

Learning for a Lifetime

550 Poirier Street, Coquitlam, BC, Canada V3J 6A7 • Phone: 604-939-9201 • Fax: 604-937-6758

CHAIR:

Melissa Hyndes

VICE-CHAIR:

Holly Butterfield

TRUSTEES:

Gail Alty

John J. Keryluk

Brian Robinson

Judy Shirra

Diane Sowden

Gerri Wallis

Keith Watkins

July 8, 2014

Honourable Peter Fassbender
Minister of Education
PO Box 9405 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

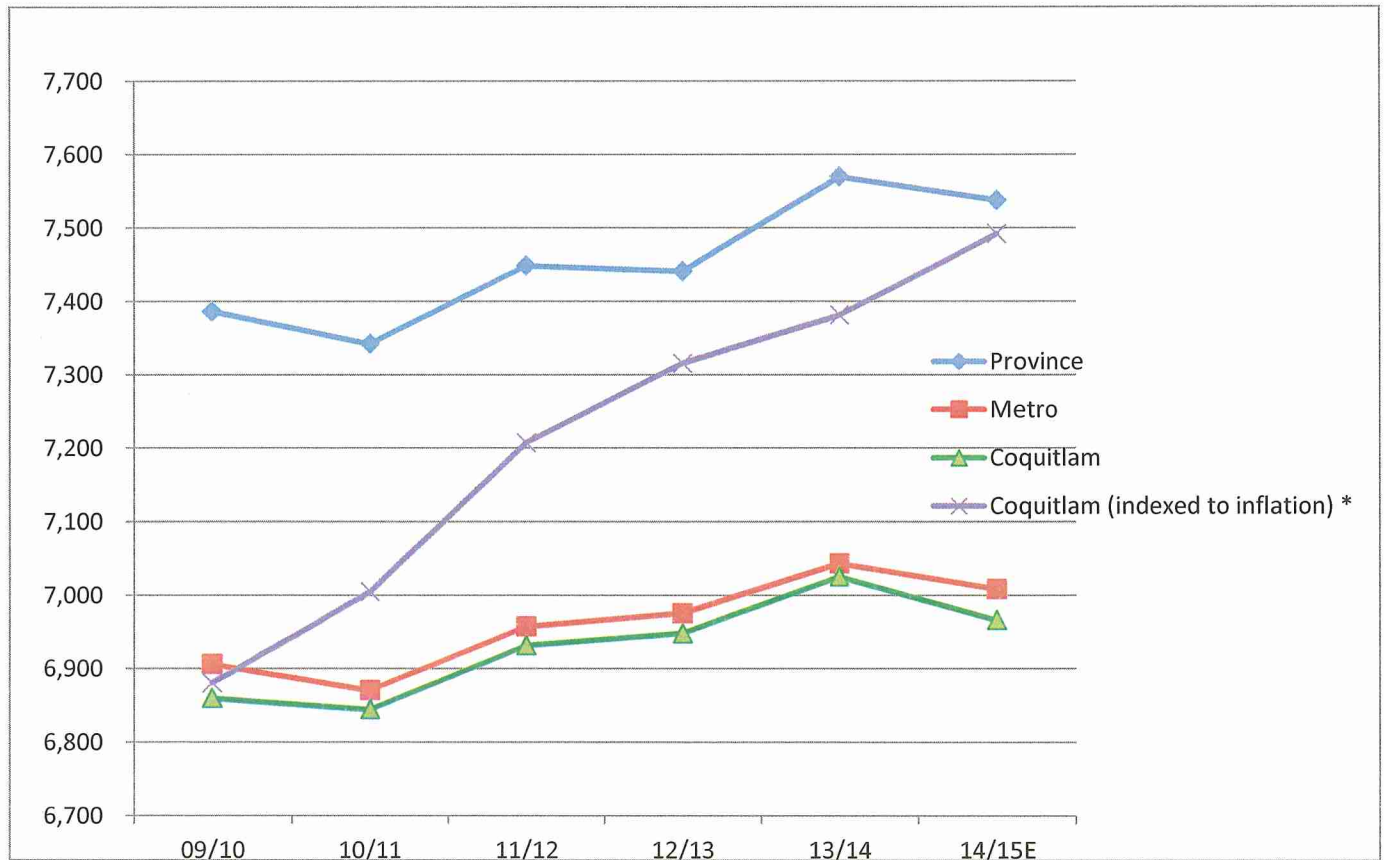
Dear Minister Fassbender,

At a recent meeting, the Board of Education for the Coquitlam School District decided to write you to express our deep concern with the state of funding for public education, and specifically highlight the funding shortfalls which exist within the context of our School District.

