



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

1580 West Broadway

Vancouver, B.C. V6J 5K8

Telephone: 604-713-5000

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April 3, 2009

Hon. Colin Hansen, M.L.A.
5640 Dunbar Street
Vancouver, BC V6N 1W7

Dear Minister:

I am writing to thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to meet with Vancouver trustees recently concerning the school district's financial challenges.

As you may be aware, the Vancouver Board of Education released its 2009/10 Preliminary Operating Budget plan on March 30. The Vancouver school district is predicting a net funding shortfall of \$7.12 million for 2009/2010. The net shortfall includes a projected surplus that will be applied from the current year.

In order to address the funding shortfall, the school district's management team proposes a number of reductions and transfers, including: 1.1 per cent reduction in teaching staff; 2 per cent reduction in supplies and services; 3.2 per cent reduction in administration costs, which will be moved to instruction; a transfer of funds from the local capital reserve; and reductions in other areas.

Trustees are deeply concerned about any reduction in the capacity of schools and the district's ability to meet the needs of its students. The cumulative effect of reductions over the course of the last decade has made it increasingly difficult to meet the learning needs of all students.

We are enclosing a document that summarizes our preliminary budget proposals and outlines our concerns about the inadequacies of the funding formula for education. We hope you will take time to review this material and will decide to increase education funding to enable school districts to meet the learning needs of each and every student.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'P Bacchus'.

Patti Bacchus
Chairperson, Vancouver Board of Education

cc. Vancouver Board of Education Trustees
Chris Kelly, Superintendent of Schools
Brenda Ng, Secretary Treasurer

Board of School Trustees:
Clarence Hansen - Chairperson
Carol Gibson - Vice-Chairperson
Allen Blakey Ken Denike Eleanor Gregory
Sharon Gregson Allan Wong
Shirley M. Wong



2009/10 budget proposals

Vancouver Board of Education
2009/2010 Preliminary Budget Proposals

As we work through this challenging process, it is the goal of this board to minimize the impact on our students and keep reductions as far away from classrooms as possible. But this will be difficult to do - there is no fat to trim in our very lean system.

~Patti Bacchus, Chairperson
Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39 (Vancouver) is one of the most diverse and complex of public school systems in Canada, with an annual enrolment of approximately 56,300 students in Kindergarten to Grade 12. Our programs and services address the extraordinary combination of challenge, need, opportunity and potential that exists in every student.

In 2008/2009, the Operating Budget for the Vancouver School Board (VSB) is \$488.1 million. The Ministry of Education provides approximately 90.7 per cent of the operating funding for the VSB. Accordingly, the number of programs and level of service the VSB can offer students depends significantly on the level of provincial funding.

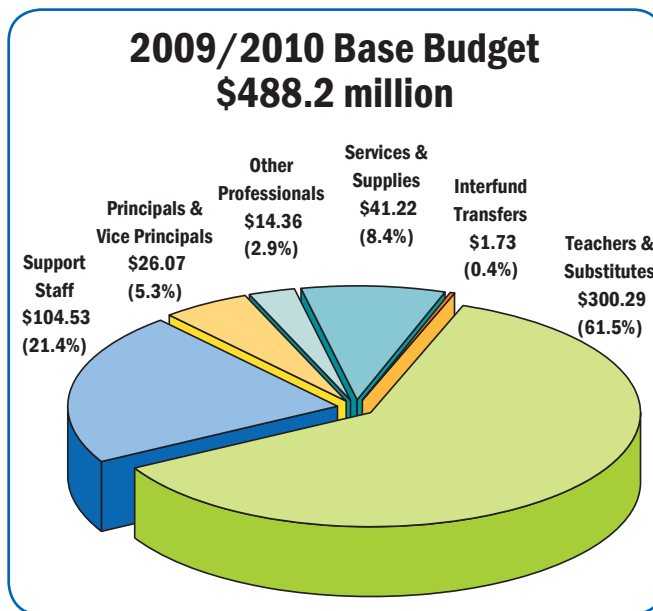
The Vancouver school district is predicting a net funding shortfall of \$7.12 million for the 2009/2010 school year. The net shortfall includes a projected surplus that will be applied from the current year.

Vancouver's funding shortfall is caused by a number of factors, including declining enrolment and a provincial funding formula that does not fund annual cost increases faced by school districts, including: salary increments; increasing employee benefit costs; and inflation.

Trustees on March 30 released the 2009/2010 Preliminary Operating budget plan developed by the District Management Team that proposes steps the school district might take in order to comply with the School Act and submit a balanced budget. The full report is available at vsb.bc.ca under Updates and Budget Process.

