



Board of Education

School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
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June 16, 2022

via email: educ.minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC V8W 9E2
ATTENTION: Honourable Jennifer Whiteside

Dear Minister Whiteside:

RE: **2022-2023 Annual Budget**

On April 7, 2022, the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) gave third reading of the subject budget bylaw.

The Board appreciates the unique circumstances of navigating a global pandemic and the collective challenges of the economy in a post pandemic context. As a public Board of Education carrying the Minister's mandate and tasked with ensuring quality public education delivery during and after the pandemic, it is imperative that Government is aware of the consequences and impact of provincial funding decisions and resulting budget decisions in Greater Victoria, and that Government takes action to assist school districts.

GVSD is in its second budget cycle of structural deficit resulting from pandemic enrolment loss of both local and international students, partially unfunded collective agreement increases and unfunded inflationary pressures. Compounding these pressures are aging infrastructure, escalating deferred maintenance liability, high cost of effectively advancing climate initiatives and increasing local contributions required for major capital projects.

The Board takes stewardship of its budget very seriously and is committed to exploring all efficiencies to realign resources to balance the budget, and at the same time and most

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importantly, providing a quality, equitable, inspiring, supportive, and progressive education for all students.

During the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 budget cycles the Board has had to make difficult decisions to reduce services and supports to students, staff, and families. Compounding pressure is the static annual facilities grant funding (\$4.4m annually), while deferred maintenance (\$319m) in our schools continues to escalate.

For this and next school year the Board trimmed \$9.1m or 4% from its operating expenditures while re-investing only \$2.2m to realign priorities in support of learning and infrastructure. With a net reduction of \$6.9m over two years, GVSD's students have been impacted.

Reductions over the two years include youth and family counsellors and outreach workers to maintain elementary school counsellors, French immersion teachers, collaboration time, gifted teachers, elementary and middle school strings and band, career centre teachers, school and district leadership staffing, and school supply budgets. Further reductions include daytime custodians, human resources administration, governance meetings and engagement tools and technology, information technology support staffing, technology hardware refresh cycles and clerical staffing to name a few.

The 2021 inflation rate is 3.4% and is estimated to go as high as 5.64% in 2022. With per pupil funding amounts unchanged for 2022-2023 and unknown for 2023-2024, this equates to estimated increased, unfunded costs of \$1.7m over two years for goods and services. The District expects to have a third consecutive structural deficit of \$2.6m for 2023-2024 which will require further reductions.

The Board of Education calls on the Minister of Education and Child Care to:

- 1) Increase per pupil funding amounts by at least inflation and collective agreement increases to cover basic cost increases;
- 2) Reinstate adequate COVID support funds to assist districts in recovering from the pandemic;
- 3) Fully fund any collective agreement increases using a funding distribution model that recognizes and funds the unique staffing levels of each district;
- 4) Provide adequate funding for capital projects with less contribution from local school districts;
- 5) Accelerate funding and advocacy for climate initiatives that will meet Government and local targets.

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Without adequate, stable funding, the District is unable to maintain its programs and services to students in order to fulfill the Minister's mandate relative to quality education, mental health, reconciliation, modernized and safe schools, classroom supports for students and relieving fundraising pressure from parents.

Collectively we have weathered the pandemic and kept students and staff safe, learning and working. The cost is becoming too great for districts to bear locally and requires a concerted effort by Government to see Boards through the recovery by adequately funding and resourcing its mandate at the local level.

Yours sincerely,



Ryan Painter
Chair, Board of Education

Cc: Board of Education, School District No. 61
Deb Whitten, Interim Superintendent, School District No. 61
Kim Morris, Secretary-Treasurer, School District No. 61
Connor McCoy, President, Victoria Principals and Vice-Principals Association
Chief Ron Sam, Songhees Nation
Chief Rob Thomas, Esquimalt Nation
Chair Janice Simcoe, Urban Peoples' House Indigenous Advisory
President Caitlin Bird, Metis Nation of Victoria
Angela Carmichael, President, VCPAC
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