

February 23rd, 2017

To the Parents and Families of SD 63,

As parents and caregivers we have the responsibility to nurture, protect and advocate for our children. It is up to us to speak on their behalf and fight for their needs. As our children get older and enter school our responsibility to them does not change.

The old adage "it takes a village to raise a child" is true and in our modern world we have evolved that village into the form of public education. It is in this "village" that our children form new relationships, are watched over, have their needs addressed and learn new skills that will transition them into adulthood. Now the responsibility for the wellbeing of our children extends to the broader community we live in. In fact, everyone in our community benefits when we can collectively meet the needs of every child. But when that collective responsibility and vision falters, it is up to us parents to speak on behalf of our children and to remind the broader community why our kids are worth investing in.

Public Education in B.C. is at an important juncture. It has become the issue that we will decide upon as we choose our next government and define the priorities we want them to address.

Decades of provincial policy decisions have created the situation where locally elected school boards no longer have the means to cover the costs of providing services to our children. Boards are struggling to provide the infrastructure, programs and services that our children need to thrive and meet their potential. Often at the expense of our most vulnerable.

It is true, that in spite of these challenges, the BC public education system has still been able to maintain a quality of service as is evidenced by strong performances on global and national rankings. This success in the face of adversity speaks more to the goodwill and hard work of the adults in the system-- parent volunteers raising needed funds and staff going that extra mile for the "kids." Is this sustainable? Can we expect this pattern of success to continue moving forward? No. The cracks are beginning to show. The social and economic costs will be undeniable if we continue in this direction.

Parents are finding their voice and it is making a difference. Since the provincial election has been called we have seen several funding announcements and moves to appease parents. All positive steps in the right direction. But it cannot stop there.

Now is the time to speak on your child's behalf. Now is the time to remind your friends, family, and neighbors why our children are worth investing in. Now is the time for everyone to remember how we all benefit, socially, economically and democratically from a quality public education system. Now is the time that we must exercise our democratic right by voting, and by holding those that earn our vote accountable to the needs, wellbeing and future of children.

To help facilitate discussion and parent engagement COPACS has compiled several resources for parents. Please take the time to read and share this information.

Yours for the Children,

James Taylor
President
Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils of Saanich (COPACS)

February 23rd, 2017

Prepared by: James Taylor, President

Briefing Note Re: Recent Provincial Funding Announcements

Over the last few decades, policy decisions at the provincial level have effectively created a structural shortfall in public school funding. The resources allocated to meet the needs of our children have been less than the actual costs incurred by local boards. Unaddressed inflationary pressures, and downloaded costs (such as MSP rates, Hydro increases, provincially negotiated salary increases, Next Generation Network costs, to name a few) have forced school trustees to close schools and reduce services to our children in order to balance budgets.

In Saanich, we are facing a potential \$1.1 million budget pressure as we plan for the 2017/18 school year.

Since the provincial election was called last spring we have seen several announcements by government regarding funding for public education. The most recent was on Feb. 19th with \$27.4 million being announced and on Feb. 21st the provincial budget was tabled in the legislature with a \$314 million increase in education spending.

The Student Learning Grant announced on the 19th is being allocated for learning resources, equipment and supplies to help defray costs in support of implementing the new curriculum and other learning innovations across the K-12 public system. This new one-time funding will be allocated on the calculation of \$50/student FTE.

This money will help offset costs that the district would have been forced to take out of its operating budget or that school PACs would be asked to fund raise for (i.e. computers, charging stations etc.). This money is not intended to cover parent costs of yearly school supplies as media reporting may have implied. It is only for resources needed to implement the new curriculum.

The other significant announcement was the tabling of the provincial budget. The new budget is stating an increase of 314 million over last year's budget. Key points to note:

- Another interim grant of 120 million will be given for hiring teacher staff next year as work on modernising and restoring language on class size and composition is still ongoing and the actual staffing costs are still to be determined.
- The 15 million for student transportation will be extended this year (parents who have to budget for busing fees will get a break for another year)
- New money under "Relief of School District and Other Pressures" for the amount of 28 million is being offered. We need to see what stipulations maybe put on how the money can be spent. If the money is allocated based on enrollment, Saanich could see \$364,000.
- Reductions in MSP premiums could result in a potential \$200,000 savings for the district
- Although there is funding for most negotiated wage settlements, there is nothing to cover the provincially mandated increase for school administrators.

