



Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association

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2015-2016 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Vancouver Board of Education
Committee III / V



April 13, 2015

VSTA RESPONSE TO 2015-2016 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

The Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association would like to thank you for the opportunity to respond to the preliminary budget proposals for 2015/16. Be assured that we recognize that the Board is once again grappling with the challenging task of approving a balanced operating budget within the constraints of the provincial government's downloading of costs and chronic underfunding of public education, a challenge that is being played out in school districts across B.C. Despite political rhetoric to the contrary, inadequate funding for public education continues to erode services for all students in Vancouver, particularly those who are most vulnerable. The reality is that a decade of budget cuts has resulted in a marked decrease in learning resources and teacher in-service opportunities; and, most significantly, fewer teachers in front of students. The VSTA also recognizes that the Board has worked to minimize the impact of the budget on the K-12 sector. For that, we thank you. However, the projected budget shortfall of \$8.52 million will no doubt make delivering an educational program (that we can all take pride in) even more difficult. As was recently described by a local media outlet, *for public education in Vancouver, budgeting is a death by a thousand cuts*. Nonetheless, the VSTA formally requests that the Board consider the following remarks (not prioritized), all of which are intended to minimize any further negative impact on the classroom and to safeguard the Board's mandate of "success for every student."

1. Increase non-enrolling teachers to meet diverse learners' needs

Resource teachers, counsellors, and teacher-librarians are essential to the daily work of the classroom teacher and student success. As a result of past budget decisions, reductions to non-enrolling teachers have been experienced across the entire district. Furthermore, years of reductions and amalgamations to special needs and alternate programs have directly impacted many of our neediest and most vulnerable students. There is also a pressing need to disaggregate the non-enrolling staffing entitlements given to schools to ensure that a baseline of service exists in all areas in all secondary schools.

The VSTA recommends that the VSB re-examine non-enrolling staffing levels/ratios.

2. Provide adequate funding for learning resources and teacher in-service training opportunities to support revised curriculum, Ministry initiatives, the BC Education Plan and the implementation of MyEducation BC.

Ongoing development of curricula in a variety of subject areas means that new resources to support and implement these courses must be found. While teachers are supportive of many of the proposed changes in the BC Education Plan, its successful implementation requires both a strategy and resources.

The BC Education Plan is ambitious and the revised curriculum represents a significant shift in teaching and learning. Teacher involvement is a key component of successful implementation of educational change; therefore, in-service opportunities are essential for teachers to develop/extend their understanding of the new curricular directions.

The implementation of a new student information system will require appropriate plans and supports for teachers and a realistic application of resources so that it is not an unacceptable burden on teachers. Adequate time and training (usage and privacy policies) are required to support teachers as the district transitions from BCeSIS to MyEdBC.

The VSTA recommends that the VSB allocate sufficient funding to support these initiatives.

3. K-12 Teaching Allocation

International Education

According to the VSB's own projections, an additional 50 FTE international students are anticipated for 2015/16. Despite this projected increase, however, the preliminary budget proposes a reduction of 7.73 FTE teachers. To decrease teaching time by altering the formula to a ratio of 22 students: 1.0 FTE will invariably result in even fewer supports for the district's most isolated students. Furthermore, any reduction in service has the potential to eventually lead to international families considering registering in districts that offer superior levels of service. This proposal can best be characterized as penny wise but pound foolish.

The VSTA recommends that the ratio of 20 international students: 1.0 FTE be retained.

4. Strict adherence to staffing entitlements for secondary-based administrators.

The staffing entitlement for secondary school-based administrators in 2007/08 was 45.1428 FTE while the actual number of administrators assigned was 52 FTE. In both 2013/14 and 2014/15, the entitlement was 40.2863 yet the assigned number was 52 FTE—*approximately 12 FTE/positions over the entitlement*. The district practice of embellishing the overall size of its administrative team through the misappropriation of teaching blocks must stop. This practice clearly inflates the district data specific to teacher-student ratios while concurrently masking the costs associated with school-based administration.

Furthermore, while there has been an overall decrease in the number of (secondary) students and teacher FTE since 2007/08, there has been no corresponding change in the numbers of school-based administrators (see chart). For example, secondary schools currently have the same number of administrators in 2014/15 as existed in 2011/12 despite the hard reality that during that same period of time, student enrolment declined by 1942 students and teaching FTE has been reduced by 126.163 FTE. Lastly, the suggestion that administrators may be using blocks for instructional purposes is not a cost savings; rather, it is the most expensive teaching in the district.

The VSTA recommends that the Board staff schools with the actual number of administrators they are entitled to under the formula and curtail the practice of “dipping into” the secondary teaching entitlement.

