



## **SCHOOL DISTRICT 64 (GULF ISLANDS)**

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### **School District 64 (Gulf Islands) Funding Model Review Submission**

School District 64 (Gulf Islands) is pleased to provide a written submission to the Ministry of Education regarding the current Funding Model Review.

As a small district that has had to enact a four-day school week to accommodate the funding quantum, we will be significantly impacted by any change to the formula. A positive change is greatly welcome but a negative change may result in our district requiring financial support from the Ministry within one year of implementation.

Our current financial forecasts indicate that we will be in a deficit situation within the next two years as a result of declining enrollment at our remote schools, and we have very few cost-reducing measures available to address the anticipated funding losses. Any further reductions in funding resulting from revisions to the existing funding formula would seriously impact our district.

Students in the province deserve a quality education no matter where they live. Any changes to the funding formula must maintain or improve equity and access for all students in the province.

As stated in the Throne Speech, “For many years, school districts were forced to close neighbourhood schools or cut vital student programs to balance budgets. These cuts have hit northern and rural communities hard, forcing many students to bus longer distances, farther from home to school. To fix the problems, government will review school funding to protect education in rural and northern communities and better support students with special needs.” We hope that this statement will be true for our rural district so we don’t have to contemplate closing schools on any of our islands.

We believe the details included in the Statement of Principles provides good guidance on how each of these concepts can be actualized in the new funding formula. The challenge will be to ensure that if any district loses funding good reasoning is provided by the Ministry to explain it.

As stated before our district is having difficulty maintaining our current program levels with the present funding formula. We struggle to provide programming comparable to that of our urban neighbours. If there is a change that results in a funding decrease we will require assistance to explain to the public why programs need to be reduced.

To provide the greatest equity to our students and embrace the personalized learning goals in the new curriculum, we believe the per pupil portion of the Block funding should be based solely on physical headcounts as opposed to FTE. We believe in financial accountability with the goal of supporting student success. Learning is on a continuum and should be engaging and empowering. Interdisciplinary learning is not necessarily delivered in a ‘course’ model.

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The unique geographic factors grant or equivalent funding is essential to keeping our outer island schools open. As stated in the Throne Speech these rural schools are critical to our island communities. While we are able to work within the current funding framework we must note again that the school district has moved to a four-day school week to reduce transportation, staff replacement, building maintenance and utility costs.

Due to the unique geographic makeup of the district and small student populations, it is costly to provide specialized services, such as English Language Learners and Aboriginal Education supports to students on the outer islands. The funding generated does not cover the salary and travel costs for specialized itinerant teachers.

Additionally, in a small district, our adult non-grads are provided service in a similar fashion to programs for our high school students. It is equally costly to serve adult students, and therefore we question why reduced funding is received for these students.

Some learners have intense needs that require high levels of support in terms of both staffing and assistive technology. Provision of specific supports and specialty professionals such as School Psychologists, Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Behaviour Interventionists, Counselors etc. are essential even if costs are in excess of the funding provided. This is even more costly when students reside on geographically dispersed islands and travel is necessary.

Our preference for Special Purpose Grants would be a hybrid model. A socioeconomic model would not serve students in our district well. We are a community of have and have nots. This disparity is evident in our schools. The current model places considerable weight on assessing rather than delivering service. Base funding does not exist for high incidence designations. There is not a mechanism in place to apply for additional funds in exceptional circumstances. We believe that service should be provided based on student need rather than on 'designating for dollars'. A long term societal vision about the opportunity costs if we do not serve vulnerable students in a timely fashion is a factor that we believe should be considered.

School District 64 (Gulf Islands) is committed to quality educational programming that improves outcomes for all learners. As we enter into a phase of financial uncertainty within the district we need to closely monitor any possible changes so that we can react quickly. We are working hard to ensure that our financial difficulties are kept as far away from the classroom as possible but the potential for changes to the funding formula leaves us with concerns. Ensuring the Funding Allocation System aligns with our efforts and success in transforming teaching and learning and focuses on student success is key.

School District 64 (Gulf Islands) appreciates the opportunity to have input into this process and will continue to collaborate with the Ministry, together ensuring success for all of our learners. We humbly submit this response to help inform a revised funding formula that includes processes and procedures that are clear, understandable, predictable, and transparent, while allowing flexibility to best meet those aims.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rob Pingle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rob Pingle, Chairperson  
School District No. 64 (Gulf Islands)