



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

September 21, 2009

The Honourable Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid, MLA
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister MacDiarmid:

Subject: Cancellation of the 2009/10 Annual Facilities Grant

On behalf of the North Vancouver Board of Education, the North Vancouver School District, the North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council, the Secondary Study Group, the Association of Elementary Administrators, the North Vancouver Teachers' Association, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 389, we are writing to express our deep concerns and to make suggestions regarding the recent cancellation of the 2009/10 Annual Facilities Grant.

As you know from our letter of June 19, 2009, the North Vancouver Board of Education worked diligently throughout the spring of 2009 to address a funding shortfall of \$3.2 million to our operating budget for the coming school year. Through a careful planning process that included a high degree of stakeholder representation, we were able to deliver a balanced budget for the school year. The process required sacrifices to our programs and services and was concluded with reservations about the negative impacts the reduced budget would pass on to our students.

We received the Ministry's notice, dated August 27th, 2009 stating that the Ministry of Education would not provide the Annual Facilities Grant for the 2009/10 school year. The timing of this announcement, after the School District and community had endured an already arduous budget process, created a tumultuous setback to the beginning of the school year.

Again we stress, as we did in June, that to support the stated goals and mandate of the Ministry of Education, a new provincial funding model is necessary, one that respects the cycle of the school year budget process, acknowledges inflation, supports increasingly complex student needs, finances a growing mandate and restores educational and support services eroded by years of budget restraint. By way of example, we cite the expectations of the Ministry in regards to H1N1, which have placed increased demands on our staff and directed costly communications to communities—without any model to compensate Boards for these costs.

Without secure and stable funding from government, the work to plan and implement the most efficient and cost-effective use of resources is considerably compromised. As stated in the Ministry's Annual Facility Grant policy: *Each Board of Education is encouraged to develop a long-term maintenance plan that articulates a Board of Education's strategy with regard to maintaining or improving the condition of facilities within its inventory of capital assets.* Clearly, the current action to withhold anticipated funding invalidates not only the Board's strategic planning, but the very policy of the Ministry itself.

We encourage the Ministry to make a thoughtful analysis of the impacts of its decision to cancel the 2009/10 Annual Facilities Grant and the seriousness of the consequences to all students in British Columbia's public schools. In this way, we are optimistic the Ministry will arrive at the realization that short-term savings through reduced maintenance of the School District's facilities come at a higher long-term cost which compromise the overarching stewardship of the Ministry to ensure safe and sustainable learning environments for our students.

Most importantly, we request your representatives open a dialogue with our School District in order to strengthen the Ministry's understanding of how vital facilities funding is planned for and allocated in the North Vancouver School District. As educators and advocates of public education, we feel strongly that an enlightened approach is the way forward towards reducing conflict between local school boards and the provincial government. By working together, we can improve everyone's appreciation for the critical importance of safe and secure learning environments. To this end, we will further our advocacy with our local MLAs, and ask that they convey the concerns of our community to the senior levels of government.

In closing, we thank you for your consideration of our concerns and suggestions and look forward to a meeting on this issue with representatives of the Ministry of Education. We ask you to reinstate the AFG Grant for the 2009/10 school year. We also ask for the Ministry's full restoration of the AFG grant for the 2010/11 school year. We consider the provision of safe and sustainable facilities to be shared between the Ministry and our School District, and we ask that the Ministry commit to long-term funding measures that will allow us to fulfill our responsibility to students.

Sincerely,



Susan Skinner
Chairperson
North Vancouver Board of
Education



Leslie Uhlenbruck
Co-Chairperson
North Vancouver Parent
Advisory Council



David Whitehead
Co-Chairperson
North Vancouver Parent
Advisory Council



John McGowan
President
Secondary Study Group



Karen Harrop
President
Association of Elementary
Administrators



Cindy McQueen
President
Canadian Union of Public
Employees Local 389



Daniel Storms
President
North Vancouver Teachers'
Association



John Lewis
Superintendent of Schools
North Vancouver School
District

cc Ralph Sultan, MLA, West Vancouver-Capilano
Jane Thornthwaite, MLA, North Vancouver-Seymour
Honourable Naomi Yamamoto, MLA, North Vancouver-Lonsdale