5. District direction to secondary schools to not use instructional staffing for non-instructional purposes.

These blocks directly increase class sizes and restrict a school’s ability to offer electives or specialty courses. School-based administrators continue to allocate teaching blocks for non-instructional purposes such as timetabling, computer support, grad transitions, athletic director, daily physical activity, and school store. This is not an acceptable use of teaching blocks and the practice must be eliminated in all secondary schools. Given the reality of the Board’s ongoing budgetary challenges, this long-standing district practice can no longer be justified or tolerated.

The VSTA recommends that school based administrators be directed to cease this practice and use the blocks for their intended purpose—providing instruction to students.

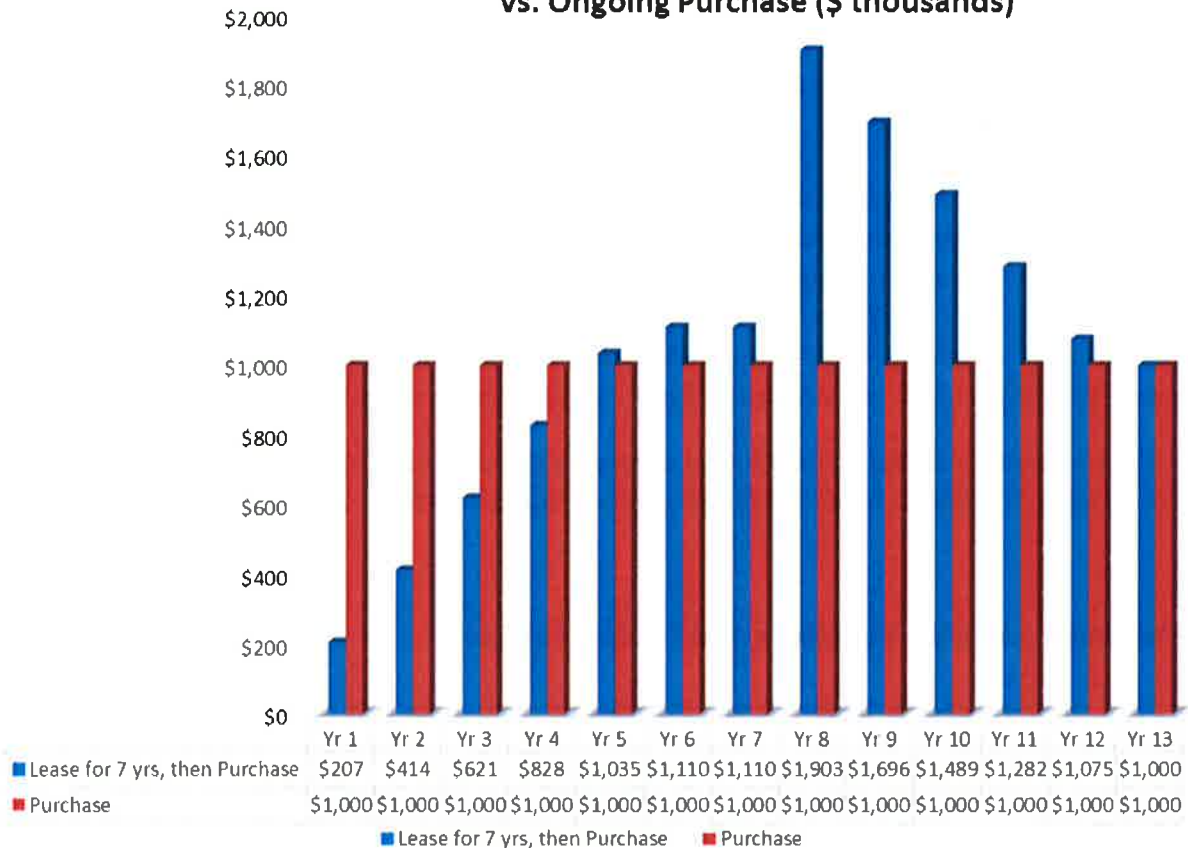
6. Minimize Lifetime Furniture and Equipment Costs

The VSTA supports efforts to identify and consider innovative sources of revenue but is opposed to financing strategies that, over their full term, result in higher furniture and equipment costs and an increased transfer of public education funds to private for-profit lending agencies. While the upfront revenue is enticing, the ‘Sale and Lease Back’ proposal carries pernicious medium to long term implications.

Switching back from leasing to purchasing would entail several years of onerous furniture and equipment expenditures. In particular, the first-year cost of switching back to purchasing might be more than trustees would be willing to impose on district finances. Assuming five year leases and an approximately constant year over year value for new furniture and equipment, in order to acquire the new assets and meet the remaining lease obligations, the first year of switching back would require an expenditure of nearly double the asset value. Extending the model presented at Committee V - a five year lease term on an annual asset value of \$1M at 5% (including 7.5% buy-out) – the following graph represents the consequences of a decision, after seven years of leasing, to eliminate financing costs and return to purchasing for subsequent years.

