

Budget Presentation

John Puddifoot, Lord Byng DPAC Rep

April 17, 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to present.

We are here to examine the possibilities. To do what we can, with what we have, where we are. Education has many things that can be done with more money. In some cases things that can only be done with a vast amount of money. That we cannot do it all should not be upsetting to anyone. What we should prefer doing are those that give the most benefit to the students, for their welfare and education is the reason we have this education system in the first place. To simply say that. "There is not enough money." And leave it at that, does a major disservice to education. The board's job is to make choices that are possible.

Fortunately boards of education in BC are generally making the right choices. BC is the leading education jurisdiction in Canada by many measures and one of the top jurisdictions in the world. By all international measures, BC is in the top ten. Our education system comparatively does very well and has shown some improvement since 2006, one of the few jurisdictions in Canada to do so. That we fight passionately about education as we are now is likely one of the reasons for this success. We allocate our resources with a critical eye and eliminate things that are no longer needed. Students in other jurisdictions in Canada and elsewhere, where funding is more plentiful, class sizes are smaller, and teachers are paid much more, do worse than students in BC.

This brings us to the choices before us. While senior management has suggested a list of proposals, that list is far from complete. To truly make informed comment a full list of the things that could be changed needs to be presented: not just the minimal preferred options of management. This approach by the board is unfortunate as it reduces this forum to reactionary statements and few innovative ideas. The one week time period to compose comment and form consensus does not engender fulsome discussion. In some cases it allows no discussion for parents as PAC meetings may not occur within this time period. Many of the presentations over the past three days have and will suffer as a result of this short timeframe. This is especially concerning as the final budget need not be passed until the end of June.

In order for PACs to properly consult with the parents of a school, they must contact them. Under current rules this is difficult as, even though all parents of children attending a school are members of the school PAC, the PAC does not have a way to contact their members directly. Everything must go through school staff. If this board wants true consultation with parents, this must be addressed. This is especially true if the board insists on maintaining these extremely tight timelines for budget consultation.

Many of the presentations here today will be appealing to this board not to cut specific programs but giving few or no suggestions as to what should be done to find the money and balance the budget. After all, the budget must be balanced. We must do the best possible for the students within our means. It is unfortunate that the proposals made by this board present no options at all for us to choose from. Indeed, with the total of the senior management proposals being equal to the shortfall, this means that alternatives must be created by the presenters and put forward if any suggested program or reduction is

to be retained. We thus suggest the following six possible adjustments to the budget to create the necessary room to continue to support programs that the board has suggest be ended.

1. Base presented numbers: One of the base numbers that contributed to this shortfall, specifically the cost of an estimated 850 fewer students, seems too high. At 3.54 million, or just over \$4000 per non-enrolled student in costs that cannot be recovered on a total cost per student of about \$9000, this figure seems quite inflated. Especially when the VSB budget consists of over 90% staffing costs which are, nearly by definition, variable. Truly eliminating the services these non-present students would have used should result in a savings of about 90% leaving only 10% of the cost remaining. Assuming that each of the 850 students costs conservatively \$8000, though this proposed budget suggests a much higher number, the retained costs for these students is closer to $850 \times \$8000 \times 10\% = \$680,000$. This recalculation results in narrowing the shortfall by 2.86 million.
2. Proposal A7: Photocopier Sale and Lease Back. It appears as if this proposal gains 1.079 million this year in exchange for total additional payments of 1.215 million over the following three years. This is a net loss over the entire period of \$136,000 and possible loss of the photocopiers at the end of this period when they still have value. Given that the VBE expects to be short of funds in the coming years, this seems extremely shortsighted. This widens the gap by 1.079 million this year, but will shrink it in years to come.
3. Proposal A10: Progression to Print Management. What is the cost of the newly purchased Cannon MFPs? This seems to be a substantial missing value. Without this cost this proposal cannot be considered and requires more analysis as to its true impact. This widens the gap by \$327,000.
4. This next proposal will doubtless be somewhat controversial. We suggest that the board consider a slight increase in class size to free up funds to retain programs at risk. For example, if you assume the cost of a class is \$71,260 as suggested in management proposal D2, increasing one class in ten by one student saves enough to pay for the strings/band program. Extending this out, adding one student to every class saves 6.49 million. Slight increases in class size result in sizeable savings. In fact, if you were to increase all class size by an average of 2 students, none of the management proposals would need to go forward. (Note the provincial government estimates that increasing class size in Vancouver by one student would yield savings of over 14 million. At less than half of this figure, our estimate is more conservative.)

