

April 29, 2018

To the Chair of the Independent Review Panel

RE: Funding Model Review Discussion Paper

As President of the Nanaimo District Teachers' Association, I am writing in response to the paper entitled *K-12 Public Education Funding in British Columbia*.

Teachers in Nanaimo are not unlike other teachers in the province. We have witnessed significant decreases in funding to public education for the better part of two decades, which has resulted in significant decreases in supports and services to students. We are optimistic that the Ministry of Education is looking to change the way that public education is funded. However, the discussion paper has raised some concerns for us, as well.

We are optimistic that the Ministry is considering doing away with special purpose grants that make it difficult for School Boards to know consistently what to expect year to year, and instead provide stable base funding aligned to actual costs to ensure that operating needs are met. School Boards should not feel compelled to accumulate surpluses in anticipation of possible deficits in future years.

We are concerned, however, by the implications of incentivized funding, as we look to the south to see what a disaster that has been for public education in the US. What we would like to see is the provision of enough funds to adequately support the needs of our students. Teachers are the professionals providing direct support to students—we have the training and experience to determine the needs of our students, and yet teachers' input has been undervalued.

We are concerned, as well, by what we have seen pass for inclusive education. This catch phrase seems to be conveniently defined in such a way as to justify underfunding the system. The paper mentions that "a disproportionate amount of time and resources" are directed towards administration, assessments, and paperwork. We would like to see a reduction in the amount of clerical work currently downloaded to teachers, but assessments serve a valuable purpose in the diagnosis of and strategies for students with exceptional needs. To eliminate these in an effort to redistribute the funding will not serve the needs of those students. What we would like to see is more funding, serving more students, but still targeted for students with exceptional needs.

Our restored *Collective Agreement* language has helped to bring back some of that targeted funding in that it recognizes that more supports are needed for students with exceptional needs, and guarantees funding. However, there are other provisions in the restored *Collective Agreement* that are not being funded, specifically the resources that School Based Teams are recommending to support students. Additionally, the ratios for non-enrolling teacher staffing, which were meant to be a minimum service level even in 1994, are being treated as targets which has significantly affected our ability to provide services this year. Students in our District have seen a reduction in the number of special education

teachers this year, and therefore a significant reduction in the level of service and support they should receive.

We understand that this paper is only the first step, and that there is more research and consultation to come. We look forward to participating in future consultations.

Sincerely,



Denise Wood
President
Nanaimo District Teachers' Association

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Steve Rae, Chair, SD68 Board of Education