

NORTH VANCOUVER SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 44

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October 30, 2007

The Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Education and Deputy Premier
PO Box 9045, Stn. Prov. Govt.
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E2

Dear Honourable Shirley Bond:

Re: Major Funding Formula Change – Mid-School Year

On behalf of the North Vancouver Board of Education, this letter is being sent to express our heightened frustration and anger with the Ministry of Education's approach and the impending impact on students resulting from the funding formula changes announced on October 18th, 2007. This has the potential of significantly affecting the 2007/2008 school year.

The North Vancouver Board of Education is requesting two things:

1. The Ministry of Education put on hold the intended funding changes with respect to student FTE at the grade 10/11/12 level.
2. There be a meeting between the Ministry of Education and school districts to discuss the potential impacts this funding change will create and the need to have better collaboration and consultation with respect to the manner in which school districts are funded.

This change in funding is reflective of a pattern from the Ministry of Education of making sudden announcements in funding or policy change with no notice to School Districts and no consultation. Our Board is of the view that this approach is not healthy in terms of operating major organizations within tight constraints and is certainly not in the best interests of students.

We are fundamentally opposed to the process and we are also of the view that funding school districts on a per course basis for secondary students will not be adequate to fund the necessary supports to ensure students are successful and complete their graduation.

In consultation with our senior administration, partner groups and the community at large, our Board spent considerable time and effort last year to develop a balanced 2007/08 budget that was approved and submitted to the Ministry of Education well in advance of the June 30, 2007 legislated deadline. As you know, a budget reflects the Board's priorities and intentions for the coming year. The Board has actively implemented this budget well in advance of the beginning of the fiscal year in order to ensure that the quality educational services our community expects and relies upon are ready for the school year in September.



Our School District takes its planning and budgeting responsibilities seriously. We had expected the Ministry of Education, with responsibility for the entire public education system and a related \$4 billion budget, would take its responsibilities equally as seriously.

It is surprising that the Ministry of Education could not foresee the take up in Distributed Learning that we understand has created a \$50 million budget shortfall in the Ministry. It is also disturbing that the only way the Ministry of Education has to deal with this budget problem, that is approximately 1% of its annual budget, is to throw the entire public education system into turmoil.

This shortsighted funding policy change pressures nearly every School District in this province to throw out their well planned and nearly fully implemented budget plans to solve the Ministry of Education's budget problem apparently created by an inability to forecast expenditures.

Announcing a major funding formula change for implementation in a fiscal year that is nearly one third of the way through is not a reasonable approach to take with School Districts to address these challenges.

This change is so fundamental that it raises significant policy issues. In an effort to respond to School District questions, it is apparent that Ministry staff is determining policy on an ad hoc basis with little thought on the long-term implications or the equity considerations within the current year.

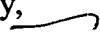
Without precise and specific information, many Boards are struggling to determine what the exact budget impact might be. Despite Ministry assurances that the impact will be mitigated by various enrolment decline grants and funding formula protection we understandably remain unconvinced that the impact will be minimized.

We are perplexed as to why the Treasury Board continues to hold the view that district surpluses provide a solution to funding pressures that the Ministry is experiencing whether due to Distributed Learning or summer school fee refunds.

We have applied \$2 million of the School District's 2006/07 surplus to balance the District's 2007-08 budget. Similarly, our School District and many others in the province permit schools to carry forward funds to facilitate good financial management. Other year-end appropriations are required because of restrictions placed upon the funds by the funder. Simply looking at the total does not provide an accurate or complete picture. Reversing appropriations at this late date will impact the budget that was carefully planned in consultation with our partner groups and the community. It just doesn't make any sense for students or in terms of making prudent business decisions.

The message we glean is that the Ministry of Education and Treasury Board discourages good financial management practices and supports the approach of spending every cent in the current budget whether it makes sense or not.

Again, we would ask that the funding change be put on hold and that there be extensive discussions and consultation with school districts

Yours truly, 

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Chris Dorais
Chairperson

cc: Ralph Sultan, MLA
Katherine Whittred, MLA
Daniel Jarvis, MLA
The Honourable Gordon Campbell
The Honourable Carole Taylor
David Cubberley, MLA
Linda Watson, NVT
Cindy McQueen, CUPE
Lisa Cartwright, NVPAC
Nicole Miller, President, Student Leadership Council
Mark Lefroy, President, Secondary Study Group
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BC School Trustees Association (for distribution)