The VSTA recommends that the VBE not relinquish the ownership of district assets to private for-profit corporations (see addendum).

Annual Cost of Leasing for 7 years then Returning to Purchase vs. Ongoing Purchase (\$ thousands)



Concluding Comment

The VSTA recognizes that this Board is committed to “success for all students” and that it has worked to minimize additional cuts to the classroom. We look forward to working with the Vancouver Board of Education in assuring a quality education for all students in our district.

Respectfully,

Q. Pawluk

Debbie Pawluk
President

Staffing Entitlement

Secondary School-Based Administrators

2007-2015

2014-15				
SCHOOL	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual
Britannia	610	38.1227	1.7143	2
Byng	1295	67.1400	2.1429	3
Churchill	2085	102.9169	3.1429	4
D. Thompson	1667	82.8979	3.1429	4
Gladstone	1079	56.5032	2.1429	3
Hamber	1586	88.9525	2.7143	3
J. Oliver	1041	55.6091	2.1429	3
Killarney	2014	100.8367	3.1429	4
King George	475	26.5554	1.4286	2
Kitsilano	1386	69.9351	2.1429	3
Magee	1225	59.9164	2.1429	3
Point Grey	1181	58.0794	2.1429	3
Prince of Wales	1210	62.6879	2.1429	3
Templeton	793	43.9883	1.7143	2
Tupper	937	52.4653	1.7143	2
U. Hill	849	45.7067	1.7143	2
Van Tech	1587	82.2245	2.7143	3
Windermere	1145	59.1739	2.1429	3
TOTALS:	22165	1153.7120	40.2863	52

2013-14			
Students	FTE	Admin	Actual
659	40.3480	1.7143	2
1312	67.0879	2.1429	3
2097	102.4290	3.1429	4
1724	88.5224	3.1429	4
1144	60.5728	2.1429	3
1679	84.3935	2.7143	3
1141	60.4569	2.1429	3
1945	98.8565	3.1429	4
480	28.1360	1.4286	2
1422	67.0543	2.1429	3
1260	60.9540	2.1429	3
1170	60.4282	2.1429	3
1250	65.0555	2.1429	3
851	47.6189	1.7143	2
935	52.7863	1.7143	2
803	38.3888	1.7143	2
1640	84.6555	2.7143	3
1232	63.7788	2.1429	3
22744	1171.5233	40.2863	52

2012-13				
SCHOOL	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual
Britannia	680	43.3422	1.7143	2
Byng	1332	68.6561	2.1429	3
Churchill	2064	103.9796	3.1429	4
D. Thompson	1832	93.9128	3.1429	4
Gladstone	1231	65.5576	2.1429	3
Hamber	1689	94.0490	2.7143	3
J. Oliver	1160	62.6092	2.1429	3
Killarney	2125	108.3607	3.1429	4 + 1 SBO
King George	525	30.7184	1.4286	2
Kitsilano	1397	73.6170	2.1429	3
Magee	1221	61.4629	2.1429	3
Point Grey	1211	63.5914	2.1429	3
Prince of Wales	1275	67.7257	2.1429	3
Templeton	967	53.5896	2.1429	3
Tupper	1015	57.6714	1.7143	2
U. Hill	690	38.4175	1.4286	2
Van Tech	1630	87.3973	2.7143	3
Windermere	1333	69.5544	2.1429	3
TOTALS:	23377	1244.2128	40.4292	53 + 1 SBO

2011-12			
Students	FTE	Admin	Actual
739	46.7581	1.7143	2
1358	70.8838	2.1429	3
2106	106.4961	3.1429	4
1849	94.4628	3.0000	4
1251	67.2854	2.1429	3
1919	96.5708	2.7143	3
1156	65.4696	2.1429	3
2106	107.1881	3.1429	4 + 1 SBO
530	29.9117	1.4286	3
1492	77.4282	2.1429	3
1260	64.9990	2.1429	3
1275	66.4284	2.1429	3
1285	68.6658	2.1429	3
1067	59.4997	2.0000	2
1016	58.3645	1.7143	2
625	35.4966	1.4286	2
1694	91.3245	2.7143	3
1379	72.6425	2.1429	3
24107	1279.8756	40.1434	52 + 1 SBO

