

By email to: clerkcomm@leg.bc.ca

October 8, 2010

Select Standing Committee on
Finance and Government Services
Room 224
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

RE: Joint 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 North Vancouver Administrators, the North Vancouver Teachers' Association and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 389, we are writing in joint advocacy to support adequate funding for public education. This submission is a reflection of our shared concern and commitment to the future of a thriving and wholly supported public education system in British Columbia.

As each year goes by, we find the magnitude of cumulative years of underfunding not only forces further reductions in our service levels, but increasingly restricts our options to mediate the impacts upon our community. Layoffs, school closures and a restricted ability to pursue significant new sources of revenue have made it impossible for us to sustain all our expected services. At this time, we find ourselves deeply concerned about the Province's commitment to public education.

We have attached, for your reference, our *2010 Needs an Opportunities Budget*, which outlines how to address the widespread impacts our School District has experienced from chronic underfunding.

This situation is not unique to the North Vancouver School District, and needs to be addressed through a systematic, stable and adequate funding formula that supports the delivery and development of a world-class education for all students in British Columbia.

In its call for submissions, the Committee asks how government might direct additional resources should they become available. In order to assist the Committee we have organized our recommendations under three themes: 21st Century Learning, Sustainability and Supporting Early Learners.

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21st Century Learning

The Ministry of Education has expressed its aspiration to promote “21st Century Learning” throughout the Province. This is an area where the North Vancouver School District has developed considerable expertise. In fact, we have been formally engaged in 21st Century Learning initiatives since 1999.

At this time, we are uncertain as to the definition and mandate of the Ministry’s “21st Century Learning” and how this will serve to define and guide a vision for education in the province. We would caution against resources being applied without clear and cohesive direction on “21st Century Learning”. Instead, we ask that through a representative collaboration, the concept be productively defined in order that careful and appropriate allocation of funding and resources may follow. Acknowledging the work that has been done to date in North Vancouver and other school districts to prepare students for the future will be an important early step.

Sustainability

The Province has been clear in its ambitions to capitalize on clean energy and lead climate action. The North Vancouver School District has a strong history of commitment to sustainability, evidenced most dramatically in recent years by capital projects with LEED Silver qualifications, and the ambition to realize LEED Gold on its Education Services Centre, currently under construction.

While we are pleased to be partnering with the Ministry on several capital projects, chronic underfunding constrains our ability to provide the high standard of education services our community expects. To achieve energy efficiency savings and reduce our carbon footprint through the retrofit of existing building systems, it is imperative that the Annual Facilities Grant be increased and provided on a reliable basis.

As “*the natural place to learn*”, the North Vancouver School District is committed to sustainable facilities that enhance the learning and teaching environment. The Government’s practice of introducing new sustainability programs or resources (i.e., SmartTool) without funding in place to support them is a grave contradiction in its sustainability plan. Downloading the financing of such resources to school districts serves to divert resources from students and classrooms. Sustainability should not come at a cost to student learning.

Supporting Early Learners

Through StrongStart locations in our schools, partnerships with local pre-school providers and our “Inspirations 44” Full Day Kindergarten program, the North Vancouver School District has shown leadership and innovation in early learning. Our experience reinforces our belief that the Full Day Kindergarten initiative has great merit in giving students the best possible beginning to school.

However, in providing funding for approximately 60% of the required spaces for this year’s Kindergarten students, our school district was greatly challenged to expand the availability (to approximately 75%) of the program this year. As a result, other programs and resources were strained in order to meet the needs of our community in a fair and equitable manner. This was a regrettable situation, and we strongly discourage the Ministry from such partial funding initiatives in the future. Instead, the introduction of new programs should be carefully and collaboratively planned so that they are fully and fairly funded and accessible to all from the onset.

We appreciate that the economic downturn has created an untenable situation for all levels of government and widespread hardship in many areas of the private sector. We have responded by finding efficiencies in all areas of our operations. A strong and revitalized British Columbia is also a sustainable British Columbia, and we appeal to the Committee to ensure consistent sustainable decision-making in all areas of government, including education.