These recent funding announcements would seem to be in response to the mounting public pressure in an election year to reinvest in our kids. For the most part it is a step in the right direction but **they do fall short for our needs here in Saanich**. These preliminary numbers could reduce some of our budget pressures by about a \$500,000 but that still leaves a half million in cuts to service in order to balance the books. *It is important to remember that we are looking at just maintaining a standard of service based on last year's budget. We have had years of cuts. It is time to start putting back all of the things we have been forced to do without.*

Please join other parents, district staff and your elected trustees at the *February 28th Public Budget Meeting at Bayside Middle School* to learn more and join in the conversation. **Our children need us more than ever. Their future is in our hands.**

Saanich Schools

BRIEFING NOTE



To: Board of Education

Prepared By: Keven Elder
Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Preliminary Calculations of Cost of Restored Language

Date: February 9, 2017

Background

As trustees and others are well aware, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in November 2016 that language that was removed by government policy from the teachers' collective agreement in 2002 is to be restored, immediately. The provincial parties, BCPSEA and the BCTF, had an agreement in place through Letter of Understanding 17 from the last round of bargaining that should such a decision eventuate the parties would hold off full restoration until completion of a provincial negotiation on terms of reinstatement.

Implications

One key element in moving toward restoration is coming to understand how the collective agreement language from 2002 does and does not apply to current school and class configurations in relation to classroom complexity. It is recognized that the 2002 language regarding special education and specialist teaching positions is inconsistent with the inclusive and diverse schools and classrooms of today. Clearly there are challenges at the provincial bargaining table to be overcome in terms of reconciling old notions of special education with current understandings, modern practice and designation of student needs by funded (or unfunded) categories of unique needs. We expect that the modernizing of this element of the collective agreement language which needs to be restored may take some time, especially since that language varies district to district.

Another key element is determining how the class size limits from the 2002 language relate to modern times. Again, the class size language which is set to be restored is different in each district. In School District 63 Saanich there will be considerable costs associated with hiring enough teachers to have us in compliance with restored language, perhaps as early as September 2017.

Interim Support

With provincial bargaining on language restoration underway, and likely to take some time, in January of this year government distributed \$50 million to the province's 60 school districts. The Interim Measures Priority Fund was for immediate hiring of teachers to ease the burden on classroom complexity and, as

possible, create more enrolling teaching positions to reduce class sizes or provide additional support to large and complex classes. Our share in Saanich of that \$50 million was \$657,000 which we used to hire 13 FTE teachers district-wide. Most were enrolling teachers. A small number were in learning assistance and classroom support, while others were teacher-librarian positions, along with one full time elementary counselling position. Our focus on counsellors and teacher librarians comes from our knowing that when the language is fully restored we will need to increase those numbers to be in compliance, whereas other non-enrolling positions such as integration support are already above that threshold. The bulk of our funding went to hire enrolling teachers.

Looking Ahead to Restored Language

As we look toward provincially negotiated restoration of modernized language, it is important that we turn our minds to how many teachers would be required in Saanich to meet those requirements. With our non-enrolling teachers being already close to or in compliance, the greatest need will be in enrolling positions to be within new class size limits. To that end, our principals completed the following task:

Provide us with an overview of this year's schedule including each class by size and number of students by grade. Then take the same number of students in the same grades and subjects, and reorganize your school as if the class size limits were (smaller) as follows. Note the subtraction from each class size limit by one, reflecting the need for any class to be smaller if it contains students with learning difficulties, behavioural challenges or special needs (essentially all of our classes). Start your analysis by removing all teaching assignments that came from the Education Fund/Learning Improvement Fund as with the restored language we will likely see the end of that fund.

Kindergarten	20 students - 1 = 19
Primary Classes (Grades 1 through 3)	22 students - 1 = 21
Split Year Primary/Multi Year Primary (K-3)	22 students - 1 = 21
Split/Primary Intermediate (Grades 3 and 4)	22 students - 1 = 21
Intermediate Class (Grades 4 and 5)	27 students - 1 = 26
Split/Multi Intermediate Class (Grades 4 and 5)	25 students - 1 = 24
Middle School Classes	29 students - 1 = 28
Middle School Split Classes	26 students - 1 = 25
Secondary English/Immersion Language Arts	27 students - 1 = 26
Multi-Programmed/Minimum Essentials (Gr 9-12)	25 students - 1 = 24
Any other class (Grades 9 through 12)	30 students - 1 = 29
Safety Sensitive Shop and Science Classes	24 students (no -1 factor here)
Total Middle/Secondary Weekly Teaching Load	200 students

Each principal completed this task, and the results were as follows:

School	Current Number of Divisions (elementary and middle) or Sections (secondary)	Number of Divisions or Sections Reorganized with Restored Language	Increase in Divisions or Sections	Total for Level (E/M/S)
Brentwood Elementary	13	15	2	17 Divisions 18.2 (with prep)
Cordova Bay Elementary	11	12	1	
Deep Cove Elementary	15	16	1	
Keating Elementary	17	20	3	
KELSET Elementary	16	19	3	
Prospect Lake Elementary	9	11	2	
Lochside Elementary	17	20	3	
Sidney Elementary	13	15	2	
Bayside Middle	21	22	1	5 Divisions
North Saanich Middle	14	16	2	5.4 FTE
Royal Oak Middle	22	24	2	(with prep)
Claremont Secondary	312	350	38	87 Sections
Parkland Secondary	153	172	19	12.4 FTE
Stelly's Secondary	247	277	30	(with prep)
Total FTE Enrolling				36 FTE
Additional FTE Non-Enrolling	(per ratios: Teacher Lib, Counsellors)			2.6 FTE
TOTAL FTE REQUIRED				38.6