Staffing Entitlement
Secondary School-Based Administrators
2007-2015

2010-11					2009-10			
SCHOOL	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual
Britannia	726	44.7941	1.7143	2	710	45.5120	2.0000	2
Byng	1351	71.3094	2.1429	3	1336	74.2242	2.4286	3
Churchill	2106	106.7738	3.1429	4	2109	107.8022	3.5714	4
D. Thompson	1855	93.7074	3.0000	4	1838	95.3489	3.4286	4
Gladstone	1325	72.6928	2.1429	3	1307	75.2204	2.4286	3
Hamber	1732	99.1163	2.7143	3	1647	97.1463	3.0000	3
J. Oliver	1217	66.9045	2.1429	3	1115	64.9590	2.2857	3
Killarney	2010	101.0616	3.1429	4	2013	104.3228	3.5714	3
King George	490	27.6487	1.4286	2	482	29.5760	1.4286	2
Kitsilano	1518	77.6740	2.1429	3	1470	77.7662	2.5714	3
Magee	1280	65.1206	2.1429	3	1294	66.3697	2.4286	3
Point Grey	1297	68.9126	2.1429	3	1270	69.6313	2.4286	3
Prince of Wales	1265	67.5193	2.1429	3	1295	69.5643	2.4286	4
Templeton	1097	58.3890	2.0000	3	1087	59.3430	2.2857	3
Tupper	1033	58.8521	1.7143	2	966	57.0801	2.0000	2
U. Hill	616	34.6560	1.4286	2	595	35.6185	1.4286	2
Van Tech	1667	92.0560	2.7143	3	1663	95.1791	3.0000	3
Windermere	1322	70.0297	2.1429	3	1313	71.6971	2.4286	3
TOTALS:	23907	1277.2179	40.1434	53	23510	1296.3611	45.1430	53

2007-08				
SCHOOL	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual
Britannia	780	45.9731	2.0000	2
Byng	1245	66.2617	2.2857	3
Churchill	2081	105.2988	3.5714	4
D. Thompson	1835	92.3738	3.5714	4
Gladstone	1335	73.2266	2.4286	3
Hamber	1658	92.0146	3.0000	3
J. Oliver	1124	61.3044	2.2857	3
Killarney	2010	102.2949	3.5714	3
King George	496	29.6828	1.4286	2
Kitsilano	1420	77.8235	3.0000	3
Magee	1250	64.2755	2.2857	3
Point Grey	1270	70.2684	2.4286	3
Prince of Wales	1468	71.4389	2.2857	3
Templeton	1058	57.9321	2.2857	3
Tupper	947	53.0886	2.0000	2
U. Hill	582	34.3857	1.4286	2
Van Tech	1661	90.4923	3.0000	3
Windermere	1330	70.4828	2.2857	3
TOTALS:	23550	1258.6185	45.1428	52

ADDENDUM

Revenue generated by the Sale and Lease Back proposal may not be required:

It is far from certain that the approximately three million dollars that the sale and lease back option would add to next year's projected revenue is necessary for the VBE to submit a good-faith balanced budget. The VSTA acknowledges that a combination of insufficient provincial funding and Ministry regulations forces school boards to adopt a conservative approach to budgeting. The uncertainty with respect to both expenses and revenue inherent in most budgeting exercises is exacerbated by limitations placed on districts with respect to revenue generation, a legal requirement to submit a balanced budget, matters of timing regarding when financial commitments are made vs. when grant revenue is confirmed, and matters of timing regarding when revenue is received vs. when expenses are incurred. The latter consideration forces districts to designate a restricted surplus at the end of one budget year for carry forward into the next. A portion of these restricted funds will be used for the purposes for which they were originally budgeted. Due to expenses coming in under budget, planned expenses not materializing, provincial hold-back disbursements, interest, and other factors, there will normally be a positive balance. This balance plays an essential role as a contingency fund, a portion used to cover unbudgeted expenses with the remainder ultimately appropriated to offset the following year's projected shortfall. Financial statements over the last five years place these de facto contingency funds in the \$10 million to \$20 million range with annual budget cuts and new revenue generating initiatives serving to maintain it at this level.

The VSTA maintains that, based on average expenditures over the last three to five years, the VBE can budget less conservatively in several budget categories and in so doing, submit a good-faith balanced budget that avoids commitments to measures as extreme as the proposal to relinquish a portion of the district's assets to ownership by private for-profit corporations. Regardless of how prudently this exercise is undertaken, any deflation of the budgetary cushion will increase the risk that the district may develop a cash flow problem. The VSTA is of the opinion that there is enough certainty in several budget categories to permit a measured reduction in budgeted expenses and still demonstrate a minimal risk that the district will find itself unable to meet its obligations. In short, rather than continuing to facilitate inadequate funding by budgeting in a manner that ensures that cash flow problems will not arise, the board should target minimal risk as the measure of a good-faith balanced budget. Over the course of the year, should the possibility of the operating account slipping into deficit arise, the VBE has options other than the sale and lease back of assets to generate the needed revenue.

