



May 27, 2015

Mr. Scott Hamilton
MLA – Delta North
Unit 8350- 8350 112th St.
Delta, BC V4C 7A2

Ms. Vicki Huntington
MLA – Delta South
4805 Delta St.
Delta, BC V4K 2T7

Dear Mr. Hamilton & Ms. Huntington,

On April 28th, the Delta Board of Education (the “Board”) passed a balanced budget for the 2015 – 2016 school year as required by the School Act. During the Board’s deliberations for the 2015 – 2016 budget, we discussed how the Board has been fiscally responsible for a number of years. We have closed schools, cancelled walk limit bussing, laid off staff, reduced supplies allocations, implemented numerous energy saving initiatives, and created significant additional revenue sources. We also discussed that despite the negative impact of some of these measures, Delta is doing a very good job delivering educational services for our students and community. School completion rates are above provincial averages. Inquiry based learning initiatives are thriving. We have renewed focus on curriculum, instruction and assessment.

While we are proud of our accomplishments, discussion then turned to what more we could do if funding was adjusted to reinstate the **\$9.9 million** in on-going reductions we have made over the past seven years. Examples of what the Board identified are listed below:

1. Support for classroom learning and increasing teacher capacity

Mentorship

We have a 0.5 fte Mentorship Coordinator. Our program involves partnering experienced teachers with new teachers. Additional funding would allow a full time or preferably two full time Coordinators to expand valuable support to beginning teachers, and experienced teachers facing difficulties.

Special Programs

Although our overall population has declined in the past seven years, the number of students with identified complex needs, specific learning challenges, and mental health issues has grown significantly. With additional funding we would increase the following specialist staff to enhance support to these students.

- Learning Assistance
- Counselling
- Child and Youth Care Workers
- Mainstream Support (supporting students with complex special needs)
- Speech & Language Pathologists
- School Psychologists

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Innovation Initiatives

Funding would be allocated for additional staff and equipment (technology) to enhance and expedite implementation of our existing initiatives.

Pro-D

We would re-instate reductions in school pro-d accounts to provide funding which is sufficient to encourage and support the needs of individual and groups of teachers.

School Supplies

We would reinstate the 20% reduction previously made in schools supplies accounts.

2. Student Transportation

Bus routes for walk limit students would be re-instated on a priority basis, recognizing that some students and parents have been placed in more difficult situations than others.

3. Facilities and Grounds

We regularly receive complaints from community members that our fields are not well kept especially in the summer months. While not the primary purpose of the school district, community use of district facilities and fields is an important part of the value for taxpayer dollars, and adds to quality of life in our community. We have entered into a partnership with the Corporation of Delta to increase our capacity to address this issue, however additional funding would enhance these efforts significantly.

Delta schools have an average age of 42 years. Seismic upgrades have assisted somewhat with improving the appearance of affected areas in a number of buildings, however there are many buildings still to go. Our custodial and maintenance staff work hard to keep these buildings well maintained, however the buildings are still old and look that way. Cosmetic improvements would help promote pride in our buildings by students, staff and the community. The age of our buildings becomes very apparent in comparison with the new schools in neighbouring districts.

Re-instating some or all of the Facilities and Grounds positions eliminated since the 2008/09 school year, along with supplies and equipment budgets, would help address these concerns.

While we appreciate that the provincial K – 12 education funding envelope has increased despite the decrease in the number of students, funding has not kept pace with cost increases in wages, benefits, utilities, supplies and services. In addition to the **\$9.9 million** in on-going reductions, to balance our budget for 2014/15 required \$1.6 million in net revenue from our International Student Programs. For 2015/16 we had to increase this amount to \$1.8 million. Further, the Ministry of Education table "Actual Operating Expenditures By Function", indicates that Delta has been second or third lowest in the province for District Administration costs as a percentage of total budget for the past three years.

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The Delta Board of Education is proud of the hard work and commitment from all staff to provide the quality education and learning environment that exists in Delta today. We will continue to strive for our bold vision to be "a leading district for innovative teaching and learner success."

Vice-Chairperson Val Windsor and I would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with the two of you, either collectively or individually, to discuss the above in greater detail and to answer any questions you may have in this regard.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura Dixon', with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

Laura Dixon
Chairperson
Delta Board of Education

cc: Honourable Peter Fassbender, Minister of Education
Mr. Rob Fleming, New Democrat Opposition – Education
All BC Boards of Education (via BCSTA)