We believe that maintaining and investing in a world-class educational system serves the long-term best interests of the province and citizens. In closing, we ask that any additional resources be applied to ensure education programs and services continue to meet the needs of all students and society as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

NORTH VANCOUVER
SCHOOL DISTRICT



John Lewis
Superintendent of Schools

NORTH VANCOUVER
BOARD OF EDUCATION



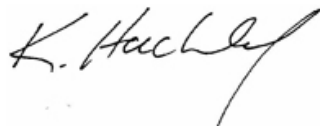
Franci Stratton
Chairperson

NORTH VANCOUVER
PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL



Mike McGraw
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SECONDARY STUDY
GROUP



Karim Hachlaf
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NORTH VANCOUVER
ADMINISTRATORS



Doug Beveridge
Chair

CANADIAN UNION OF
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES LOCAL
389



Cindy McQueen
President

NORTH VANCOUVER
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION



Daniel Storms
President

cc. Margaret MacDiarmid, Minister of Education

North Vancouver School District

THE 2010/11 NEEDS and OPPORTUNITY BUDGET

A. Discussions of the 2010/11 Operating Budget

Faced with the prospect of challenging financial circumstances, before the unanticipated action of the Ministry of Education to eliminate the Annual Facilities Grant of more than \$3 million, the Board of Education established the preparation of the 2010/11 Operating Budget as a priority to be address earlier in the school year to enable increased community consultation. Throughout the course of the 2009/2010 school year, the Board, through its *Finance and Facilities Standing Committee*, engaged the community through a *Budget Challenge 2010* public consultation process and through a subsequent *Restructuring 2010* public consultation process. Numerous meetings were held to consider and communicate matters relating to the challenges to be faced to prepare a balanced 2010/11 Annual Operating Budget. As a result of the significant challenges faced and the proposed changes to programs and service levels, these meetings were well-attended by concerned parents, community members and education partners.

During these public meetings, trustees and education partners considered the following matters:

- The current circumstances and challenges for the 2010/11 operating budget
- The magnitude and impacts of revenue reductions that had occurred during prior budget years
- The certain impacts of anticipated further funding and expenditure restraints in 2010/11
- Proposed reductions and their potential impacts in 2010/11
- The potential need to consider school closures and program consolidations.

The sentiments, views and expectations and opinions of participants at the *Budget Challenge 2010* and *Restructuring 2010* meetings included the following:

- The need for communication with all partner/stakeholder groups during the process of developing the 2010/11 operating budget
- The need to provide opportunities for partner groups to be actively involved and to express their views respecting the development of the 2010/11 operating budget and the impact of budget decisions on the level of programs and services provided to students
- The importance of ensuring that parents and the community at large understand the challenges faced by the Board in balancing its expenditures to available revenue and the effect this will have on the level of programs and services provided to students
- The concern that despite promises and assurances by the province, education funding has not been protected to the extent expected and assumed by parents and our community
- The need for the Board to protest the imposition of unfunded costs on school districts through a continually expanding mandate.

In short, Trustees and education partners expressed the view that previous and current provincial governments were not providing funding increases commensurate with cost increases and expanding mandates and as a consequence, were not providing, through its operating grants, sufficient funds for public education.

The preparation of the 2010/11 Operating Budget

The challenge associated with preparing the 2010/11 Operating Budget was to address a funding shortfall of approximately \$6 to \$7 million through a combination of revenue improvements and expenditure reductions. Projected revenues from all sources other than the provincial grant have decreased as a consequence of the current economic conditions. Expenditure reductions in the amount of \$6.5 million were required in the development of the 2010/11 Operating Budget. The Board adopted its 2010/11 Operating Budget Bylaw on May 26, 2010.

B. Concerns with the 2010/11 Operating Budget

The 2010/11 Operating Budget adopted by the Board on May 26, 2010 was not a needs budget – it balanced planned expenditures to estimated revenue from all sources, meeting the requirements of the *School Act*. The 2010/11 Operating Budget does not enable the preservation of current service levels and provides for no restoration of services eroded over the past years of under funding, fiscal controls and expenditure restraints and provides no contingency to address the materialization of risk factors throughout 2010/11.

The reduction in service levels, unmet needs, the accumulated impacts of expenditure reductions in the past years and the risk factors associated with restraints, have been reported to the Board on a number of occasions.

Included among the risk factors are:

- Unforeseen and/or inescapable changes in the forecasted revenue and/or forecasted expenditures
- Unanticipated and/or unavoidable increases in the costs of goods or services
- Emergent issues related to essential replacements or repairs of aging instructional and non-instructional equipment
- Emergent issues related to aging facilities, related occupational health and safety issues, and related health board requests
- Downloading of responsibilities and costs from other senior levels of government including the carbon tax and associated reporting procedures
- Security issues and the associated costs of vandalism, break-ins and theft
- Replacement of aging technology and the acquisition of needed new technologies/supports
- Costs of compliance, including legal costs, associated with increasing regulatory powers and requirements of various government agencies

Without a contingency, the Board would have to address the materialization of risk factors by reducing planned expenditures for 2010/11.

