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September 28, 2022

The Honourable Selina Robinson
Minister of Finance
P.O. Box 9048 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

The Honourable Jennifer Whiteside,
Minister of Education
P.O. Box 9045 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Ministers Robinson and Whiteside,

Re: Inflationary Cost Pressures

Our Board is writing to add our voice to that of other districts who have expressed their concern over the impact inflationary pressures are having on school district budgets. These cost pressures are exacerbated by the impact of declining funding protection on district funding.

Canada is currently experiencing inflation at rates not seen in a generation. The rising cost of food, fuel and many other materials have an immediate impact on the operation of the school district. In a community that has a limited choice of local suppliers, the ability to shop for better prices is limited. Staff will be monitoring costs in the fall, and there is a very real possibility of the Board needing to make cuts in the Amended Annual Budget to respond to these cost increases.

The impact of funding protection – which guarantees 98.5% of the previous year's funding – means that the district has less funds available each year. Funding protection became part of the funding formula in 2006, and our district has received funding protection in our funding every year that it has been available, averaging almost \$1.4 million each year.



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Living in funding protection means that the specific parts of the funding formula become almost meaningless. For example, if our average teacher salary increases, there are no new funds. If there are additional students with designations, there are no new funds. If there are more students (and the district continues to see declining enrolment), there are no new funds.

This is also true, now, of the money for labour settlements. In the 2021-2022 funding model, these funds were provided outside of the funding protection calculation. In the current 2022-2023 year, however, these funds are now rolled into standard student funding rates. As a result, there is no assurance that the district is continuing to receive the money required to address payroll costs that arises from the collective agreements.

In 8 of the past 10 years, the Board has made cuts to the Annual Budget in order to submit a balanced budget. In a community with a high degree of poverty, there is no question that these cuts have hampered the district's ability to meet the needs of students. And it will come as no surprise that the Board struggles to maintain contingency funds in reserve.

It is high time something is done to increase the funding available to school districts. This funding needs to be predictable and sustainable, so that the very real needs of students are met.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our concerns.

Yours sincerely,
School District No. 52 (Prince Rupert)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Kate Toye", written over a long horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature area.

Ms. Kate Toye
Chair

cc: MLA Jennifer Rice
BCSTA