Options:

Should a need for additional revenue arise during the year or should trustees deem it preferable to incur debt in order to pre-empt any possibility of a shortfall, there are several options that could be pursued which do not involve the retail lending markets. These include:

- Issuing debentures as provided for by the School Act.
- Pursuing the possibility of a short-term operational loan with the Municipal Finance Authority of BC.
- Securing loans for equipment funding with the Municipal Finance Authority of BC.



International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 963, Submission to Trustees re: VBE 2015/16 Budget

April 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to address trustees and senior staff regarding the VBE 2015/2016 budget. As you are all well aware, this district has been making deep cuts for many years affecting virtually all aspects of education in the district.

Vancouver school trustees have been leaders in advocating for public education and highlighting the inadequacies of provincial government funding. This is appreciated and we encourage the entire board to continue that work, particularly in light of the latest government edict to reduce another \$54 million over two years in so-called "administrative" cuts.

The suggested administrative cuts in the 2015/2016 Preliminary Budget Proposals include the Sale & Leaseback of furniture, equipment and technology (\$2.93 million), Furniture and Equipment reduction (\$0.38 million) and Print Management (\$0.20 million) for a total of \$3.51 million. At this point it appears these administrative cuts will not affect "administrators" or excluded staff.

Preliminary Budget Proposals March 31, 2015

Student/Staff Ratios

The Preliminary Budget Proposal power point and accompanying Fiscal Framework document contains a provocative set of numbers pursuant to *Student/Staff Ratios*. In what can only be characterized as a *non sequitur*, this subset compares student populations to district staffing. Student/Staffing ratios may be an appropriate means to compare classroom functions- teachers, administration, classroom support staff- but it makes no sense based on non-classroom work. Building maintenance, from heating and ventilating to painting and plumbing are factors of the amount of real estate managed by an employer.

And while the data is sub-noted with a number of reasons for the differences there is the suggestion that the VBE is some 347 FTE's over the "subset."

The following slides then appropriate this incomparable data to "challenges to [the VSB's] long term financial sustainability."

When IUOE asked about this particular area we have been told that the information used in this so-called comparable review of a handful of like-sized districts to Vancouver was confidential. The Framework document reads,

In order to assist the Board in this difficult task, an analysis of key staffing ratios compared to a subset of comparable school districts in the Province was undertaken. The source of information was based on staffing and enrolment submitted by each school district to the Ministry of Education, supplemented by more detail obtained from the comparable school districts in the subset.

To reiterate, the VBE has produced public documents which purport to list critical “challenges to long term financial sustainability” but will not offer a fulsome explanation of this cryptic representation.

Board Advocacy Must Continue

The IUOE understands that our support staff colleagues throughout the province represented by CUPE will largely be taking the position that school trustees must take a significant stand against further cuts to education. We concur with that position and urge all Vancouver school trustees to participate in efforts to restore, not cut, education funding.

The IUOE Local 963 thanks you for your time.

Joint Union Submission
on the
Vancouver School Board
Attendance Management Program

April 13, 2015

Submitted by:

Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association

Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association

CUPE Local 15

CUPE Local 407

IUOE Local 963

Construction and Maintenance Trade Unions

(IUBAC 2, BCRCC 1907, OPCMIA 919, IBEW 213,
IAHFI 118, IAMAW 692, IUPAT 38, UA 170, SMWIA 280)

**Joint Union Submission on
Vancouver School Board
Attendance Management Program
April 13, 2015**

Consistent with past practice and positions, unionized stakeholder groups are once again speaking in opposition to the recently initiated Attendance Management Program (AMP). While fully cognizant of the employer's oft repeated assurances and explanations, VSB unionized employee groups continue to question the district's rationale, overall efficacy, and projected cost savings of the Employee Attendance Management Program.

Further to our position that the VSB's AMP is unnecessary and potentially redundant is the information in the Deloitte Report (2014) on service delivery transformation and shared services. The report clearly identifies five tier 1 opportunities for the province, one of which is a Health and Wellness Support Program that can be "tailored to individual district circumstances." Furthermore, clearly identified within the report is a *province-wide program* with quantitative benefits of \$10-\$12 million in annual replacement costs. In light of this comprehensive report and recommendations, we strongly question why the VSB is investing considerable time and limited resources into developing a made-in-house program. Given the Ministry of Education's identification of optimal operating models and timeline for managing shared services, we once again question the district's logic in moving forward at this time with the AMP, particularly when the Deloitte Report details a sector management model structure.

