



# Board of Education

School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)  
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*Chair: Nicole Duncan Vice-Chair: Karin Kwan*  
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*Derek Gagnon, Emily Mahboobi, Diane McNally, Rob Paynter*

14 July, 2023

Premier David Eby  
Office of the Premier  
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**ATTENTION:** Premier David Eby  
Honourable Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care  
Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Finance

Dear Premier Eby, Minister Singh and Minister Conroy:

**RE: Funding for Public Education**

The Board of Education of School District No.61 (Greater Victoria) unanimously passed the following motion:

*That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) direct the Board Chair to write to the Minister of Education and Child Care, Minister of Finance and Premier advocating for additional funding.*

We appreciate that provincial governments have many competing priorities to consider when determining how best to allocate public funds across program areas. However, unfunded inflationary costs effectively reduced our operating grant funding, directly impacting available program funding for the 2022-23 school year. In the Greater Victoria School District unfunded inflationary costs will again effectively reduce program funding for the 2023-24 school year. Inflationary pressures include increased Canada Pension Plan contribution rates and employer health and benefit premiums, such as WorkSafe. These inflationary pressures are also impacting the significant cost associated with paid illness and injury leave which is unfunded. Inflationary costs also include unavoidable cost pressures in services and supply budgets such as fuel and software licenses.

We wish to highlight that the overall decrease in purchasing power directly impacts the school district's ability to sustainably maintain facilities, renew technology and learning resources, and to fund needed equipment and supplies. We have seen a 19% increase in the cost associated with local mileage claims, a 300% increase in custodial supply costs for consumables like toilet paper and paper towel, and copy/printer paper has increased by 38% this year alone. Our network infrastructure costs have increased 20%, while our insurance premiums through School Protection Plan (SPP) have increased by 23% in a single year.

School districts with growing enrollment may be better positioned to absorb these inflationary cost pressures through their operating grant funding. However, since basic inflationary costs are not being funded, a school district with declining enrollment or relatively stable enrollment like the Greater Victoria School District experience budget pressures that can only be addressed through program reductions. We must emphasize that in school districts such as ours it is not possible to fund inflationary pressure through further reductions and also continue to meet basic requirements including human resource management, facility maintenance, and managing risks such as those related to health and safety, data protection and regulatory compliance. When funding does not keep pace with inflation, Boards of Education are left with few options to achieve a balanced budget and consequently much needed programming is cut.

In terms of capital project funding, we are pleased to see the province make significant investments in much needed capital projects including funding seismic upgrades and new schools. However, we are struggling to address increasing capital cost pressures, as material and labour costs continue to escalate. Quotes and bids for services and supplies are coming in well above anticipated costs. Of further concern is the provincial calculations of the required capital project contribution to be borne by school districts. While the calculation of a school district's capital contribution is purported to be based on what a school district can afford to contribute, in Greater Victoria these calculations will leave our Board of Education with an even greater projected budgetary shortfall for many more years to come.

We do acknowledge the recent cost of living allowance tied to wages negotiated in the context of provincial labour settlements. We are grateful for this support. However, we are also keen to confirm that the full cost of exempt staff salary and benefit increases will be fully funded beyond the 2023-2024 school year.

We also wish to bring to your attention that the basic per pupil allocation for each FTE student enrolled has only increased by approximately 16.2% in five years, from \$7,423 in 2018-19 to \$8,625 for 2023-24. Further, British Columbia is still investing less than the national average on education. We know that a strong public education system significantly improves the life chances and well-being of young people in British Columbia, and we sincerely hope to see our province invest more in public education.

We are confident that by working together in partnership we can see more public funds directed to support students learning and well-being in our Province. Young people are indeed the future of our province and they each deserve our utmost care, attention and financial support.

Yours sincerely,



Nicole Duncan  
Chair, Board of Education  
School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)

cc: Board of Education, School District No. 61  
Deb Whitten, Superintendent, School District No. 61  
Katrina Stride, Secretary-Treasurer, School District No. 61  
Jane Massy, President, CUPE 947, School District No. 61  
Paul Knapik, President, CUPE 382, School District No. 61  
Ilda Turcotte, President, Greater Victoria Teachers' Association  
Tracy Humphreys, President, Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, School District No. 61  
Jeanette Alexander, President, Allied Specialists' Association, School District No. 61  
Brenna O'Connor, President, Victoria Principals and Vice-Principals Association, School District No. 61