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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **School District 43 (Coquitlam) Board of Education Passes ‘Responsive’ 2023-2024 Budget**

Coquitlam, BC (April 25, 2023) – The School District No. 43 (Coquitlam) Board of Education passed its 2023/24 Annual Budget Bylaw unanimously after holding all three readings at its regular public meeting Tuesday, April 25. The budget totals just over \$476M.

The budget process included an early stakeholder input session February 21, a presentation of the preliminary budget April 11, an opportunity for public input on April 18, and the final budget presentation and approval on April 25. The explicit theme expressed by the Board of Education throughout the process has been ‘you talk, we listen’.

In response to concerns raised about the increased challenges to support students, including the most vulnerable and those with unique learning needs, the 2023/24 budget includes an increase in education assistant staffing at elementary schools and the conversion to full-time of an education assistant position at middle schools, to facilitate participation in extracurricular activities for students that may need support. Additionally, the introduction of department head positions at each elementary school, combined with increasing the number of teachers, relieves school principals of regular teaching duties to focus on educational leadership, provides greater staffing flexibility and increases overall staffing levels to support students in schools.

The Board of Education has eliminated teacher layoffs for the upcoming school year, a process that has previously been a source of disruption and stress for teachers and the community. The financial risk is necessary to ensure stability in schools and to support staff recruitment and retention.

Other responsive actions include additional funding for music programs and events, additional support staffing to ensure ventilation systems are maintained at peak efficiency, and an increase in financial support for the District Parent Advisory Council.

Board Chair Michael Thomas thanked Secretary-Treasurer Randy Manhas, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Nita Mikl, and their staff for their exceptional efforts in preparing the 2023/24 budget and said, “The Board of Education will continue their multi-year budgeting and financial planning with positive, yet reasonable changes and in doing so, will provide a stable, predictable, and world-class education system to support learners, employees, and our community.”

Referring to the budget process, Superintendent Patricia Gartland emphasized the importance of the close relationships between the board and stakeholders, “The input provided early in the process during meetings with the Coquitlam Teachers’ Association, CUPE 561, the Coquitlam Principals’ and Vice-Principals’ Association, and the District Parents’ Advisory Council was invaluable, and the board is proud to have passed such a responsive budget. Working together, we have again provided a financially stable environment for students and staff to thrive.”

School District No. 43 (Coquitlam) is the third largest in B.C. with approximately 32,000 students in 71 schools and serves the cities of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody, as well as the villages of Anmore and Belcarra.

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Serving the Communities of **Anmore, Belcarra, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam** and **Port Moody**