



SCHOOL DISTRICT 63 (SAANICH)

2125 Keating Cross Road, Saanichton, BC Canada V8M 2A5
Phone: (250) 652-7300 Fax: (250) 652-6421 saanichschools.ca

February 18, 2022

The Honourable Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Christina Zacharuk
Deputy Ministry of Education
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Whiteside and Deputy Minister Zacharuk,

Re: Education Funding

At the February 17, 2022 meeting of the Saanich Board of Education, the following motion was carried:

That, as the Minister/Ministry of Education has not responded to our letter of May 26, 2021 regarding education funding, and because there is now a new Minister of Education, the Saanich Board of Education write again to the Minister of Education regarding the issue of funding for public schools that does not compensate for the increase in annual inflationary costs, leaving a potential budget shortfall for school districts each year, requesting that budgets in all public school districts be made whole in this regard and further, urging the Minister to encourage all parties charged with reviewing the education funding formula, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, to resolve these outstanding issues without further delay, in particular the unfairness of the way the funding formula rewards districts with growth in enrolment, while penalizing districts experiencing declining enrolment.

The funding formula in BC is disproportionately leveraged to enrolment change. As enrolment grows funding generally increases faster than enrolment-based program costs, and as enrolment declines funding decreases faster than enrolment-based program costs. And because funding rates do not keep pace with inflation, even a school district with stable enrolment will experience growing budget pressure each year that can only be addressed over time through program reductions.

Budget planning should focus beyond just the fiscal year ahead, and school districts should prepare multi-year fiscal plans demonstrating that programs are fiscally sustainable. However, this cannot be done effectively when sustainability can only be achieved through reliance on continual enrolment growth.

We appreciate the Ministry's support through the pandemic and to our shared commitment to improving student success through the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. Stable funding reflecting the financial impact of enrolment change and inflationary changes over time is foundational to the development of programs to enhance student learning that will be sustainable.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Dunford', written in a cursive style.

Tim Dunford
Board Chair

TD/klg

cc: The Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia
The Honourable Selena Robinson, Minister of Finance
The Honourable Lana Popham, Minister of Agricultural & MLA for Saanich South
The Honourable Adam Olsen, MLA for Saanich North & the Islands

Attachment: Letter to Minister and Deputy Minister, May 26, 2021



SCHOOL DISTRICT 63 (SAANICH)

2125 Keating Cross Road, Saanichton, BC Canada V8M 2A5
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May 26, 2021

The Honourable Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Scott MacDonald
Deputy Minister of Education
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Whiteside and Deputy Minister MacDonald,

Re: Fully Funding Collective Agreement and Inflationary Costs

At the May 19, 2021 meeting of the Saanich Board of Education, the following motion was carried:

That the Board send a letter to the Minister of Education and the Ministry of Education, copying local MLAs, Premier Horgan and the Minister of Finance requesting that the Ministry fully fund Collective Agreement and inflationary costs.

This motion was adopted following completion of the 2021/22 budget consultation process, during which a shortfall in funding was identified for collective agreement wage increases and for other identified inflationary budget pressures.

The growth in funding rates for 2021/22 do not fully fund the estimated cost of provincially negotiated collective agreement wage increases, resulting in a funding shortfall of approximately \$274,000. When reflecting all inflationary pressures in 2021/22 (primarily wage and benefit rate increases) there is a structural funding shortfall of approximately \$825,000 that, if enrolment remains stable, will carry forward in perpetuity.

The funding formula in BC is disproportionately leveraged to enrolment change. As enrolment grows funding generally increases faster than enrolment-based program costs, and as enrolment declines funding decreases faster than enrolment-based program costs. And because funding rates do not keep pace with inflation, even a school district with stable enrolment will experience growing budget pressure each year that can only be addressed over time through program reductions.

For the past 4 years, the Saanich School District has been able to fund inflationary pressures with funding from enrolment growth. However, our forecasts indicate enrolment growth will likely moderate and may decrease in the years ahead. Like many districts, our enrolment growth is driven primarily by in-migration which is subject to fluctuation and challenging to forecast.

Budget planning should focus beyond the fiscal year ahead, and school districts should prepare multi-year fiscal plans demonstrating that programs are fiscally sustainable. However, this cannot be done effectively when sustainability can only be achieved through reliance on continual enrolment growth.

We appreciate the Ministry's support through the pandemic and to our shared commitment to improving student success through the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. Stable funding reflecting the financial impact of enrolment change and inflationary changes over time is foundational to the development of programs to enhance student learning that will be sustainable.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,



Tim Dunford
Board Chair

TD/klg

cc: The Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia
The Honourable Selina Robinson, Minister of Finance
The Honourable Lana Popham, Minister of Agricultural and MLA for Saanich South
The Honourable Adam Olsen, MLA for Saanich North and the Islands