Increasing class size is always of concern, however in this case relatively minor increases would have little negative impact on student learning while at same time retaining many programs we know have a huge positive impact on student engagement and outcomes, especially for students at risk. Given the choice of some of the more draconian proposed management cuts, or a small increase in class size, slightly increasing class size might be the preferred option.

Increasing class size to retain nearly all the proposals headed, "Educational" is sound practice. These programs in general support kids staying in school. I have yet to hear of a student quitting school because there class was 27 rather than 25 students.

Looking at other nearby districts for comparison as shown in Appendix A, they mostly have larger classes than Vancouver. Increasing the average by one student would mean we would still have classes comparable in size to those in nearby urban districts. And, when you compare

average class sizes at Byng and our feeder elementary schools, increasing class size by one student across Vancouver would mean the district average class size would still be below those currently at Byng and most of its feeder schools.

While this means a loss of enrolling teachers, it does mean that important non-enrolling teacher and support workers positions that keep kids in school will be saved. Hopefully this board does want to keep kids in school and see them graduate.

There are some other costs. For example certain low enrolment classes might not go ahead, and some classes at the student limit would not be able to be increased needing those extra students to go elsewhere, but these costs are minor compared to the severe impact of other suggested cuts.

To minimize this impact, we suggest that increasing class size by 0.4 students across the district, essentially returning to the class sizes of 2008/09, is worthy of serious consideration. Possibly the board could consider more, as the benefit is great for the price paid. The trade-off is worthwhile.

Please examine Appendix A for details of this, comparable class sizes in Vancouver and other nearby urban districts, and the sources of the supporting data.

5. As an alternative, student to staff ratios in Vancouver have declined since 2008/09. Looking at Appendix B, moving these ratios back to 2008/09 levels would generate these savings:
 - a. Reduction in enrolling teachers to 2008/09 levels saves about 2.67 million. (Class sizes go up by about 0.4 students per class, or 2 classes in every 5 get one extra student.)
 - b. Reduction in Education Assistants to 2008/09 levels saves 5.286 million.
 - c. Reduction in support staff to 2008/09 levels saves 3.42 million.

It appears that rather than a decline in services, as is so often claimed, since 2008/09 the level of staff compared to the number of students has consistently increased. There may be very valid reasons for these increases, such as requirement to meet IEP staffing. However returning to these levels should be investigated and is worthy of consideration. It would appear that the bones have grown some gristle.

6. Reduce the number of "\$1,000 meetings" and legal costs by giving staff basic conflict resolution skills. When a parent gets treated unfairly through having their complaint dismissed out of hand, stonewalled, or simply having their concern mishandled, it can quickly super-size to the point that senior staff become involved. This leads to a series of meetings where the combined pay of the people in the room total over \$1,000 just to attend the meeting. (And sometimes more.) These meetings cost the system money when often all that needs to be done is for the parent to feel they have been heard. Giving frontline staff basic conflict resolution skills will reduce the number of occurrences resulting in a significant net savings. Further this will improve the culture of the school and encourage parents to become more engaged. The monetary benefit of this is unknown, but well worth considering in more detail.

The above suggestions that we know the value of would have the following impact on the budget:

Enrolment decline impact adjustment: (2.860) Million

Eliminating proposal A7 (Photocopier Sale)	1.079 Million
Eliminating proposal A10 (Print Management)	0.327 Million
Increasing Class Size by 0.4 students to 2008/09 levels	(2.661) Million
Reduce Education Assistants to 2008/09 levels	(5.286) Million
Reduce Support Workers to 2008/09 levels	(3.420) Million
Total Savings	(12.821) Million

Implementing all of these changes and none of the management suggestions would result in budget with a small surplus. If some of the less vile management proposals were incorporated all, our suggestions are not necessary to implement fully. There is now choice as there should have been to start. The challenge is to choose which the best is for the students. It is our belief that small increases in class size are far superior to some of the management proposals.

Having more than found the funding necessary to eliminate the more onerous proposed measures, we will now speak to the following select issues and board proposals, though our absence of comment on a specific suggestion in no way lends it our support. Indeed, it is not necessary for any of the management proposals to go forward.

