

Learning for a Lifetime

October 12, 2015

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

RE: Budget 2016 Consultations

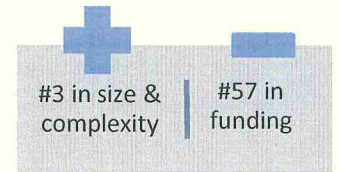
Dear Committee Members,

This letter is our formal written submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services by five key stakeholder groups within School District No. 43 - Coquitlam (SD43). We outline three serious concerns about the state of education funding in B.C. and specifically our district. We also offer three thoughtful recommendations.

CONCERNS

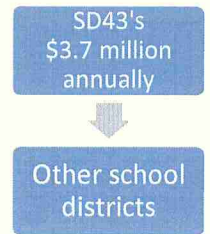
1. Underfunding

Fairness and equity in funding B.C.'s 60 school districts is imperative. SD43 is B.C.'s third largest school district (of 60) with one of the most diverse and complex demographic profiles and population growth projections significantly higher than 97% of all school districts. Yet we are in the bottom 2% of all school districts for funding on a per student basis. SD43 has a balanced budget, sound fiscal management practices, proactive capital improvement plans, revenue generation successes, and some of B.C.'s highest student academic outcomes but we appear to be financially penalized for our efforts and successes compared to all other school districts.



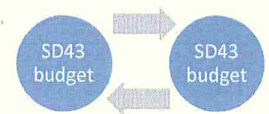
2. Funding Protection

The Funding Protection grant provided to other school districts currently costs SD43 \$3.7 million annually. As a well-managed district we are again penalized and receive \$0 in funding protection. If the grant was modified to a balanced and equitable distribution model it would allow SD43 to reinvest the \$3.7 million to further our education services. It would also assist in funding inflationary cost pressures which currently are not considered or funded. Government must ensure public education receives increased funding protection that is also fairly applied to all districts.



3. CommunityLINK Funding

CommunityLINK funding is important for supporting vulnerable students. However, the allocation method of redirecting existing money from within a school district budget to its own program budget along with inflexible spending control is ineffective. CommunityLINK needs to be fairly funded with increased new money and allowed to be managed by school districts.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Update the Ministry of Education K-12 funding allocation system and funding formulae** including supplementary grants to attain equity across B.C.'s school districts, and more fairly allocate funding to larger school districts that have more complex challenges, diverse student populations, and higher costs of service delivery. **Fund SD43 at least at the average level of school district funding.** As one of the largest and fastest growing school districts with some of the most diverse and complex demographic profiles, SD43 is significantly underfunded to effectively deliver education services that are mandated by the Ministry of Education and needed and demanded by our communities.
2. **Modify the Funding Protection supplementary grant to a balanced and equitable distribution model** to allow all districts fair access to the funding. The current \$3.7 million shortfall SD43 annually faces would be directed into our own regional cost pressures which need funding protection including inflation and higher costs of service delivery.
3. **Provide new and increased funding to support CommunityLINK programs and vulnerable students along with empowerment for school districts** to decide how to allocate and spend it on local priorities that will best meet the specific and often unique needs of the communities we serve.

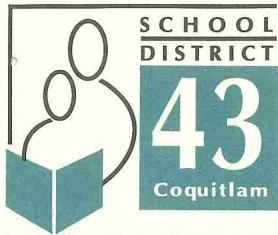
These reasonable, attainable and financially viable recommendations, if implemented, would provide SD43 with:

- Funding at a level that is at the average for all BC school districts – versus near the lowest funding level.
- The ability to undertake additional capital projects to meet seismic requirements and enrolment growth.
- The ability to support new local, regional and provincial educational initiatives such as the new curriculum.
- The ability to support vulnerable students, mental illness and related social issues in schools.
- The ability to meet the significant projected student enrolment growth over the next 20 years.

A robust K-12 education system that is adequately and equitably funded across districts contributes to the personal, social and economic success of students, families, and the residents the school districts serve. In the case of SD43, as B.C.'s third largest school district, we serve three large urban centres and two suburban regions with a diverse population of almost 225,000, 70 schools, 35,000 students and 3,500 dedicated employees. The population is expected to grow by 140,000 by 2041 and this requires proactive planning and increased funding.

We understand the cost pressures that the B.C. Provincial Government faces. We also acknowledge the commitment by the B.C. Government for a \$564 million funding increase for K-12 education over the current three-year fiscal plan. However, it simply does not go far enough in addressing the serious overall funding shortfalls and inequity that some districts face, especially SD43. When compared to much smaller school districts, with fewer schools, lower enrolment, and fewer challenges such as significant population growth, diverse and complex demography, increasing mental illness and related social issues in our region and schools, SD43 is not adequately or equitably funded.

In closing, we note that the Select Standing Committee has acknowledged the cost pressures on school districts across B.C. and has recommended that the budget reflect increased funding for the public education system. We encourage the committee to also consider modifications to the funding allocation system and formulae to bring added fairness and equity to the system as well.



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We look forward to these recommendations being implemented in the upcoming budget, and thank you in advance for your efforts to maximize the resources available for public education in B.C. and for SD43.

Respectfully,

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Chair
SD43 Board
of Education

Charley King
President
Coquitlam Teachers
Association

Dave Ginter
President
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561

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