VSB employees have repeatedly been informed that the AMP is just one element of the Wellness Support Initiative and that the promotion of *employees' health and wellness* is the primary goal. However, unlike the two other key elements of the program—disability management and wellness initiatives—the AMP is firmly grounded in rigorous data collection, intensive analysis, and the identification of atypical employee absenteeism. Assurances that employees will only be flagged when/if they fall into the 95th percentile (a random demarcation point solely determined by the employer) is problematic as we have not been provided with a rationale for the setting of the 95th percentile, nor have we received a clear and transparent explanation as to the types of absences that will be "filtered out" from the overall total. This ambiguity will inevitably trigger a flurry of grievances/arbitrations, thereby potentially creating significant, undeterminable cost pressures on the VSB. Claims that the AMP is "designed to support employees who struggle with non-culpable absences" are neither reassuring nor credible as there is no guarantee (nor can there ever be) that the data will not be used either now or in the future for other purposes: namely, increased scrutiny to reduce absenteeism and sick leave in order to gain cost efficiencies and increase management capacity. Additionally, as employee groups have consistently reiterated, a plethora of labour relations mechanisms already exist for circumstances related to culpable behaviours and the abuse of sick days: mechanisms that are readily available to the employer at any time. Worth noting, moreover, is that none of the systemic factors in the workplace that negatively impact employees' physical and mental well-being are being addressed by this purported employee "wellness" and "healthy work culture" initiative. While employees sympathize with the financial challenges facing the district, we are profoundly disappointed by the employer's ill-advised decision to gain cost efficiencies through increased monitoring of front-line employees.


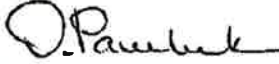


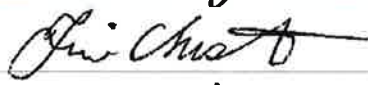

Unionized employee groups are also puzzled by the ongoing claims of increased cost savings. Budget documents dating as far back as 2011/12 speculate on potential cost savings from employee wellness

initiatives and reduced replacement costs; however, the employer has yet to produce a formal report detailing the purported amount saved for any given year. For example, the following potential savings were predicted: \$105,000 (2011/12), \$250,000 (2012/13), \$800,000 (2013/14) and another \$1.1 million in 2014/15. While costs have been incurred due to the expansion of the Human Resources Department through additional hiring, the procurement of reporting software and tracking tools, EAP enhancements, and sundry materials and training, detailed information specific to the annual cost savings has not been forthcoming. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been invested into this initiative yet there is a noticeable dearth of quantitative data on the actual cost savings. Surely, both the trustees and the stakeholder groups are within their rights to expect a detailed report which outlines both the *specific costs* and *actualized savings* dating back to at least 2011/12.

In closing, we once again reiterate our grave concerns related to the Attendance Management Program, particularly in relation to its overall costs, efficacy, and actual purpose. As noted, budget projections (for several years) have not been reported as actualized, nor has the district addressed our concerns specific to the long-range intent of the program. Contractual provisions and procedures already exist to address absences due to culpable behavior; therefore, investing scarce financial resources into this initiative is at best nonsensical and at worst irresponsible. Lastly, in consideration of the Deloitte Report, there is no sound justification for a “made in Vancouver” program.

As indicated below, the partner groups below strongly encourage the employer to reconsider the necessity of such a program, particularly at a time when the district is facing a significant budget shortfall for 2015/16.

Sincerely,

Dan Graves, President Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association	
Debbie Pawluk, President Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association	
Leanne Toderian, President CUPE Local 15	
Brent Boyd, President CUPE Local 407	
Tim Chester, President IUOE Local 963	
John Pesa, Chair Construction and Maintenance Trade Unions: IUBAC 2, BCRCC 1907, OPCMIA 919, IBEW 213, IAHFI 118, IAMAW 692, IUPAT 38, UA 170, SMWIA 280	

VEPVPA Response to the Budget – April 13, 2015

On behalf of the Vancouver Elementary Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, I would like to thank you for the invitation to speak to the Committee today as part of the 2015/2016 budget process.

VEPVPA appreciates opportunities for stakeholder groups to provide ongoing input as the budget process proceeds. Given our ongoing fiscal constraints and the appointment of a Special Advisor, we acknowledge that this is a particularly difficult budget timeline. We appreciate all the hard work and consultations that have gone in to producing this preliminary budget. We also applaud the continued work by this Board to advocate for stable and adequate funding for what we all value: a strong and equitable public education system.

We support the Board in its commitment to trying to keep cuts away from our students. We acknowledge the value of music in a student's education and the value of the Adult Ed Program in supporting our youth and providing them with an alternative setting to complete their secondary diploma. At the same time, we realize that the Board has been forced to consider cuts in programs that are not part of the core mandate.

As Principals and Vice-Principals, we are working to support the Board's direction in implementation of administrative cost-saving measures.

Over the years as the number of support staff has decreased, Principals and Vice-Principals have felt the impact. The role of the Principals and Vice-Principals has become increasingly complex as we fulfill our 'duty of care' as well as provide educational leadership in a rapidly changing world. We are facilitating new district and provincial directions and providing leadership and support to implement and follow through on our District's plans for student learning. Building positive relationships with staff, students and parents is always our prime focus.