1. Proposal B3: Closing 28 classrooms. Working this backwards, the savings per day per classroom is about \$7.25. This seems quite cheap for the use of a classroom for a day. Surely these rooms could be rented out to produce more than \$1400 in revenue per year or be used to support student clubs or activities? Further, if portables are not being used, why are they still at these schools? Should they not be transferred to where they are needed? Keeping these classrooms open would add \$39,200 to the budget, and might increase rental revenue.
2. Proposal D1: Continuing Education. While we do not favour eliminating this program at this time, many other organizations offer similar programs so it is a duplication of services. Coordinating and supporting these other organizations, be they the Parks Board, Community Centres, other educational institutions, or private companies would both retain and improve the offerings to the public who these programs are meant to serve. This would also be consistent with the Neighbourhood Learning Centre concept to bring the community into the schools. Sharing this programming might also produce revenue flows to support empty school space as many of these other organizations have limited facilities. It is recommended that the possibility of merging the Continuing Ed program with others offered in the city is worthy of consideration. As this is a long term change that cannot be implemented in a year, we recommend that while this is being investigated that this program be retained at a cost of \$514,401 while wind up and merger is considered. We do not recommend that this program continue on in its present form in 2015/16.
3. Proposal B2: Band and Strings Program. As many in the room know, the Lord Byng Honours Orchestra recently won the US National Championships in New York. The high level of achievement exhibited by all the Byng Orchestras can be partially attributed to the strong strings program in the Byng family elementary schools. Without this support from the elementary program it is nearly certain that the enrolment in our strings program will deteriorate both in quality and in numbers. Further placing a fee on this program, as is an alternate suggestion, is inequitable for families who cannot afford it. Keeping the elementary strings and band program would add \$558,651 to the budget including the fees overlooked by senior management. (Overlooked were any rental fees collected on the instruments which is not listed.)

4. Proposal D5: SACY No question: these workers who support students at risk should be retained. This would add \$127,000 to the budget and help keep students from falling disastrously through the cracks.
5. Proposal D7: Area Counsellors. These support many students at risk and are invaluable in crisis situations. Retaining these three counsellors adds \$315,200 to the budget.
6. Proposal D8: Education Psychologist. Again, a support for students at risk. Well worth retaining. This would add 103,530 to the budget.
7. Proposal D9: Speech and Language Pathologist: again a necessary support to access education. This should be retained adding \$98,130 to the budget.
8. Proposal D11: Library Services. The carry forward of \$80,000 to \$100,000 every year confuses us as we have constantly been told by our school that there is no money for new books. Regardless, maintaining the library collections is something that parents have always supported and frequently augmented with funds from PAC accounts. This should be retained. Additional Cost \$50,000.
9. Proposal D14: Literacy Consultant. With recent changes in pedagogy surrounding reading, the creation of the Superintendent for Reading, and the advent of the new curriculum, it is astounding that such a change be considered. Much training of teachers in this area is imminent. For \$133,494 these positions should be retained.
10. Proposal D18: Peer to Peer Mentors: It is critically important that staff can get the support they need to improve their performance. Ironically the BCTF and the Ministry are working together to enhance mentoring across the province: the gains and benefits to students are substantial. This \$334,680 expenditure should be retained.
11. Proposal D20: Athletic Coordinator. Supporting school sports keeps students who might otherwise drop out engaged and in school. Competition is a key part of this strategy. Further the coordinator supports hundreds of volunteers. If cut those tasks would be taken over by staff who get paid more than the coordinator and can't do this job as well. This should be retained for the \$71,216 cost.
12. Proposal D21: Calendar Adjustment. We already have 7 district closure days in Vancouver. Each of these days cost the students and parents many times the savings realized. Not doing this adds \$375,000 to the budget.

To summarize, we request these specific managements proposals not go forward:

B3 – Closing Classrooms	39,200
D1 – Continuing Education	514,401
D2 – Band and Strings Program	558,651
D5 – SACY	127,000
D7 – Area Counsellors	315,300
D8 – Education Psychologist	103,530
D9 – Speech and Language Pathologist	98,130
D11 – Library Services	50,000
D14 – Literacy Mentor and Consultant	133,494
D18 – Peer to Peer Mentors	334,000
D20 – Athletic Coordinator	71,216

D21 – Calendar Adjustment	375,000
Total	2,719,922

Totaling these changes to the proposed budget yields an extra \$2,719,922 in costs. If nearly any one of our cost savings suggestions above are implemented, all the management proposals we object to need not go forward. There are choices on the table. Let's make wise choices that support the students.