2009/2010 Preliminary Budget Proposals totalling \$7.12 million in reductions and transfers

- Reduction of 3.2 per cent or \$1.57 million in administration costs. This amount will be reallocated to offset reductions in the classroom.
- Reductions of two per cent or \$460,000 in supplies and services in schools and non-administrative areas.
- Reduce payment to fully fund accrued employee future benefits by \$440,000.



- Transfer of \$1.5 million from the Local Capital Reserve.

- Net reduction in teaching staff of \$3.15 million or 1.1 per cent. (The net reduction includes \$1.57 million reallocated from administration.)

Recent funding shortfalls

In all but one budget year since 2002/03, the Vancouver School Board has been forced to make significant budget reductions because provincial funding was

insufficient to maintain the existing level of service. During the six-year period ending in 2007/08, the district reduced its operating budget by a net total of \$40.4 million.

The cumulative effect of reductions over this period has made it increasingly difficult to meet the learning needs of all students, which is why trustees are deeply concerned about any further reduction in the capacity of schools.

The funding challenge

The provincial government states education funding is at its highest point in history despite declining enrolments. However, funding levels for Kindergarten to Grade 12 education in B.C. are inadequate to meet the basic, ongoing costs of the system despite declining enrolment.

Ministry of Education per-student base funding has remained relatively unchanged in recent years. The bulk of the funding increases for the past three years has gone to pay for provincially approved collective agreements. Very little of the additional funding has been available to pay for other cost increases faced by school districts or to provide enhanced services.

The current provincial funding formula does not fund:

- salary increments for employees on pay grid systems such as teachers, administrators and other professionals;
- increases in employee benefit costs;
- and inflation on goods and services.

It is estimated these costs will total \$4.34 million in 2009/10.

At the same time, it's predicted 500 fewer students will enrol in Vancouver schools next year. (Fewer English-as-a-second-language and international students are also expected.) The decrease in regular enrolment is less than one per cent of the district's total enrolment, however, it would result in a net drop in funding of \$2.9 million. This is problematic because a portion of school district costs, such as facility operations and maintenance, school administration and district administration are fixed and do not vary with small changes in enrolment.

To illustrate the funding challenges school boards face, Vancouver trustees will be developing a "needs" budget alongside the compliance budget school districts are obligated to submit under the School Act. The needs budget will identify how much annual funding is needed to not only maintain, but improve public education. The public will be able to provide feedback on proposals for the compliance and needs budgets through a series of public meetings during the month of April.

Public consultation

March 30, 5:30 p.m.

VSB Education Centre boardroom

Plenary meeting of committees III and V to receive 2009-10 Preliminary Budget Proposals;

April 8, 5:30 p.m.

VSB Education Centre boardroom

Plenary meeting of committees III and V for stakeholder input on budget proposals;

April 14, 7 p.m.

Mount Pleasant Elementary (2300 Guelph St)

Committee-of-the-Whole meeting for input from the general public on budget proposals;

April 21, 5:30 p.m.

VSB Education Centre boardroom

Revised budget proposals released during a plenary meeting of committees III and V;

April 28, 7 p.m.

VSB Education Centre boardroom

Committee-of-the-Whole meeting for input from the general public on revised budget proposals;

April 29, 5:30 p.m.

VSB Education Centre room 400

Plenary meeting of committees III and V for stakeholder input on revised budget proposals;

April 30, 7 p.m.

VSB Education Centre boardroom

Special Board meeting for trustees to consider any further budget revisions and approve and adopt the 2009-10 Operating Budget by-law (Compliance Budget) and the 2009-10 Needs Budget.

Vancouver School Board's Education Centre is located at 1580 West Broadway

Have Your Say

Vancouver Board of Education trustees value your opinion and invite you to make your views known so that a budget can be developed that takes into consideration your input. Those who wish to speak at the April 8/14 and April 28/29 meetings, please register by calling 604-713-5080 no later than two working days before the meeting.

Written submissions must be received by mail, fax or e-mail no later than:

- April 6, 2009 for the 2009/2010 Preliminary Budget Proposals; and
- April 27, 2009, 10:00 am, for the 2009/2010 Revised Preliminary Budget.

Send to the Vancouver Board of Education, Attn: Administrative Coordinator, Secretary-Treasurer's Office, 1580 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC, V6J 5K8, or send by fax to 604-713-5049, or e-mail to budget2009_10@vsb.bc.ca

Please note: All submissions to the Board are considered to be public documents. The Board, therefore, reserves the right to make any submissions available to the public.