As we all know, numerous years of budget shortfalls have severely impacted our District, limiting options for supporting valuable programs and supports for our students. We also know that with previous years of declining enrollment and a shift in the population the Board of Education has found itself with significant excess space in some facilities. We applaud the Board's commitment to supporting all students' needs; however, we also know that this has become increasingly difficult with the excess of space at some sites. We support the consideration of long term solutions for meeting the needs of all students in educationally sustainable cost effective school settings.

As an Association we continue to strongly value and support maintaining elementary Vice-Principals in schools with an enrollment of over 400; VPs in each of the elementary annexes; full-time Principals in each of the 74 elementary schools and Principals and Vice-Principals to adequately support our Adult Education Centres.

In closing, we thank you again for this invitation to provide preliminary input on behalf of the Vancouver Elementary Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association and we would like to reiterate that we are committed to working with SMT and the Board in a leadership role.

Respectfully,

Marion Broadbent, President

Vancouver Elementary Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (VEPVPA)

VESTA RESPONSE

TO THE VSB PRELIMINARY OPERATING BUDGET 2015-2016

To the Vancouver Board of Education

Committee III / V

Monday, 2015 April 13

Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association

VESTA's Response to the VBE's 2015-2016 Budget Proposals

The Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association expresses its appreciation to the Vancouver Board of Education for receiving our submission and for considering our responses to the 2015-2016 preliminary budget proposals.

We recognize that due to the chronic underfunding of public education, the legal expectation of the Board to present a balanced budget, and a projected shortfall of \$8.52 million, the VSB Board of Trustees finds itself, again, in the position of considering cuts to highly valued programs.

We are here tonight to articulate some long standing priorities that VESTA holds as a way to consider the budgetary choices you are faced with at this time.

First, equity of access and quality of programming and support across all schools in Vancouver is a priority. Regardless of neighbourhood, socio-economic status of families, choice programs or pay-for-use options, we believe all students and all schools deserve equitable access to resources, to funding, to supports for students with special needs and to programming. Every student deserves programs and resources that address their needs, their capabilities, and their aspirations. Similarly, teachers, no matter where they work, need fair and equitable access to learning resources, technology, and the professional autonomy to make decisions about the needs of their students. We have serious concerns about increasing pay-for-use programming and reducing services to classrooms and classroom teachers as a result of the ongoing cuts to core educational services. We believe in neighbourhood schools and maintaining all of our existing school sites, as these serve and support diverse and unique communities, all of whom deserve equity of access.

Secondly, we are in the context of working under our new Collective Agreement and are working to implement the changes that are new this year. There are costs inherent in this new Collective Agreement and we look forward to implementing the new and existing Collective Agreement provisions through upcoming years. We have concerns about the discussion at Committee III regarding Board mandated use of prep time to attempt to remedy the issues surrounding Band and Strings programs. We believe that school staff, through their Staff Committee Meetings, make decisions based on school needs and strengths, and that the funding and scheduling issues facing Band and Strings need to be resolved without infringing on the rights of schools to make decisions through the school-based processes described in our Collective Agreement.

Thirdly, after years of cuts such as those we are facing today, we have grave concerns about the deterioration of the Working and Learning Conditions and Health and Safety of our students and teachers. Cuts continue to impact the ability of teachers to provide the kind of learning opportunities we all desire. Over years we have seen the effects of increased class size, decreased resource and specialist teacher support, aging technology and unsafe buildings. Supports for teachers continue to dwindle, as the needs in our classrooms increase. We urge the Board to consider not only the cuts this year to services for teachers and classrooms, but to locate them in the context of an ongoing reduction in services. Each cut, piled on top of previous cuts, is compounded year upon year, while teachers and students work in buildings that are unsafe and without reliable learning resources.

Finally, we wish to take this moment to articulate the fact that VESTA supports the autonomy of locally, democratically elected School Boards. The potential effect of Bill 11 is devastating for students, teachers, and for citizens of British Columbia.

VBE Budget Presentation from VESTA AE Sublocal

First off, we want to say that we are disappointed that, once again, we are here talking about AE school and Learning Centre closures and no evidence of a transparent process seems to have been adhered to. I would like to preface this response today by echoing Patti's words from last week's committee meeting: we need more information, research, surveys and student input before closing schools and programs. This is because it ensures that decisions made reflect the realities and the needs of our Adult Learners.

The whole week, this one line from "The Merchant of Venice" has been reverberating in my head. The famous line where Shylock says, "if you cut us do we not bleed." And I think it resonates with me because it speaks to the human reality of cutting/both figuratively and literally—that there are real human repercussions to cuts—that behind the numbers and figures are real people's lives—lives that are often eviscerated with the shift of a decimal point. And we've done a lot of bloodletting in Adult Ed. this year already. The ministries myopic decision to repeal the Education Guarantee not only disadvantages our most vulnerable citizens, but is a serious blow to an already fragile system. And now, with these proposed cuts, the blood continues to flow. But there is only so much blood one can give.