- We trust the above programs will be retained as they support the kids better than the alternatives.

Lord Byng PAC

Appendix A: Savings from Increasing VSB Average Class Sizes					
	Grades				
	K	1 to 3	4 to 7	8 to 12	Totals
Current Average Class Size 2013/14	18.0	21.9	26.4	24.2	23.6
Number of Students (FTE) 2013/14	3,824.0	11,036.0	14,125.0	23,985.4	52,970.4
Number of FTE Classes	212.4	503.9	535.0	991.1	2,242.5
Change in Class Size					
0.10 Students	18.1	22.0	26.5	24.3	23.7
0.40 Students	18.4	22.3	26.8	24.6	24.0
1.00 Students	19.0	22.9	27.4	25.2	24.6
2.00 Students	20.0	23.9	28.4	26.2	25.6
Change in Number of FTE Classes					
0.10 Students	(1.2)	(2.3)	(2.0)	(4.1)	(9.5)
0.40 Students	(4.6)	(9.0)	(8.0)	(16.1)	(37.3)
1.00 Students	(11.2)	(22.0)	(19.5)	(39.3)	(91.1)
2.00 Students	(21.2)	(42.2)	(37.7)	(75.7)	(175.1)
Change in the Budget					
0.10 Students	(83,640)	(163,227)	(143,875)	(290,651)	(673,688)
0.40 Students	(329,104)	(644,123)	(569,057)	(1,148,424)	(2,661,097)
1.00 Students	(796,778)	(1,568,115)	(1,391,489)	(2,802,702)	(6,490,616)
2.00 Students	(1,513,879)	(3,005,007)	(2,684,986)	(5,391,457)	(12,474,562)
Assumptions					
Variable Cost of a Class	71,260.00	(Cost of a teacher as presented in proposal D2)			
Comparables (Average Class Sizes Elsewhere)					
Burnaby	19.4	21.2	26.5	24.8	
Coquitlam	19.7	22.0	28.7	25.8	
Delta	19.4	22.2	27.3	22.5	
New Westminster	19.2	22.5	25.8	24.5	
North Vancouver	19.2	22.1	27.2	24.5	
Richmond	20.0	22.4	27.2	23.9	
Surrey	19.5	21.4	26.4	22.7	
West Vancouver	18.5	20.7	26.1	25.1	
Average	19.4	21.8	26.9	24.2	
Jules Quesnel	22.0	23.2	30.0		
Lord Byng				25.5	
Lord Kitchener	20.2	23.6	25.7		
Queen Elizabeth	19.0	19.3	28.4		
Queen Elizabeth Annex	22.0	23.7			
Queen Mary	20.0	22.4	25.7		
Above Base Data for 2013/14 from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/district.php					

Appendix B					
Return to Historical Staffing Levels					
	Actual		Using 2008/09 Ratio for 13/14 Enrolment	Change	Value
	2008/09	2013/14			
Teachers	3,186.34	3,053.39	3,015.90	(37.49)	(2,671,239.2)
Ratio Students to Teachers	17.92	17.70	17.92		
Education Assistants	801.25	869.11	758.40	(110.71)	(5,286,476.2)
Ratio Students to Educational Assistants	71.28	62.20	71.28		
Support Staff	1,259.63	1,263.85	1,192.21	(71.64)	(3,420,743.5)
Ratio Students to Support Staff	45.34	42.77	45.34		
Assumptions					
Cost of a Teacher	71,260.00	(Cost of a teacher as presented in proposal D2)			
Cost of an Educational Assistant	47,750.00	(Cost of a Educational Assistant as presented in proposal D18)			
Cost of a Support Staff	45,000.00				
Source of base data: http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/14Apr08_op_plenary_III_V_item1_0.pdf					

April 17, 2014

Reference: SACY-STEP Program – Vancouver School Board

Dear Board members,

My wife Carrol and I would like to express our gratitude for the above-mentioned program. Our son currently attends Vancouver Technical Secondary School and has attended the STEP program along with many of his classmates. The student follow-up through the school liaison, Ms. Heather Charlton, has been invaluable. Ms. Charlton provides a realistic, hands-on approach with the students. The boys place trust in her mentoring and leadership as they struggle with issues around possible substance-abuse.

