



NORTH VANCOUVER SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 44

721 Chesterfield Avenue, North Vancouver BC V7M 2M5
Tel 604.903.3444 Fax 604.903.3445 www.nvsd44.bc.ca

October 24, 2008

By email to: ClerkComm@leg.bc.ca

Office of the Clerk of Committees
Room 224
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

**RE: Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services'
budget consultations**

Dear Committee,

On behalf of the North Vancouver School District, the North Vancouver Board of Education, the North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council, the Secondary Study Group, the Association of Elementary Administrators and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 389, we are writing in joint advocacy to support adequate budget and planning for new initiatives in public education. As executive leaders of the primary organizations involved in the development and delivery of public education to students in North Vancouver, we are pleased to have the opportunity to present this submission as a reflection of our shared concern and commitment to the future of adequately funded public education in British Columbia.

In this submission, we have chosen to emphasize a budget approach to support the provision of funding for all-day Kindergarten for five-year-olds that is currently under review by the Province's Early Childhood Learning Agency. We believe that stable, predictable and complete funding and careful, long-term planning for this program are essential for its success.

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We present our requests as responses to questions two and three in the *Budget 2009 Consultation Paper*, in keeping with the committee's guidelines for public participation in the budget consultation process.

Q.2 Given that the Province has committed 2/3 of all new spending in the next 3 years to health care, what choices would you make on other priority investments in 2009?

1) **Prioritize education.** Education should be declared a priority investment, and, as such, should be provided for with stable, adequate funding. Lead time and planning is essential for school districts to properly plan and allocate resources. School Districts should not be expected to cover unforeseen expenditures or shortfalls in funding through funding changes launched after the annual budget process has closed.

Q.3 Government has now reduced its debt from government operations to a level not seen since 1991. How should we invest the savings from lower interest payments on the reduced operating debt?

1) **Full funding for all new education initiatives.** The savings the provincial government has achieved through debt-reduction should be directed to support *all* new Ministry-led education initiatives, including full-day Kindergarten for five-year-olds.

It is essential that the universal full-day Kindergarten model only be implemented under the provision of new funding. We do not support the reallocation of current funding to the deprivation of other programs. We ask that the Ministry proceed only after a thorough budgeting process. This process should forecast expenditures for all the necessary resources and contingencies of implementing and sustaining universal full-day Kindergarten without negatively impacting any other School District program or service.

2) **Full funding for all new research, consultation and planning of new education programs and services.** We follow, with interest, the work of the Early Childhood Learning Agency into the potential for optional all-day early learning programs for children ages three and four. We ask that budgeting be adequate to facilitate thorough consultation with school districts on the feasibility of such programs that includes a full consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of providing child care within the school system. As a school district, we engage our staff and community in long-term facility planning on a timeframe of 10 – 20 years. For this reason, and considering the inherent complexities of accommodating very young children in school environments, we ask for the earliest involvement in guiding and developing a vision for early learning and childcare that will in turn allow us to plan and design facilities appropriately and efficiently.

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3) **Commitment to long-term planning.** As educators and education administrators, we advocate for an end to short-term directives and initiatives from the Ministry of Education that are not supported by full funding and reasonable timelines. The practice of announcing new initiatives that follow short term trends and are then imposed upon School Boards without the means to pay for implementation leads to confusion, inconsistent implementation and varying results of reduced quality throughout the province. We ask for adequate funding, provided per pupil, K-12 to allow all school districts to plan and focus on the essential work of educating students to their fullest potential.

Our commitment to full-day Kindergarten for five-year-olds

Through the North Vancouver School District's own community consultation process, "Towards the Future for Schools" we have ascertained a strong interest by the community for the provision of universal full-day Kindergarten for five year olds. We feel that the Ministry's responsiveness to creating a universal program of this kind for the needs of children and their families is commendable and provided full-funding is forthcoming, we are prepared to implement it throughout the North Vancouver School District.

The success of the School Districts own initiative: "Inspirations 44 all-day Kindergarten" program is a testament to the appeal of all-day K. However, the program is, at present, paid for by participants (excluding those students who qualify for full day funding by the Ministry) and is only available at five schools in the North Vancouver School District at this time.

Providing Ministry-funded, full-day Kindergarten for all five-year-olds will distribute the benefits of this program to all families in our school district and throughout British Columbia. It will allow participants to attend schools in their local neighborhoods, most often the same school they will continue to attend for their elementary education. We believe that this essential fairness and continuity represents values at the core of public education that should be accessible to all, and as such belongs in the provincial budget.

While we look to the Ministry for full funding for full-day Kindergarten, our school district has worked, with foresight, to initiate feasibility studies of the necessary adaptations and accommodations that may need to be made to school facilities to accommodate this program at every school. From a practical standpoint, the modifications, where required, can be made in time provided the School District receives the funding assurances and directive by the early spring.

Provided adequate funding is forthcoming, we are confident that we will be able to accommodate a place for every five-year-old in the School District at their neighborhood school, or a nearby school within the greater family of schools for their community for September 2009.

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In closing, we thank you for this opportunity to submit our recommendations and we look forward to working with all Ministries involved in the welfare and education of children to help find solutions to provide the very best educational environment for children throughout the Province.

Sincerely,

NORTH VANCOUVER
SCHOOL DISTRICT



John Lewis
Superintendent of Schools

NORTH VANCOUVER
BOARD OF EDUCATION



Chris Dorais
Chair

NORTH VANCOUVER
PARENT ADVISORY
COUNCIL



Lisa Cartwright
Chair

SECONDARY STUDY
GROUP



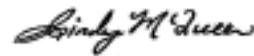
Mark James
Chair

ASSOCIATION OF
ELEMENTARY
ADMINISTRATORS



Karen Harrop
Chair

CANADIAN UNION OF
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
LOCAL 389



Cindy McQueen
President