



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

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Wednesday, March 24, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I write to you as the Vancouver School Board embarks on its annual budget process. As you may be aware, we have a world-class public education system that consistently ranks among the best, and have many successes to celebrate in our schools. It is a system worth supporting and strengthening as we know there is no better investment in tomorrow than meeting the educational needs of all students today.

It's never easy to set the budget for one of the most diverse and complex of public school systems in Canada. The task this time will be particularly difficult given the size of the funding shortfall coming from the Ministry of Education.

The VSB must address a severe funding shortfall of \$18.12 million for 2010/2011. Without money to cover this shortfall, we must either sell off assets, find ways to increase revenue or reduce spending, as the Board is legally required to balance its budget.

Based on the preliminary operating grants announced on March 15, the VSB will receive \$447.8 million for 2010/2011. This year's increase is intended to fund, in part, the partial implementation of full-day Kindergarten and provincially approved collective agreements.

However, the current funding formula does not provide for the following annual cost increases faced by school districts:

- salary increments for employees on pay grid systems such as teachers, administrators and other professionals;
- increases in employee benefit costs such as CPP, EI, WCB, MSP, extended health and dental benefits, and employee pension plans; and
- inflation on goods, services and utilities.

I cannot overstate how difficult it will be to make up next year's funding shortfall. The VSB has already made \$51 million in accumulated annual spending reductions in the past eight years, and further reductions will make it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of all students.

As trustees, it is important that we hear from all our stakeholders – parents, students, employees and the general public – about what is essential to maintaining a quality public education system. I invite everyone to participate in our budget process in order to prioritize expenditures and provide feedback on proposed reductions.

Board of School Trustees:

Patti Bacchus - Chairperson

Jane Bouey - Vice-Chairperson

Allan Blakey Ken Clement Ken Denike

Carol Gibson Sharon Gregson Mike Lombardi

Allan Wong

Some of the options the board may consider in order to reduce spending include: changes to the school calendar to close schools an additional 10 days per year; cuts to instructional staff and administration, including school librarians, ESL support, special education support, vice principals and supervision aides; cuts or cancelations of programs; reductions in learning resource budgets; increased deferral of school maintenance; and school closures.

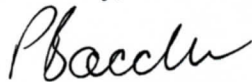
Please visit our website at www.vsb.bc.ca for more details on our budget process and dates of public meetings. Parents will also be represented through their school's Parent Advisory Councils and the District Parents' Advisory Council (DPAC). I encourage you to participate in your school's PAC to assist in providing collective advice to trustees.

While we work to balance our budget, it's important that our provincial leaders understand the difficult decisions we face due to deficiencies in the provincial funding formula for education. As trustees, we continue to advocate for a restoration of public education funding and we invite you to join us in our advocacy efforts. To learn what we are doing and how you can help, please visit our website and click on *Trustees' advocacy work*.

Your support and participation is appreciated as we work through this difficult process. We've recently witnessed the outstanding results that came from investing in excellence during the Winter Olympic Games. Now it's time to invest in our students by fully funding the costs of meeting their educational needs.

Best wishes to you and your family as we head through the final months of the school year.

Sincerely,



Patti Bacchus
Chairperson, Vancouver Board of Education

cc. Steve Cardwell, Superintendent of Schools
Brenda Ng, Secretary-Treasurer
All trustees
VSB Advocacy Committee