As parents, we also have attended several SACY workshops. These workshops not only give families valuable parenting tools in many aspects of raising teenagers, but also act to unite families within their local community and deal with issues on a united front. Ms. Alexandra Wilson heads the parent lectures. Ms. Wilson deals with the issues at hand in a thoughtful, informative manner. Without her expertise, many of us would struggle through these extremely challenging periods.

As I'm sure you are aware, there exists a strong cannabis culture in Vancouver which unfortunately permeates to our school-aged children. With this risk, I am thankful that SACY exists as an educational tool. I am very concerned with the announcements around cuts to the SACY program and urge you to ensure that funding of this program continues. Budgetary cuts to this program will negatively impact many vulnerable youth across the District. Thank you for your attention to this matter. If we could offer any assistance or further feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully yours,



Laurent Blain and Carrol Grupe

Thank you, Vancouver School Board trustees, senior management, and guests for allowing me this time to speak this evening.

For the record, I am Monica Moberg the District Parent Advisory Council chairperson. I am speaking as a private person now. I thought a lot about what I would say to you this evening, and I have a few thoughts.

First, you should be very proud of the work you do and all that you have accomplished. I especially commend your focused “Strategic Plan”; it’s working.

As we have seen through this consultation process, all the main points

1. Engaged Learners
City, school,
2. Inclusive schools
-support for SACY
-Ed consultants
-sports
-Elementary counsellors
3. Caring communities
-support for multicultural workers: Britannia centre
4. Sustainable schools
-green initiatives
-seismic upgrades

The Plan is working too well. For many right now, the emphasis has been on saving these programs: no more cuts. No plan has been submitted on how to save the programs.

I have some modest proposals for you to consider.

(Side note: I was so proud that my daughter asked me whether or not eating Irish children was involved [referencing Swift]. I assured her that no children would be et.)

Proposal #1: Calendar. Change it from 2 weeks to 3 weeks at Christmas.

#2: Ax the Health and Wellness Program for employees; TOC’s need work, have a drink of water and a walk around the block.

#3: Hold back 1090 of Benefits and Service until the teachers’ contract is fully settled. 13.5 million dollars (no shortfall)

#4: No new administrative contracts. Switch people around. Either at P or VP, it’s team building.

#5: Corporate Alumni donor drive to fundraise for programmes

#6: To further develop apprenticeship programs: have students under supervision do repairs to facilities (the school is the classroom).

#7: Continuing education to offer personal growth courses.

#8: Crowd sourcing donations.

#9: Donations. Tax receipt for user pay.

10: Do joint ventures with the City of Vancouver to redevelop schools with and interest in creating buildings that provide safe, inclusive environments for the whole community to prosper in.

Dear Board members,

My name is Chi. I am a new immigrant coming from Vietnam, living in Vancouver ¹ year ago.

First of all, I would like to thank VSB members for your acceptance of my presentation today in this public meeting. I am here not only for my family and my daughter but also for the other vietnamese students and their families that will be affected by your decision or planning to cutback 2 positions of Multicultural Liaison workers in Vancouver.

As the Education for my children and Integration for all of us are the most important things, the main concerns when we decide to leave our homecountry, I can't not avoided to be shocked by this information given by Ms Yen, the youth's leader in Vancouver. Starting life in a new developed country as Canada, we expect always to receive the support from our Vietnamese community because we know that we will be facing new culture, new values, new regulations, new education system ... (In VN, we didn't speak english, couldn't have 2 grades in 1 school, couldn't have the right to propose our schedule with our counsellor, didn't receive the training on soft skills, specially leadership skills for both academic and emotional development) . But we didn't find the support as the vietnamese community is so complex and the connect~~ed~~ness is not so strong as in chinese, philippino, indian ...community. This makes me and my family loosing directions until the day I came to Tupper with my daughter to meet the Multicultural Liaison Worker. After the meeting, my feeling to be alone has dissappeared as we really are understood and supported not only in education, but also to understand the culture, the society for fast integration. With his background and experience in education, with his knowledge on the vietnamese school system, the multicultural liaison worker helped us to understand about the school system in Vancouver, what are the differences? to VN, to advise how to plan the study schedule with the school counsellor, what are the supporting activities/ associations around us, how to follow-up the progress of my daughter and the most important to connect us to the teachers, to the school, to the youth centre and how to integrate fastly to the new society. He also helped me to be aware about the psychologic changes in this transition and teenager period.

