

May 3, 2024

The Honourable Minister Rachna Singh
Minister of Education & Childcare
PO Box 9179
Stn Prov Gov't
Victoria, BC V8W 9H8

Dear Minister Singh,

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.

Sincerely,



Tim Dunford
Board Chair
SD63 Saanich



Helen Gilbert
Board Chair
SD60 Peace River North



Cathy Schmidt
Board Chair
SD79 Cowichan Valley



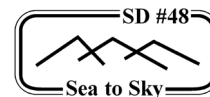
Mark Olsen
Board Chair
SD22 (Vernon)



Carolyn Broady
Board Chair
SD45 (West Vancouver)



Rebecca Barley
Board Chair
SD48 (Sea to Sky)



James Palanio
Board Chair
SD67 Okanagan Skaha



/klg

cc: The Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Finance



April 30, 2024

The Honourable Rachna Singh
Minister of Education and Child Care
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Government
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

The Honourable Katrine Conroy
Minister of Finance
Room 153 Parliament Building
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Ministers Singh and Conroy:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Education of School District No. 79 (Cowichan Valley) to express our growing concern with the funding model, and in particular within the context of a School District with modest enrolment growth.

The funding formula is very heavily weighted to the per-pupil factor. When enrolments are static or growing slowly, the year-over-year increases in funding are insufficient to address the rising costs associated with inflation.

It is appreciated that the Province funds the costs associated with negotiated wage settlements. Ninety percent of our School District's budget is expended on wages and benefits. The wage settlement funding does not, however, cover any of the inflationary costs associated with increased employee benefit rates such as health and dental premiums. In our School District these costs increased by close to twenty percent between 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.

The remaining ten percent of our budget is for services and supplies. These include: fuel for the school buses, materials and supplies to maintain and clean our schools, resources used in schools, and utilities. The Provincial inflation rate over the last two years has exceeded 10% (7% + 3%). Not funding these increases has meant that the Board has had to make difficult decisions regarding services and programs for students.

When a School District is in declining enrolment the funding formula may provide an allocation for funding protection to protect that School District from having to make quick adjustments to services and programs. When a School District is growing quickly the funding formula provides for new funding that can be directed towards the new students and inflationary costs. When a

school district is in static or slow enrolment there are little additional funds that support inflationary costs.

The need for an inflationary adjustment or change in the funding formula has become very apparent in this time of high inflation. As our Board projects our budgets forward for the next two years it clear that if inflation is not addressed significant reductions to services and programs will be necessary.

I urge you to consider these challenges and find ways to support School Districts in our position of modest growth/flat lining enrolment projections.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Schmidt', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cathy Schmidt
Board Chair, Cowichan Valley School District

cc: Deputy Minister of Education and Child Care, Christina Zacharuk
Deputy Minister of Finance, Heather Wood
BCSTA
MLA Sonia Furstenau, Cowichan Valley
MLA Doug Routley, Nanaimo-North Cowichan
Board of Education, School District 45 (West Vancouver Schools)
Board of Education, School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay)
Board of Education, School District 22 (Vernon)
Board of Education, School District 48 (Sea to Sky)
Board of Education, School District 60 (Peace River North)
Board of Education, School District 67 (Okanagan-Skaha)
Board of Education, School District 72 (Campbell River)



April 23, 2024

The Honourable Rachna Singh
Minister of Education and Child Care
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Government
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

The Honourable Katrine Conroy
Minister of Finance
Room 153 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Ministers Singh and Conroy:

I am writing to bring to your attention the pressing need for an adjustment in the education funding model to better support districts with static enrollment. The current funding formula in British Columbia heavily favours enrollment change, leaving districts with static enrollment at a significant disadvantage. These districts not only lack the increased funding support provided in the growth model but are also ineligible for the supplemental funding and funding protection provided in cases of declining enrollment.

Enrollment-based costs, mainly consisting of salaries and benefits, on average consume 91% of enrollment-based funding. As a result of this 9% gap, as enrollment grows funding increases at a faster rate than the costs associated with it. This gives growing districts more financial flexibility and provides a buffer against inflation that is not available to districts with static enrollment. Additionally, growing districts enjoy economies of scale that lower their per-student operating costs, further increasing their ability to address overall cost pressures. In a comparison of metro and Vancouver Island districts, those with large and growing enrollment were, on average, able to spend \$171 less per student on salaries and benefits than their smaller, static neighbours.

Increased operating grants reflect annual bargained salary lifts, but they do not cover overall economic inflation, placing districts with static enrollment in a cycle of continual reductions in program supports and resources to balance their budgets. Without adjustments to the funding formula to address this inequity, such districts will be further strained by rising costs, potentially affecting critical resources for student achievement including mental health support and services for diverse learning needs.

While the 2018 Funding Model Review Panel's report made recommendations to address this issue, key recommendations aimed at improving the funding model have not yet been implemented. It is crucial that action is taken to rectify the inequity inherent in the growth model of funding to ensure that all districts, regardless of enrollment changes, receive adequate support to maintain financial sustainability and to continue to provide world class education for their students.



I urge you to consider these challenges and work towards implementing necessary adjustments to the funding model to support static enrollment districts like West Vancouver.

The West Vancouver Schools Board of Education would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss this issue and possible remedies to our concerns.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Broady
Board Chair, West Vancouver Schools

CC: Deputy Minister of Education and Child Care, Christina Zacharuk
Deputy Minister of Finance, Heather Wood
Board of Education, School District 45 (West Vancouver Schools)
Karin Kirkpatrick, MLA West Vancouver-Capilano
Jordan Sturdy, MLA West Vancouver Sea to Sky
BCSTA
West Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council
West Vancouver Teachers Association
West Vancouver Municipal Employees' Association
West Vancouver Administrators' Association
Board of Education, School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay)
Board of Education, School District 22 (Vernon)
Board of Education, School District 48 (Sea to Sky)
Board of Education, School District 60 (Peace River North)
Board of Education, School District 67 (Okanagan-Skaha)
Board of Education, School District 72 (Campbell River)
Board of Education, School District 79 (Cowichan Valley)

Via Email:

From: Michael Finch <MFinch@wvschools.ca>
Date: May 2, 2024 at 9:14:59 AM MDT
To: Carolyn Broady <CBroady@wvschools.ca>
Cc: Chris Kennedy <CKennedy@wvschools.ca>, Scott Slater <SSlater@wvschools.ca>
Subject: Thank You

Dear Board Chair Broady,

On behalf of the WVAA members we wanted to reach out and thank you for your letter (dated April 23rd) to the Ministers of Education and Child Care, and Finance. Your advocacy for an adjustment to the funding model, one that acknowledges the challenges of static enrollments faced by multiple districts, including West Vancouver, addresses the concerns impacting thousands of students throughout the province. Without question, WVAA membership have felt the impacts and increasing challenges of the current funding model.

With that said, our membership have also consistently felt the support of our Board and District teams. Despite the shifts and changes that may occur, we have an appreciation and understanding of the work you do. We feel fortunate to work in such a progressive, constructive and collaborative district. As ever, we are committed to continuing to provide outstanding learning environments and opportunities for our students and staffs.

Thank you again for your continued support and advocacy of our students and schools.

Scott Slater and Mike Finch
WVAA Presidents

Michael Finch
Principal
Sentinel Secondary
T 604 981 1137 C 604 785 6011



I acknowledge and am thankful to live, learn, and work on the territory of the Coast Salish people, Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish) Nation, whose territory West Vancouver Schools resides.