The 2010/11 Operating Budget adopted by the Board provided for a reduction in current service levels and no opportunity for any restoration of services eliminated or reduced over the past years. The management of unmet needs and expectations become more challenging each year.

Significant unmet needs and challenges include:

- Class sizes in core courses at secondary schools
- Class sizes at grades 4 to 7
- Implementation of Full Day Kindergarten
- Actual costs associated with supports for students with special learning needs
- Increased professional and program development supports for teachers and support staff
- Occupational health and safety programs and wellness supports
- School and classroom supplies and materials
- Actual costs associated with an expanded mandate for early learning, community literacy, adult learning, student safety and healthy living
- Actual costs associated with expanded accountability measures including the administration of the Foundation Skills Assessment
- Actual costs associated with provincially negotiated contracts, including wages and benefits
- Applications of information technology: hardware, software and technical supports
- New and replacement furniture and equipment, including workstation upgrades
- Custodial and maintenance frequency of services
- Energy efficiency upgrades and related measures to achieve 'carbon neutral' mandates
- Mechanical systems maintenance and upgrades
- Interior painting
- Asphalt, fencing, exterior lighting and grounds repairs.

C. The 2010/11 Needs and Opportunity Budget

The Board submitted its first Opportunity Budget to the Minister of Education in October 2003. Through its 2003/04 Opportunity Budget, the Board argued that \$8,087,000 in additional funding was required to begin addressing unmet needs. The Board submitted a second Opportunity Budget to the Minister of Education for the 2004/05 Budget year, identifying additional funding needs in the amount of \$8,850,600. The Board submitted a third Opportunity Budget to the Minister of Education for the 2009/10 Budget year, identifying additional funding needs in the amount of \$10,900,000

The 2010/11 Needs and Opportunity Budget amount of \$16,400,000 is the Board's estimate of additional expenditures needed to preserve current services and to restore educational services, programs and supports, to address unmet and unfunded needs and to accommodate risk factors contained in the 2010/11 Operating Budget.

D. Components of the 2010/11 Needs and Opportunity Budget

Class sizes in core courses at secondary schools (\$2,100,000)

A decrease in the average class size by 2 students in Secondary courses would require an additional 21.0 FTE @ \$92,000 (average salary + benefits). Associated costs would include substitute costs, professional development and educational leadership.

Class sizes at Grades 4 to 7 (\$1,400,000)

A decrease in the average class size by 2 students in Grades 4 through 7 would require an additional 14.0 FTE @ \$92,000 (average salary + benefits). Associated costs would include substitute costs, professional development and educational leadership.

Support for the Implementation of Full Day Kindergarten (\$300,000)

As a consequence of the phased approach to the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten over two years and the demands for space within the community exceeding the spaces allocated by the Ministry of Education, the School District will need to allocate additional funds to support implementation. An additional 3.0 FTE @ \$92,000 (average salary + benefits) would be required.

Classroom supports for students with special learning needs (\$2,500,000)

An increase in Learning Assistance and Student Services staffing with the restoration of special education aides to prior service levels would help address needed supports for students with special learning needs.

Program support services for teachers and students (\$1,200,000)

Ongoing support of instructional practice and program delivery has been significantly reduced in recent years. Curricular, program and instructional support services have been reduced in the areas of Library services, English Second Language, Mathematics, Literacy, Aboriginal Education, Special Education, Gifted Programs, Alternate Programs and Careers. Reductions in Program Services and Library services will have an impact on the delivery of services to students at the classroom level.

Professional development of teachers and support staff (\$660,000)

Support for training of teachers and support staff has been reduced over successive budgets. The provision of \$660,000 is to address in service in areas of early learning, aboriginal student success, teaching mathematics, literacy instruction, the application of information technology, supporting students with special needs, teaching citizenship and social responsibility, implementing graduation requirements, and supporting a teacher mentorship program.

Leadership development and succession planning (\$880,000)

Positions of leadership and the time and resources necessary to support leadership activities and initiatives have been significantly reduced at both the administrator and teacher level. While administrative demands have continued to escalate, there has been a steady reduction in the time allocated for these important positions. Administrators and teachers both serve as instructional leaders at their schools in supporting improved student achievement. To provide for future leadership needs at both the school and district levels, there is a need for additional support.

Occupational Health and Safety/Wellness Programs (\$200,000)

Staff and program costs associated with programs and services to manage costs associated with absenteeism, on the job injuries, disability management and crisis and disaster planning.