My experience is totally positive with all the Multicultural Liaison Workers after joining the workshops organized for the parents to help us knowing about the challenges for the children in Vancouver: internet control, drug, gang...and How to protect our children. They delivered the useful documents on different topics for settlement and education. In these workshops, the parents could share all concerns, their successful histories and we could learn each other. Their friendship and expertise make them more and more reliable to us for discussing openly when we have issues. For us, they really are not only the translators but the bridge between us and the school to know what are our concerns and expectations for developing our children to be the good people and citizens.

With their support, my daughter has already good results in her study and also marks. She has been transferred to the regular classes after only some months. She has many friends vietnamese, chinese, malaysian, Brazilian ... The most important for me is that she is happy to study, to work and to live here

In conclusion, I would like to propose reviewing your decision. The budget restriction could be balanced in other way, not on the people.

I am I believe that
As medical doctor, Prevention is always better than Treatment. Prevention is for community, Treatment is only for individual. If we don't allocate the cost for Prevention for the time being, may be we pay more for the future. Treatment sometimes can not avoid sequelae and the scar that will become the burden for our families and society.

Thanks very much for your attention.

Presentation to the VBE by the Vancouver Public Education Project on
the proposed 2014 -2015 Budget Recommendations

Jane Bouey and Gwen Giesbrecht, Co-Chairs, Public Education Project: Dedicated to defending, promoting and enhancing public education.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Board today. First, we have to say that the proposed VBE 2014-15 budget is an effort to mitigate a totally untenable situation. This is an exercise with which the Board is, sadly, all too familiar. It is once again in a totally untenable and unnecessary situation. Over a decade of provincial underfunding has not abated. Indeed, the next three years portend nothing but more of the same. Who can doubt that this is deliberate and is intended to weaken public schools and undermine public confidence in public education, our society's single most valuable social institution. The Board is not to blame, but the Board will bear the burden imposed by a cynical provincial government.

The VBE's officials have made some recommendations for cuts that are palatable. Cancelling membership in the BCSTA and not adding to DPAC's existing funds for the next year are two of these.

There are, however, far more recommendations that are harmful and, despite the Board's commitment to a renewed and revitalized Inner City School project, will disproportionately affect already vulnerable students. These cuts through the bone and right into the marrow include eliminating an Educational Psychologist. This will, as the Background and Analysis notes "... increase the waitlists for psycho-educational assessments." The same is true for the Speech and Language pathologist, the Anti-Racism and Literacy mentors, two SACY positions, the English Language Learner consultant and cuts to the Britannia Secondary School cafeteria, as well as cuts to the co-ordination of physical education that will have an impact on both elementary and secondary students. The positions involved were already minimal. Yet the number of youth needing help in just these areas, as well as those with untreated mental health challenges and problems, increases yearly.

Too often in past, the arts were regarded as frills. We know now how vital they are for a full and rich education. In this budget, however, the entire elementary Band and Strings Program is under the axe. It is sad indeed, that the background and analysis tell a common truth; "... the Board could increase the annual fee for the band and strings program to \$25 a month ...". So, for families able to afford a fee of \$250 a year for each child, access to music could be available. By any definition this is unfair. As a restriction based on ability to pay it is contrary to the purposes and spirit of a public system. We all know that such programs already exist. They are called private music lessons.

This budget also proposes more cuts to Maintenance services for a total saving - a misnomer if ever there was one- of \$499,660. Those of us who spend time as staff, students, parents or volunteers in Vancouver schools already know that they are shabby and not painted regularly. In some, plaster falls off the walls, drinking fountains in others are taped off and in others, kids' art covers gaping cracks.

How has this happened in an obviously wealthy province? It is the logical consequence of the province's established practice of downloading expenses onto local school boards. Recently, Victoria put boards on notice that in future, they may be compelled to pay for half the cost of capital projects and seismic upgrades. In 2011, the province withdrew annual grants for maintenance, repairs and general upgrading. These ongoing abrupt and unilateral directives show contempt for local planning and have a destabilizing impact on all operations. So, as well as seeing the deep erosion of support for students, we are witnessing the deterioration of precious community facilities.

