



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

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2010 June 10

Hon. Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid, MLA
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC
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Dear Dr. MacDiarmid:

Thank you for your letter today regarding the Vancouver School Board's preliminary response to the Comptroller General's report. As you know, our response noted many of the recommendations are either current practice, already considered in the balanced preliminary budget proposal (that I sent to you after it was released and posted to our website in April), or inappropriate practice for elected officials. We noted that we would give further consideration to some, while others were based on inaccurate information. Several recommendations, as we've noted in our response, were already well underway prior to the Comptroller General's review.

I am pleased to hear your recognition of our excellent management staff. With their advice we are proud of this board and previous board's financial oversight, although without stable predictable funding and policy direction from the province, this is always challenging. Boards must anticipate, apparently, that your government will negotiate, and not fully fund, cost increases and make new financial demands on boards and suddenly cancel funding grants mid year (ie: AFG) and direct boards to implement new programs without the necessary funding to do so. In light of the instability coming from your Ministry, our balanced budget, positive student incomes and strong cash position demonstrate that it is not this board that has difficulty managing its finances.

As you know, I have previously invited your input on the staff budget proposals and invited you to all of our budget meetings, and you have declined all invitations. We have a public meeting planned to consider an updated, balanced budget proposal focused on students success scheduled for 2010 June 14 at 5:30 pm in the VSB Education Centre and we would welcome your presence and participation in that discussion.

We also invite you to attend a public consultation meeting at Mount Pleasant Elementary School on the evening of 2010 June 17. I know many of our students, parents and community members would welcome the opportunity to discuss our budget proposal with you.

Board of School Trustees:

Patti Bacchus - Chairperson

Jane Bouey - Vice-Chairperson

Allan Blakey Ken Clement Ken Denike

Carol Gibson Sharon Gregson Mike Lombardi

Allan Wong

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In response to your Ministry Directive, I can assure you that we have directed our Senior Management Team to develop a balanced budget and I can assure you they will revise the current proposal with full consideration of the Comptroller General's budget recommendations, and in fact had already considered the relevant options well before our budget process was interrupted by her appointment and review.

Our budgets are always drafted with the best interests of students, student success and parents as the paramount considerations.

We will be happy to deliver you our updated draft by 2010 June 18 and would welcome any advice ministry staff can provide to reduce the impact of the proposed budget cuts on student learning.

I am hopeful that you will now focus your energy on supporting school districts in meeting the needs of students. I suggest you begin by addressing the unfunded costs downloaded to school districts and fund the costs you negotiated on our behalf or otherwise imposed on school districts.

We know that chronic underfunding of cost increases is the biggest threat to public education in this province. I urge you to advocate within your government for the stable, predictable and adequate funding so that we can get on with supporting teaching and learning.

Yours truly,



Patti Bacchus
Chairperson

cc: Trustees
Steve Cardwell, Superintendent of Schools
Brenda Ng, Secretary Treasurer