At this point we don't know if the provincial parties, BCPSEA and the BCTF, will come to agreement prior to staffing for September, and if so if the restored language will reinstate the class size limits shown above. Assuming that is the case it is now clear that we will need an additional 38.6 FTE teachers to be compliant with restored language. Our analysis also assumes that with the restoration of language we will see an end to the Education Fund/Learning Improvement Fund which provided us with 10.4 FTE teaching positions after classes were organized every September. As that fund disappears (as is likely) the addition of 38.6 FTE teaching positions will be almost all enrolling positions (2.6 of those being teacher librarian counselling), meaning that the additional integration support time that constituted about half of our EF hires will be gone and replaced by enrolling positions.

All of this is to say that our need for teacher staffing under pending restored language will cost the province approximately \$4 million. Expanded to the province, that would suggest that the \$300 million estimate for collective agreement language being restored is likely close to reality, at least if Saanich is any indication. While we greatly appreciated our share of \$50 million for the second half of this year, when looking at that as \$100 million for a full year, the actual need is likely three times that in the long run. We will be watching very closely to see what comes from the provincial restoration negotiations and from the provincial budget coming down in the coming weeks. Once an agreement is reached we expect that enough funding will flow to allow us to be in full compliance.

Additional Planning and Cost Considerations

Beyond the cost of adding teachers there are numerous other logistical and cost implications.

1. Education Assistants: With the creation of 22 new divisions at elementary and middle schools, and 87 sections at secondary schools, we will have that many more classrooms in which students need EA support. Our current cohort of EAs may not be enough to manage the increased need.
2. Physical Space: Secretary Treasurer Reid has consulted with principals and completed a comprehensive analysis of space pressures that will come with the addition of classes. That report has been submitted to the Ministry of Education as required. It calls for 20 additional teaching spaces in six of our schools. **The cost of creating and furnishing those spaces will be approximately \$2 million.**
3. Hiring and Orientation: Establishing new positions, creating postings, finding candidates, filling positions, orienting new teachers, and mentoring and supporting new teachers will create sizable overhead for human resources staff and school administrators.
4. Human Resources and Labour Relations: Having a new Director of Human Resources coming in will provide much needed leadership and support for the HR functions noted above and for all of the work that will go into restoring and abiding by the new collective agreement language.
5. School Administration: All of the matters referred to above will create substantial additional administrative responsibility for principals and vice-principals.
6. Integration Support Teachers: Although we are technically over the number of IST/LA teachers that would be required by restored language, the complexity of classes and the range and volume of unique needs has expanded greatly since 2002. With additional enrolling classes to support, and with the loss of additional IST time generated by the Education Fund, we will need to find a way to increase the number of Integration Support Teachers with current or new funding.
7. Custodial, Maintenance and Energy Costs: With the addition of 20 teaching spaces as noted above there will be additional costs for custodial staff, utilities/energy and maintenance.
8. Learning Resources: With 36 enrolling teachers being hired, whether they teach in existing vacant space or the 20 required new teaching spaces, there will be a real, and possibly substantial, cost to providing learning resources to those teachers and classes.

Submitted with respect,

Keven Elder
Superintendent of Schools

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Public Education Questions for Candidates Running in the May 2017 Provincial Election

As we draw closer to the May election date, candidates seeking office will be working hard to secure your vote. Take the time to engage with these candidates as they canvass and participate in public debates. Let them know that quality public education is a priority and an expectation. Below are some suggestions on what you might ask your local candidate to get the discussion started. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list but rather a starting point for you to think about what you might want to know or expect from our next government.

- If your party were to form the next government, what priority would it give to making schools seismically safe for BC students?
- What are your thoughts on the amount of money school PACs have to raise to fund earthquake kits, school supplies, electronic equipment, field trips, playgrounds etc.?
- Do you support public tax dollars going towards funding of elite private/independent schools?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in the current per pupil funding model? Do you have any ideas on how we might improve or change how schools are funded?
- What will your government do to ensure the educational needs of my child are being met?
- What will your government do to ensure that all students meet their potential (especially those who may be vulnerable or have special learning needs)?
- What role does your party see for public education in the ongoing economic and social/cultural well-being of BC? What steps will it take to support that role?
- Do you support/oppose the action of government regarding the removal of contract language concerning class size and composition?
- Do you believe that costs such as inflation, MSP, hydro, provincially mandated salary increases be fully funded by the province or passed down to local school boards?
- Do you support increased funding for our public schools?
- Is it educationally sustainable for BC to have the 2nd lowest per pupil funding in all of Canada (\$1000 lower)?
- Do you think that we need to increase the share of the GDP invested in public education since its dropped 25% from 2001 investment levels?