School and classroom supplies and materials (\$1,500,000)

Block budgets have been maintained at significantly reduced levels with very limited funds available for replacement of curriculum/program materials and the purchase of required textbooks for instruction, and the maintenance of libraries. A very conservative increase of 50% annually would help relieve the reliance upon fund-raising and increased fees charged to students.

Costs associated with an expanded mandate for early learning, community literacy, adult learning, student safety and healthy living (\$600,000)

The expanded mandate of the Board of Education has not been adequately funded to meet the Board of Education's requirements to delivery early learning services and programs, community and district literacy initiatives, the 'education guarantee for adults' and to address student health and safety issues related to nutrition, daily physical activity, emergency services and procedures.

Costs associated with expanded accountability measures including the administration of the Foundation Skills Assessment (\$250,000)

The expanded accountability measures of the Ministry of Education and other Ministries and regulatory bodies have not been supported with adequate resources for their effective implementation for the intended purposes of improving student achievement.

Information Technology: hardware, software and supports (\$2,100,000)

Hardware: increasing the number of machines and planned replacement of existing machines every 4th year (\$1,000,000 annual increase).

Software: upgrades for student information and licensing costs (\$300,000 annual increase)

Connectivity: required upgrades to bandwidth to provide reasonable access to learning resources and business applications (\$500,000 annual increase)

Support: technical support for maintenance and repair (\$300,000 annual increase).

New and Replacement Furniture and Equipment (\$985,000)

Classroom/Instructional Equipment: allocate an allowance to secondary schools to permit a 25-year replacement cycle for equipment in Classrooms, Offices, Kitchens, Shops, Gyms, and Home Economics. (\$50,000 per school per year for 8 schools = \$400,000).

Workstation upgrades: ergonomic workstations to support the application of technology within classrooms are needed across the school district (\$250,000 per year for four years).

Communication Equipment: allocate funds for ongoing replacement of school communication equipment, including sound field systems (\$150,000 per year for four years).

Physical Education and Audio Visual Equipment: allocate funds to replace \$3,000 worth of PE equipment on a 20-year cycle and \$3,000 worth of AV equipment on a 10-year cycle for each of the 27 elementary schools (27 x \$6,000 = \$162,000).

Custodial Equipment: allocate funds to replace custodial equipment on a 10-year cycle (46 locations x \$5000 over 10 years = \$23,000 per year).

Custodial cleaning – increase frequency of service (\$500,000)

Restore custodial complement by adding 7 positions (\$350,000), allowing custodians more time to focus on cleaning washrooms and high traffic corridors, and providing replacement services for custodians absent on approved sick leave (\$150,000).

Mechanical Systems Preventive Maintenance (\$375,000)

Required to undertake long-term preventative maintenance, address 'carbon neutral' requirements, improve occupant comfort, speed up asbestos removal and/or encapsulation activities, increase building equipment lifespan and significantly reduce the risk of immediate shutdown due to equipment (e.g. boiler) failure.

Interior Painting (\$300,000)

Reinstate a ten-year cycle of full interior painting. Interior painting currently consists of spot touch-up only with no provision for full interior repainting.

Asphalt and Fencing (\$125,000)

Reinstate twenty-year cycle of asphalt and fencing replacement. Holes, cracks, and root upheavals prevalent on asphalt surfaces are currently repaired only where significant liability exists. Similarly, uncapped steel fence pipe poles, steel bands, wire ends, and unprotected bottom of fencing will be repaired only where significant liability exists.

Exterior Lighting (\$250,000)

Upgrade all school lighting over five years to bring exterior lighting to current WCB standards. The value of exterior lighting upgrade requirements at an average school is \$25,000.

Grounds Improvements and Repairs (\$175,000)

Allocate funds to support two additional Grounds workers (at \$57,500) to permit brush control twice a year, annual weeding, and to implement crime prevention measures through environmental design to help reduce costs associated with vandalism. Current program to upgrade grounds is limited by lack of funding to support and adequate staffing complement and necessary supplies and equipment.

E. Summary

The 2010/11 Operating Budget was not a needs budget – it balanced planned expenditures to estimated revenue from all sources, meeting the requirements of the *School Act*. The 2010/11 Operating Budget provided for no restoration of services eroded over the past years of under funding, fiscal controls and expenditure restraints and provided no contingency to address the materialization of risk factors throughout 2010/11.

The 2010/11 Needs and Opportunity Budget is a minimum needs budget, which includes \$16,400,000 over and above the 2010/11 Operating Budget to maintain and restore educational services, programs and supports to prior levels, to address unmet and unfunded needs, and to accommodate the risk factors associated with the 2010/11 Operating Budget.