



SCHOOL DISTRICT 63 (SAANICH)

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March 14, 2024

Carolyn Broady
Board Chair
School District 45 (West Vancouver)
Via email: cbroady@wvschools.ca

Dear Carolyn,

At the March 13, 2024 meeting of the Saanich Board of Education, the Saanich Board carried the following motion:

“That the Board forward a letter to the Board of each of the eight school districts identified as being in a similar low enrolment growth position, explaining the February 14, 2024 advocacy motion, and requesting that they consider being a signatory to an enclosed draft letter to the Minister of Education and Child Care as a collective communication addressing unfunded inflationary costs. “

This letter is being sent to the Board Chairs in the following eight school districts:

- School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay)
- School District 22 (Vernon)
- School District 45 (West Vancouver)
- School District 48 (Sea to Sky)
- School District 60 (Peace River North)
- School District 67 (Okanagan-Skaha)
- School District 72 (Campbell River)
- School District 79 (Cowichan Valley)

At the February 14, 2024 meeting of the Saanich Board of Education, the Saanich Board carried a motion which included that the Board work with senior staff *“to connect with other school districts facing a similar scenario (low enrolment growth) to explore the possibility of a collective communication to the Minister of Education and Childcare”.*

As you know, the funding formula in BC is disproportionately leveraged to enrolment change with the vast majority of funding being determined through per pupil funding allocations. Each year, funding rates are adjusted by an amount that does not fully reflect inflation, and historically has only reflected wage inflation. This means school districts are dependent on continual enrolment growth so that “net funding” from enrolment growth can be allocated to fund all other inflationary costs.

In a district where enrolment is stable or only growing slowly, program budgets cannot keep pace with inflation and a balanced budget can only be maintained longer term through continual reductions to programs. This is particularly challenging for medium sized school districts with stable enrolment or low growth, which do not benefit from either the scale of a larger district or the greater supplemental funding provided to smaller districts and districts with declining enrolment.

I am sending this letter to request that your Board consider approving being a signatory to the draft letter to the Minister of Education and Childcare included as an attachment to this letter. This letter will be prepared on a composite letterhead that displays the logos of each participating district in the upper header in order of district number. If your Board plans on participating please provide the appropriate logo for inclusion in the composite letterhead.

We thank you for considering this request and ask that you reply by April 26, 2024.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Dunford', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Tim Dunford
Saanich Board Chair

TD/klg

cc : C. Kennedy, Superintendent
J. Leiterman, Secretary Treasurer

Attachment: Draft letter to Minister of Education

To: Minister of Education and Childcare

We are writing to convey our concerns regarding the inequity and negative impacts of the current funding model for medium sized school districts with lower enrolment growth.

The funding formula in BC is disproportionately leveraged to enrolment change with the vast majority of funding being determined through per pupil funding allocations. Each year, funding rates are adjusted by an amount that does not fully reflect inflation, and historically has only reflected salary inflation. This means school districts are dependent on continual enrolment growth so that “net funding” from enrolment growth can be allocated to fund all other inflationary costs.

In a district where enrolment is stable or only growing slowly, program budgets cannot keep pace with inflation and a balanced budget can only be maintained longer term through continual reductions to programs. This is particularly challenging for medium sized school districts with stable enrolment or low enrolment growth, which do not benefit from either the scale of a larger district or the greater supplemental funding provided to smaller districts and districts with declining enrolment.

The Province’s Independent Funding Model Review Panel acknowledged on page 53 of its 2018 report that *“the current model does not consider potential economies of scale in those districts where enrolment is increasing and larger numbers of students attract significant amounts of funding”*. The recommendations relating to this observation and other observations impacting funding equity have not yet been implemented. In addition to the specific concerns raised in this letter, we acknowledge that other school districts are also being impacted in other ways due to other inequities in the funding model. In recent years, these inequities in the funding model have been compounded by greater than historical inflationary cost pressure.

We urgently request that these issues with the funding model be addressed for the 2024-25 school year, so that all school districts are able to maintain existing programs and implement strategies necessary to support student achievement in their respective communities.

Signed by Board Chairs of medium sized low growth school districts

Copy: Minister of Finance