



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

1580 West Broadway

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Thursday, May 27, 2010

Hon. Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid, MLA
Minister of Education
PO BOX 9045 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Dr. MacDiarmid:

I am writing to clarify inaccurate statements made about the Vancouver School Board concerning administrative costs and how these costs compare to those of Surrey.

You have claimed that this board has stated "there are no more administrative savings to be found" in our budget, however, it is important to note the VSB's current budget proposal includes \$1.6 million in district administrative reductions and \$1.3 million in cuts to school administrative costs. This information has been publically available on the district website since April 7. We also provided you with copies of our budget materials to assist you in understanding our financial picture.

As board chair, I have publicly commented the cuts being contemplated will not be accomplished without affecting the quality of service and support to students. I have never said there are no administrative savings to be found.

You have also compared the VSB's district administration costs to those of the Surrey school district and alleged Vancouver's costs are higher than Surrey's despite having 12,000 fewer students. However, we're concerned about how reliable the information used for the comparison is.

The function/program expenditure information submitted by districts to the ministry varies considerably depending on how each district interprets ministry guidelines regarding expenditure classification. The VSB follows the ministry guidelines closely, and as a result we are confident we have properly classified our expenditures.

We cannot, however, be certain every other district has similarly classified their expenditures because neither district auditors nor ministry staff audits the information to ensure ministry guidelines have been properly applied. As a result, where one district may assign a cost to district administration, another might not. This makes the costs by function difficult to compare as the information is no longer comparable. In other words, we need to be comparing apples to apples for the comparison to be valid.

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Board of School Trustees:

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Jane Bouey - Vice-Chairperson

Allan Blakey Ken Clement Ken Denike

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If you wish to draw comparisons between district function/program expenditures, more work is required by the ministry to ensure that the information is reliable and comparable. Until then, I request you stop drawing this comparison when speaking about the VSB.

I trust this clarifies our concerns for you. We look forward to a productive meeting with you in June.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "PBacchus".

Patti Bacchus
Chairperson, Vancouver Board of Education

cc. Steve Cardwell, Superintendent of Schools
Brenda Ng, Secretary-Treasurer
VBE trustees