All children have a right to an education system which is responsive to their needs – not just the children who are easy to educate. Our school district has become a leader in improving graduation rates, an objective which was clearly articulated as a priority by our Board of Education and by the Ministry of Education. In this school district, we have found ways to address the needs of many more children who are at risk of failure. That said, we are not complacent about the fact that some children in our system still have far less chance of reaching graduation than others. As inflation continues to outpace any incremental funding to the school system, we are continually faced with having to cut educational programming to absorb cost pressures. All school districts require adequate and stable funding which allows them to reach all students.

To illustrate this point, since the 2009/10 fiscal year, the Coquitlam School District has seen its per student funding change from \$6,880 to a projected \$6,966 in 2014/15. Had the per student funding amount in 2009/10 kept up with inflation, per student funding in 2014/15 would have been \$7,492 per student. This \$526 difference per student is significant. Considering our student base, it demonstrates that we have had to absorb \$16.3 million in cost pressures over the past 5 years. It is our position that these monies be returned to the school district.

Rates of Funding and Inflation – 2009/10 to 2014/15 – Coquitlam School District



* Inflation reflects Consumer Price Index, for 2014/15 5 year average inflation was applied. Note that Ministry funding for 2014/15 is based on current figures provided by the Ministry.

School District 43 was able to reduce its operating budget by \$13.4 million to ensure a balanced budget for the 2014/15 fiscal year. That said, the impacts to the public education system are tremendous. In order to balance the budget, the District**:

- Eliminated 91 teaching positions including Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, High Incidence Teachers, Librarians, Student Services Coordinators, Counsellors, and Teachers working to maintain class size and composition
- Eliminated 55 support staff positions, including many Noon Hour Supervisors and Maintenance positions
- Eliminated 33.5 educational support positions which includes Teaching Assistants, Youth Workers, and Library clerks
- Eliminated 2 Administrator positions despite opening a new middle school
- Closed middle school cafeterias
- Eliminated before and after school busing for students

** Positions reflect full-time equivalents. Due to part-time work, actual number of persons impacted is higher

During our public budget meetings, it was clear that these cuts would impact all students, especially those students who are most vulnerable and most in need. The Board of Education empathized with the many parents and guardians, teachers, administrators and support staff, who spoke with emotion about the reductions that the Board of Education had to implement. We are greatly saddened that the cuts we were forced to make will limit our ability to help students achieve their full potential as individuals and citizens.

The Coquitlam School District has had a history of student success. The impact of these cuts will be devastating and our continued high-level of achievement is in jeopardy. While the dedicated professionals in our District will continue to go above and beyond, there are limits to what can be accomplished with such reduced resources.

The Board is greatly concerned by the potential of further inflationary costs and new cost pressures. The 2014/15 budget assumed that any provincially negotiated labour agreements with CUPE and the BCTF would be fully funded. Further, it is assumed that any negotiations to settle issues around class size and composition would also be fully funded.

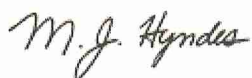
Minister, we ask that you fully consider the impact that lack of adequate funding is having on our system. Further, we ask that you work to restore our funding by:

- Increasing our 2014/15 allocation to reflect inflation over the past 5 years
- Building into future funding a provision for inflation
- Ensuring that any labour agreements are fully funded
- Ensuring that any settlement regarding class size and composition is fully funded
- Committing to reviewing funding for vulnerable students to ensure that their needs are met
- Committing to reviewing the funding formula to ensure equitable funding amongst all School Districts

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Yours truly,

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 43 (COQUITLAM)



Melissa Hyndes, Chair
Board of Education

c: Board of Education
Thomas J. Grant, Superintendent
Mark Ferrari, Secretary-Treasurer
Ken Cober, President, CPVPA
Charley King, President, CTA
Dave Ginter, President, CUPE Local 561
Chuck Dennison, President, DPAC
Premier Christy Clark
Michael de Jong, Minister of Finance & Treasury Board Chair
MLA Mike Farnworth (Port Coquitlam)
MLA Douglas Horne (Coquitlam-Burke Mountain)
MLA Linda Reimer (Port Moody-Coquitlam)
MLA Selina Robinson (Coquitlam-Maillardville)
Mayor Richard Stewart and Coquitlam City Council
Mayor Greg Moore and Port Coquitlam City Council
Mayor Mike Clay and Port Moody City Council
Mayor Heather Anderson and Village of Anmore Council
Mayor Ralph Drew and Village of Belcarra Council
Teresa Rezansoff, President, BCSTA
BC Boards of Education c/o BCSTA
Terry Sullivan, President, BCSSA
Lyle Boyce, Executive Director, BCASBO
Michael Hind, Executive Director, Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce