



Board of Education

School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
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Chair: Nicole Duncan Vice-Chair: Karin Kwan
Trustees: Natalie Baillaut, Angela Carmichael, Mavis David,
Derek Gagnon, Emily Mahboobi, Diane McNally, Rob Paynter

March 1, 2024

Re: Victoria Police Department Chief Del Manak's comments about student safety in the Greater Victoria School District

To Our Learning Community,

The Board and staff of the Greater Victoria School District are committed to providing a safe environment for the students and staff in our schools. As we continue to prioritize the safety and well-being of our students, we wanted to take a moment to address some important aspects regarding school safety and the presence of School Police Liaison Officers (SPLOs) within our school community. SPLOs have not been in Victoria or Esquimalt schools since 2018. To be clear the decision regarding whether to fund SPLO positions in the Victoria Police Department is not a decision that would be made by the Board of Education.

Our existing protocols in respect to critical incidents, lockdowns (hold and secure) and violent threat risk assessments continue to be in effect.

Ensuring a secure and nurturing environment for our students is a shared commitment that involves collaboration between educators, parents, and community partners. We understand the significance of creating a safe space where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Our expectation is that Police communicate potential safety concerns which may have an impact on our schools through formal channels, including through the existing protocols outlined above. To ensure that approaches to communication from police regarding potential safety risks in community, that may impact our schools are communicated in a clear, consistent and timely manner we have directed our Superintendent to move toward a formalized communication protocol with policing services.

We acknowledge that addressing potential gang activity in the South Island is the responsibility of policing services. We welcome any information the police can provide us regarding the steps they are taking to address this safety risk to the community. Where there is a risk to a member of our learning community we will continue to activate our existing protocols to appropriately address it in collaboration with our staff, and community partners, which includes police services.

Our staff continue to monitor schools for safety concerns and to seek support from appropriate community partners including police services when necessary. Last year we shared information about

the risks associated with potential gang recruitment on the South Island in a letter to parents. The safety of our students is of the highest priority, and we encourage students and families to report any safety issues to local police and the principal of their school. It's essential to emphasize that our approach to school safety goes beyond the mere presence of law enforcement. We are dedicated to implementing comprehensive strategies that prioritize prevention, intervention, on-going risk assessment and wrap around support for our students through collaborations in multi-disciplinary teams. This includes promoting positive behavior, fostering strong relationships between students and staff, and providing access to mental health resources.

Our goal is to create and maintain safe, welcoming, and inclusive school environments for all members of our learning community. We are committed to maintaining good relationships with local police. Police continue to play a key role in keeping our school communities safe.

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
Darren Reed, 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
Brenna O'Connor, President, Victoria Principals and Vice-Principals Association, School District No. 61