter, or about the *School Act*, please contact Dave Duerksen, Executive Director, Legislation, Policy and Governance Branch, by phone at (250) 387-8037 or by email at Dave.Duerksen@gov.bc.ca.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Bernier".

Mike Bernier
Minister