Despite the proposals for cuts, there is still money in the budget to support the vast array of computer technology that is now a key part of the school board's infrastructure. Both the initial expenses and those in this budget have been downloaded onto local boards by the province. This is not 'bling' funding. It is not optional. The system absolutely requires the use of computers but refuses to fund it. Under the heading Potential budget additions on page 15, IT infrastructure, Tech Deployment, Unified Communications, and Hardware Equity Plan are all cogs in the system that ought to be provincially funded, just as new

school buildings are. That technology expenses eat up a huge amount of capital is especially galling when one realizes the full implications of this statement from the E2 - Hardware Equity Plan analysis on page 68. Referring to the 6,000 computers purchased by the board in 2009 it says: "Those computers are now nearing their fifth birthday and need to be replaced by modern tools." Five years young and already obsolete. A total of \$720,000 will be spent to replace machines that are only five years old and this funding – by the board out of operating funds – will be needed in perpetuity.

The above represent only a select few of the problematic budget proposals, but they give the flavor, a truly nasty taste, of a precarious future. Therefore, the Board needs to plan carefully a robust and assertive response.

The single most important part of the board's response needs to be advocacy. Loud, lively, outspoken, evidence-based, hard-hitting advocacy. This kind of advocacy follows detailed plan and makes good use of all trustees in their role as leaders. This plan should include public awareness and engagement. It should ignite media interest about the reality of the provincial governments' abrogation of responsibility for the health and welfare of public education. It has ignored the pleas of the last 13 years. Now, it is time for more pressure, much more pressure, to make the provincial government notice.

Enough is enough.

Year after year the Board cuts here and cuts there. It pinches pennies. It closes whole programs. It contemplates selling some of the property it holds in trust for the children of Vancouver. Perhaps the board should shut down its headquarters, the Education Centre, scatter the district's administration throughout the system and rent out the big building for big bucks. Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it. But this is where cut after cut has left us.

The Vancouver Board of Education has had to put a stark and bleak budget proposal on the table. Its response should be equally stark, but not so bleak. The Board ought to run out the budget and run the schools the way they should be run, until it runs out of money. And then? Shut

it down. The board should not continue to preside over the demise of the public school system.

The Board should consider creating and submitting a deficit budget rather than passing a balanced, inadequate, harmful, and irresponsible budget.

It is obvious that implementing either of the above scenarios would leave the Board in very difficult circumstances. Firing and the imposition of a provincial trustee would be certainties. It has happened here in the past. It happened in Cowichan a couple of years ago.

It may be very difficult for some of you to contemplate being fired. But consider this. The chance to grab public interest and to have access to the media would be a clear advantage to you. As well, being fired in May or June would mean an extended time to mobilize for the November municipal election when you could place public education at the center of the civic agenda.

For too long public education has languished as a kind of political fourth fiddle. It needs to be obvious to every single Vancouver resident that this current reality: a freeze on capital spending, three years of upcoming, compounded cuts until 2017 and ongoing harm to those who most need and most benefit from public education, destroys civility. Well-funded, stable, valued public schools are good for the whole community.

Our premier, Christy Clark, has the colossal nerve to claim, boldly and erroneously, that our public system is "well funded." Year after year, however, we continue to lurch from crisis to crisis as programs, services and help disappear from view. Our students suffer as successive boards endeavor to paper over repeated shortfalls and patch up glaring deficiencies, with VBE trustees left shouldering the blame. It is time to put the negligent and evasive provincial government on the hook.

This strategy just might do it.



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Vancouver School Board PRELIMINARY OPERATING
BUDGET 2014-2015

Vancouver Board of Education
Committee III / V
Monday, 2014 April 14
Submitted by CUPE Local 15

Vancouver Municipal, Education and Community Workers
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Dear Trustees:

We are writing to you in response to the proposed budget distributed to stakeholders and unions on April 8th and again at the Committee III/V meeting on April 14th.

As you know, the level of funding to our public education system has been inadequate to meet population demands for more than 10 years. Now school districts are facing even bigger financial challenges, including increased utility and medical costs mandated by the Provincial Government and collective bargaining settlements that school boards are expected to fund internally. Despite the hard work of successive school boards to keep our education system functioning, years of underfunding means growing infrastructure deficit that must be addressed.

However, we feel the proposals are not in the best interests of students. We feel strongly we cannot expand in areas when there are members whose livelihoods and the services they deliver are in jeopardy. We have concerns the board is making decisions which are unsustainable – if you cannot fund the existing why are we expanding? For instance the Wellness program – you could employ two Peer to Peer support workers for the same amount of money.

