

August 26, 2014

Layne Christensen
Editor
North Shore News
100 – 126 East 15th Street
North Vancouver, BC V7L 2P9

Dear Ms. Christensen:

Subject: Land sales and rebuilding Argyle Secondary

I would like to provide clarification on points made by Trustee Skinner in her letter to the *North Shore News* regarding land sales, debt repayment and financing the rebuilding of schools.

Trustee Skinner states that the school district “only had to show that it had a plan” to the Ministry to finance the costs of rebuilding Argyle Secondary beyond a seismic upgrade. In reality, it is not enough to just have a plan. We are, understandably, expected to follow-through and repay what was borrowed in good faith. In recent months, the Ministry has expressed concerns about our ability to repay the still outstanding \$6.2 million debt incurred in rebuilding Sutherland Secondary and Westview Elementary. It is only reasonable that before new projects are approved, existing debt for capital projects must be addressed.

Trustee Skinner also calls for “broad consultation” with regards to alternative community uses of sites no longer needed as public schools. In fact, this is ongoing. Since the Spring of 2012, the Board has engaged the community and its civic leaders in its “Land, Learning and Livability” process and received input on various, sometimes competing, interests for the future use of its surplus properties. While there are many ideas and potentialities for the future use of school district lands, consideration of student and community interests continues to affirm the pressing need for a rebuilt Argyle Secondary as our next capital priority. Repurposing a select number of surplus properties remains our most viable option in terms of repaying our capital debt (the Board’s annual operating budget is balanced) and raising the funds necessary for future rebuilding projects.

Land management is a long process. Terms and conditions can change over time and may create confusion. Good financial stewardship is more constant. It involves acting responsibly to meet our obligations while addressing the current and future needs of students with the resources we have available. As a Board of Education, this is the duty upon which all our decisions should stand.

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