

October 6, 2015

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services,

Re: Budget 2016 Consultation Submission

The Delta Board of Education believes it is important that we learn from research telling us that global communities with higher levels of education have improved economic outcomes, fewer health problems, higher financial literacy, and overall improved societal strengths, with citizens contributing their best to society. Our District Vision reflects this belief.

While British Columbians currently take pride in knowing that they are one of the top educational jurisdictions in the world, they also recognize that we are dealing with increasing expectations and an expanding mandate. In order to successfully accomplish the mandate of the BC Ministry of Education of having public commitment by education partners, to work together to continuously improve student learning in relation to intellectual, human and social, and career development, we will require on-going funding improvements over the next decades to continue being one of the top educational jurisdictions in the world.

In 2011 Delta began working toward achieving a collaboratively developed school district Vision. Trustees, staff, students, parents and the community at large engaged in a collaborative appreciative inquiry process to identify areas of greatest strengths and needs, to determine goals and actions, and identified relevant evidence. We have been continually monitoring the progress of the goals, and analyzing their effectiveness. Goals have centered around three main vision themes; Student Engagement, Student Sense of Belonging and Connectivity, and Preparing Learners for their Future. Many innovative initiatives have been taking place across the District to assist in achieving our school district Vision. Interestingly many of the district goals have a strong alignment with the changing BC Curriculum, and as a result will assist teachers and learners in Delta adapt to the new curriculum. What this means for teachers and learners in Delta is that we are on track to accomplish important educational changes in the new British Columbia curriculum.

Helping teachers to increase their capacity through on-going continuous, and effective professional learning carries with it a significant cost to a school district, if it is to be done well. For example, as a professional learning strategy, collaborative inquiry requires teachers to work together, often in teams, to create opportunities to learn together about best teaching practice.

This requires teachers being released from their regular teaching duties for a few hours to be involved in the inquiry process. We have seen this type of teacher learning result in innovative and inspiring teacher practice in our district.

In Delta we have funded the teacher learning initiatives through a few sources of funding, in particular our International Student Program and hold back funding from the Ministry of Education. We placed those funds into the reserve and have accessed them to develop the Vision and to create opportunities for teacher learning. This great work has already had a very positive impact on teacher learning and student learning. We cannot continue to rely on these funding sources for this important work as they have limitations. Increasingly, we are required to use International Program funding to balance our operating budget, and other funding sources are one time funding that we may not be able to replenish.

As we believe that Delta is not the only district experiencing the restrictions in funding, we have a few requests and recommendations for the Standing Committee regarding school district funding, some of which overlap with the September 16, 2015 BC School Trustees Association's submission to the Select Standing Committee:

- Provide additional funding to districts to provide Professional Learning for staff. This additional funding will be used to create more opportunities for teachers to build capacity.
- Aboriginal Curriculum and learning for teachers requires much more development and support. This is vital to changing outcomes for Aboriginal learners, and ultimately all learners.
- Review the exempt staff compensation freeze as it applies to the K-12 education sector allowing for fair and equitable compensation improvements in line with unionized staff contracts.
- Stipulated cuts to Administrative positions are potentially cuts to our learning leaders who support our teachers in their professional learning opportunities. As a school district we have scrupulously kept our administrative costs as low as possible to direct dollars to the classroom but we believe these further cuts directly impact student learning and therefore should be reconsidered in light of the need to achieve our mutual goals of improved outcomes.

Finally, in conclusion, countries such as Singapore, Finland, Scotland, Australia, and New Zealand, have put significant funding into professional learning opportunities for teachers to improve their practice, and have experienced some of the greatest successes on international measurement such as PISA. While we embrace the challenge of system transformation and improvement, Boards of Education must also insist that corresponding funding accompany these additional responsibilities. We are grateful that the Ministry of Education has provided additional Professional Development time for teachers to learn more, and collaborate about the new BC curriculum.

Sincerely,



Laura Dixon
Chairperson, Delta Board of Education
P: 604-999-2053
E: ldixon@deltasd.bc.ca

cc: Mr. Scott Hamilton, MLA - Delta North
Ms. Vicki Huntington, MLA - Delta South
CUPE Local 1091
Delta Teachers' Association
Delta Parent Advisory Council
Association of Delta School Administrators