

Board Chair Report – October 27, 2009

Over the last several months this Board has expressed its strong opposition to the devastating cuts in funding for public education, and specifically for this district. Over and above the \$1.8 million reductions required in spring to meet our mandated balanced budget requirement, we have seen the Annual Facilities grant of \$4.3 million completely abolished, an increase in MSP premiums, and a threat of new HST related costs. As well, closely related grant cuts to the School Parent Advisory Councils, the public library system, sports and fine arts programs will all impact in some way the quality of education for our students. Our board believes passionately that a fully funded public education system is vital to the health and viability of our communities, and this is even more important now during the current downturn in the economy. A recent report in the *Globe & Mail* stated that there has been a significant jump in university enrolment and this is in part due to “governments looking to higher education as a key driver of economic recovery”. This article goes further to state “While the country has shed 390,000 jobs for workers without higher education in the past year, it has added 60,000 new jobs for university grads”. Our board believes that students will not be able to access the benefits of post-secondary education if we continually impact the quality of education available to the K-12 sector because of significant budget cuts.

Over the last weekend the BC School Trustees Association Provincial Council met in Vancouver. The PC representatives are of boards of education across the province that meet to provide advocacy direction to the Trustees Association between annual general meetings. The focus and number of resolutions discussed and passed this weekend were unprecedented in PC history. The motions included the request of reinstatement of the Annual Facilities Grant, deferral of the off-again, on-again proposal of all-day kindergarten, and the provision of stable and predictable funding for districts. Also at this council meeting, the delegates heard from Deputy Minister James Gorman about the precarious state of the economy and the budget crunch that the government was facing, both now and in the immediate future. We were told that any new initiatives

or return of funding cuts such as the AFG, upcoming salary and pension increases, and carbon offset costs would have to come from the current block of funding, as there was no more money. Imagine the trustees' shock and anger to hear the announcement the very next morning by the government for a replacement, state of the art, retractable roof for BC Place Stadium that would cost upward of a half a billion dollars! It appeared to many of us that the priority of our government is to build flashy public monuments to their governance, rather than to provide safe and secure schools for our children. Our board is outraged at this apparent lack of priority and commitment of the provincial government to fully funded public education .

This Board will be presenting motions later in this meeting to ramp up our advocacy in support of the students and staff of the Burnaby school district. We welcome any and all support from our partner groups and the residents of Burnaby. We believe that our public education system is in crisis. We need a combined effort with the community to ensure that our students ... our future ... are well equipped to meet the challenges that they will face, and to be the best that they can be.

Resolutions Arising from Provincial Council

5.1 Annual Facility Grant Reinstatement – CARRIED

- a. That BCSTA urge the Minister of Education and Minister of Finance to immediately reinstate current and future Annual Facility Grant (AFG) allocations.
- b. That BCSTA work with the appropriate ministries and BCASBO representatives to review AFG funding amounts and delivery process to enable boards of education to implement long term maintenance plans consistent with the Ministry of Education's policy to protect assets under board stewardship and to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff in school district facilities.

5.2 Harmonized Sales Tax – CARRIED

That BCSTA urge the Provincial Government to provide boards of education with a Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) rebate.

5.3 Increased Costs of Medical Services Plan (MSP) – CARRIED

That BCSTA urge the Ministry of Education to ensure that, effective in 2009-2010, operating grants to Boards of Education include funding to cover the increased costs of Medical Services Plan (MSP) Premiums..

5.4 Predictable Funding – CARRIED AS AMENDED

That BCSTA meet immediately with the Minister of Education to ensure the School Act funding provisions are adhered to in a predictable, responsible and accountable manner recognizing the responsibilities locally elected boards of education have to their communities and move the conversation to one of extending flexibility to boards in their expenditures.