We are deeply disappointed to see partnerships such as SACY and positions such as multi-cultural liaison position be eliminated when the students who benefit from this assistance are the most vulnerable. It does not follow the principles of students first and we strongly object to those cuts.

We are also disappointed there is no reconciliation of cuts to administration which we understand was “buried” in the report. If those cuts are substantial they should be reflected in the budget. We believe our members have borne the brunt of extra work downloaded by previous budget cuts and our members tell us they do not see the same in exempt or administration. Shared services should extend to all levels at the Vancouver School Board and Education Centre.

I sincerely hope the Trustees will listen to the stakeholders, public, parents, students and employees when we discuss our education system with an open mind and be prepared to substantiate the proposals in an open and transparent way.

Below are comments which summarize the points we spoke to earlier and are numbered in reference to the report noted above:

A1 – Wellness/Attendance Management Program – It is our opinion this is simply not needed, this area is already covered by a number of existing departments/services such as: JEIS, PEBT, Human Resources, Peer to Peer support. In particular Peer to Peer support helps promote, problem solves and create a healthy working environment for students, employees and which proactively supports a better workplace. The principles behind Peer to Peer is to engage members and students in resolving issues which, left undone, does nothing to support health and wellness. You achieve greater success than introducing what can be viewed as a tool for HR to go after non-culpable and innocent absenteeism.

There is no explanation as to why another layer of administration is going to be valuable in employee wellness? WE are in a vicious circle here – more cuts equal more uncertainty and more stress and while employers argue stress is not an illness, we can all attest that stress will lead to health problems by disrupting sleep patterns which can lead to other more serious conditions or exacerbate any existing conditions which respond to stress.

A2 District Admin - BCESIS position – Classification? When new student tracking program is initiated will this position be reinstated?

A4 Transfer of positions from operating budget and capital – operating and subsequent positions should not be borne by the operating budget and subsequently at expense of RFT positions. We support the transfer of funding from operating to capital.

C4 Parking lots – While members cannot afford to pay for parking – we support member's jobs over vehicle use; we also strongly suggest the VBE do not contract this out – and instead utilize City of Vancouver Parking Enforcement officers to enforce. We also strongly suggest something closer to 60 or 70% of market rates is more appropriate

D1 Continuing Education office – Stays with VBE with staff roll over to successful college, seniority, wages, and benefits

D3 District staffing – library assistants – move to school 9,000 books to catalogue with teacher librarian high school and elementary schools.

D5 SACY – the union strongly urges the VBE to seek continuing funding of these positions which have had such a positive influence in terms of substance use prevention and support in the schools. Education regarding substance abuse in formative years can have a long lasting positive effect on student's ability to cope and refrain from substance abuse.

D10 Multi-Cultural Liaison Workers – we need more information on your assertion that numbers are declining in South Asian and Vietnamese populations. The workers who are assigned to these classifications have advised the union their work is never done – they provide ongoing support to new and existing students whose parents usually are not fluent in English. This support has a direct impact on the success of students currently enrolled and supports them so that they can contemplate and ultimately succeed in post secondary and beyond.

D13 Media Technician – will this position be rolled into school or off loaded to another staff? Where will the existing digital/dvd library be housed/managed?

D15 Alternative Programs – one YFW for entire district of 50,000 plus students. The City of Vancouver declared this the year of Reconciliation and the union is very disappointed you are proposing to cut support to arguably the most marginalized vulnerable student population just when the VBE celebrated the highest graduation rate among Aboriginal students. The union does not support this reduction.

D18 Peer to Peer – is a direct support to not only students but accessed by HR, LS Admin, RT, SSA and SSB. In addition all Learning Service tablets and devices are supported by this position.

D19 Professional Development Contact - off loading this work will create work load issues and reduce efficiencies.

D20 Athletic Coordinator – this work will get downloaded to others in the system, to those already over loaded with responsibilities. How are schools going to coordinate use of gym space and then how long before athletics become something not sustainable due to inability to coordinate?

E5 Payroll coordinator – What is the rationale for adding another exempted position? How many days absent on average? Our members are asked to do more with less time, cuts which result in more work they are expected to absorb the subsequent work for many years with no concern about workload. This can be absorbed by other exempt managers or ask existing staff act in a senior capacity?