To be clear, we appreciate the difficult position the Board is in. The ministry has woefully underfunded education for far too long and tough decisions have to be made, and no one wants to

have to make cuts. But like in surgery, one can cut to save life-to preserve and sustain life-or cut to kill. We'd like to talk about how rethinking these cuts could stanch the flow of blood and, as Scott said at the Budget meeting "keep adult Ed. Alive and Viable. The future of AE is dependent on some precise incisions and we have some solutions that will apply poultice to the wound. We have an opportunity here to stop the bleeding.

We have to have self-paced programs at all schools. Learning Centres (or self-paced) are the heart of each school and are essential to the sustainability of each centre. Because there are so few electives offered in the structured classes, due to the GA cuts, most electives required for students to graduate are taken through our Self-Paced. Without access to these courses, most students will not even be able to graduate. It simply makes no sense. The self-paced programs offer the much needed flexibility that adult students require. Most students take a combination of structured and self-paced courses in order to accommodate their complex and busy lives. Many of our students are single parents, or work long hours. Taking a combination of structured and self paced courses enables them to complete their schooling and graduate. A school without a self-paced program will place tremendous hardship on our students and could result in students discontinuing with their studies altogether. Also, Adult Ed. does not have any support staff to help students with learning disabilities, so the self-paced programs are where students who struggle in a structured environment can go to complete their courses, as they can take longer to complete their work and get the one to one attention they require to be successful. And the reality is that all self-paced students will not travel to GP to take self-paced courses, as this is an incredible inconvenience and obstacle. Adult students have very little extra time to spend 30 mins to an hour to go from centre to centre—this is not a solution based in reality, and out of touch with the realities of being an Adult student with all the challenges that come with that. To have a learning centre with no classrooms to feed into it, and vice versa, is like building a dam—it will cut off the flow from one to the other and it'll dry up. It is not viable to think that up to 1200 students are going to be able have their self-paced needs met through one small site alone. We agree that GP should have a learning centre, but it needs its classrooms back in order for it to properly serve the community.

Barriers are never a good thing—our students have those in spades already. Self-paced Learning centres are also the first point of contact for our students. It is where students come in to do intakes and assessments. The staff who work there are on the front lines, so to speak. Without these centres, student intake will decline—not exactly a solution to fostering a sustainable system.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of this preliminary budget is the proposed new class minimums of 26. It was reported earlier by management that the class average for AE, 20. This

seems inaccurate, as our class minimums are currently 19. My classes, for example, always run with 28 or 29 students. We would like to have more information about how these numbers were arrived at. Were youth age students, international students and learning centres included in this calculation? Where these averages calculated based registrations at the beginning of the class or only on completions at the end of the class?

The egregious cuts to graduated adult funding is already going to make it harder for classes to hit minimums. By raising minimums from 19 to 26 at the same time as Graduated Adult are being blocked from taking courses due to prohibitively high tuition is draconian and unfair. Also, the reality is that adult students come to class with a variety of learning disabilities, both diagnosed and mostly undiagnosed, and AE has no support staff to help with our varied class composition. Raising the class minimums to 26 will make it even harder for teachers to help students achieve their educational goals, as there are virtually no resources available to them. Keeping class minimums where they are now will ensure that students can get the quality education that they deserve, and will ensure that classes will be viable, and all types of learners will be assisted. Quite simply, this number is way too high. If we are to survive, this number needs to come down considerably.

The next issue is the proposal to close the DEEC and Hastings Centers. If these schools are closed there will be no AE availability downtown at all. This disadvantages our most vulnerable citizens and under-serves the communities who most need close access to school. Many of these students suffer from poverty, drug addiction, mental illness and hunger. These are students who can't just hop on a Sky train or a Bus and go to another centre. Without access to a school Downtown, hundreds of students are going to suffer. Real people will not go on to graduate; at-risk youth from our outreaches will lose their lifeboat, and drown in a sea of fiscal indifference and bureaucracy, people will become disconnected from their communities, will not better themselves, will not be able to provide a better life for their families, and for their children, and they will not become active, positive members of their communities. We need a fully functioning school Downtown with a self-paced learning centre and classrooms and outreaches together in one location.

We know that no one wants to have to make cuts, and we know these decisions are difficult, but please keep in mind that there are stories behind the statistics and the numbers. Please don't forget the human equation is this. Our students are just trying to get a hand up and for most of them, this is the only hand that is extended to them in the world. Please don't let them fall. The return on your investment is so far reaching, and so important for a healthy society.