5.5 Funding Advocacy – CARRIED AS AMENDED

That BCSTA develop a province-wide advocacy plan to respond to the cancellation of the AFG program and other proposed cuts to boards of education arising from the September 1, 2009, Province of BC Budget Update. That the following elements be included in the advocacy plan:

- a. Strongly opposing the cancellation of the Annual Facilities Grant (AFG) program for the 2009-10 school year.
- b. Urging the Ministry of Education to restore fully AFG funding to boards of education for the 2009-10 school year and beyond.
- c. Requesting the Province of BC to ensure that boards of education are provided with adequate funding from the Ministry of Health to cover measures recommended by the Provincial Health Officer.
- d. Calling on the Province of BC to provide boards of education with adequate funding to cover the cost of increased MSP premiums for school district employees.
- e. Requesting the Province of BC to ensure that boards of education are provided with the 100% Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) rebate that will be made available to municipalities.
- f. Requesting the Province of BC to reinstate the \$20 per-student grant to school-based Parent Advisory Councils
- g. Requesting the Province of BC to restore the funding for the rental or lease of school facilities by SD #93.

5.6 Land/Property Disposals – CARRIED AS AMENDED

That BCSTA facilitate a process by which the policy regarding the disposal of property be reviewed so that Boards are less restricted in property disposal that:

- ♦ is not related to the closure of the school or
- ♦ is sharing of a property or
- ♦ is required for the Board to pursue a community partnership or
- ♦ helps Boards work to create community hubs or
- ♦ helps Boards actualize potential to serve children and the broader community

5.7 Deferral of Full Day Kindergarten – CARRIED AS AMENDED

BCSTA supports the concept of and recognizes the value of full day Kindergarten for the children of this province. However, given the funding difficulties that school districts have at this time, it is moved: That BCSTA request that until the Government of British Columbia provides full,

predictable and stable funding to support K-12 education, the Government of British Columbia defer the implementation of full day kindergarten and redirects the \$151 million (over 3 years) allocation of funds to current programming.

5.8 Full Day Kindergarten – CARRIED AS AMENDED

That BCSTA request from the Ministry of Education a detailed outline including a timeline and opportunity for school districts to provide feedback to the Ministry of Education so that local dialog will be taken into account with the final plan for the implementation of full day kindergarten within the province including how the program will be funded.

5.9 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Target Act – CARRIED

That BCSTA urge the Ministry of Education consult with Northern Boards of Education for the purpose of a review of the effect this Act has on the more rural or northern boards of the province.

5.10 Carbon Neutral Plan for School Districts – CARRIED

That BCSTA urge the Provincial Government to delay the requirement for school districts to become carbon neutral until the Annual Facilities Grant is reinstated.

5.11 Debt Service Grants Agreement – CARRIED

That BCSTA urge the Ministry of Education to honor agreements with school districts regarding debt service grants.

5.12 Proposed Review of Boards of Education – CARRIED

That BCSTA urge the Ministry of Education to consult with Boards of Education in the development of terms of reference for any review of boards/districts as announced in the Provincial Throne Speech.

5.13 Class Size and Composition Legislation – CARRIED

That BCSTA urge the Minister of Education to review and revise current class size and composition legislation in consultation with Education Partners in light of recent arbitration rulings.

5.14 Annual Facilities Grant – CARRIED AS AMENDED

That the Ministry of Finance be requested to restore funding levels for the Annual Facilities Grant for the 2010/11 school year, and

That the Annual Facilities Grant be increased by a significant amount for the 2010/11, 2011/12, and 2012/13 school years to allow districts to complete projects that were scheduled for the current year while continuing to protect core funding.

The following were approved as Late Motions:

6.1 Provincial Public Conference on Sustaining Public Education – CARRIED

That BCSTA convene a provincial public conference on sustaining public education.

6.2 Stagnant Rural BC Public Education Funding – CARRIED

That BCSTA Board of Directors meet as soon as possible with the Ministers of Education, Community and Rural Development and Transportation and Infrastructure regarding public education and community support for rural BC.

6.3 Amalgamations of School Districts – CARRIED

That BCSTA record their opposition to further amalgamation of school districts with the Minister of Education.

6.4 Ministry of Education Removal of Annual Facility Grant Monies – CARRIED AS AMENDED

That BCSTA investigate the School Act legal aspects of the Ministry of Education withdrawal without notice of Annual Facility Grants to the vast majority of districts and consider appropriate action, including possible lawsuit.

6.5 Redirect Funding for Retractable Roof – CARRIED

That BCSTA ask the government to reconsider its decision to install a retractable roof on BC Place Stadium and re-allocate the \$500,000,000 for this project directly to the Ministries of Health and Education.