

April 9, 2010

The Honourable Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid
Minister of Education
P.O. Box 9045, STN Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister MacDiarmid:

RE: Meeting with the North Vancouver Board of Education

I am writing to you on behalf of the North Vancouver Board of Education to invite you to a meeting with our Board and the Presidents' Council to discuss several important issues affecting the North Vancouver School District. The Presidents' Council is a committee chaired by the Superintendent and includes the presidents of the North Vancouver Teachers' Association, the Association of Elementary School Administrators, the Secondary Study Group (secondary administrators), CUPE, the North Vancouver Parent Advisory Committee and the Chairperson of the Board of Education.

The North Vancouver Board of Education is very concerned about the adequacy of funding expected for our School District next fiscal year. While we appreciate that the provincial grant is expected to increase by \$698,430 over the current year, we are very concerned that this increase will be completely inadequate to address our needs for the 2010/11 school year. The increased costs of teachers' salaries and benefits including the pension increase are nearly \$3 million. In addition, we face the higher costs of the MSP premium increases for all employees, the cost of purchasing carbon offsets and additional costs of the implementation of full day kindergarten over and above funding provided by the Ministry of Education.

Our Board has engaged the community since the fall of 2010 with the goal of identifying \$6 million in cost savings to balance the budget in 2010/11 (\$10 million over three years). To achieve reductions of this magnitude will involve significant staff layoffs, the possible closure of up to four elementary schools and the possible closure or reconfiguration of our alternative programs. While our staff is taking all possible steps to mitigate the impact, our Board, partner groups, and especially parents, are very concerned that such a significant budget reduction for 2010/11 will have a dramatically negative impact on services to students.

We also wish to discuss the Ministry of Education's policy change that no longer allows school districts to dispose of surplus school sites. The North Vancouver School District has experienced the impact of declining enrolment more significantly than most other school districts and as a result has closed several schools. The School District currently has four surplus school sites from closures in previous years. Another two schools (Ridgeway Annex and Balmoral) will be closed in 2011 and 2012, pending the completion of two replacement schools and the Board is currently considering the closure of up to four more schools as part of this year's budget process. With the exception of two French Immersion schools that may require portables, we are able to fully accommodate the implementation of All Day Kindergarten in existing schools and still have sufficient capacity to implement further early learning programs in our schools without the need to reopen any previously closed schools. The Board wishes to discuss potential strategies for dealing with our surplus school properties with you.

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The Board and the Presidents' Council would be pleased to meet with you at your convenience to discuss these important issues facing the North Vancouver School District. If a meeting with the Presidents' Council is not possible, at a minimum, our Board of Education would appreciate a meeting with you.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Skinner', written over a horizontal line.

Susan Skinner
Chairperson
Board of Education

SHS/mg

cc: John Lewis, Superintendent of Schools, NVSD
Board of Education of School District No 44 (North Vancouver)