



Prince Rupert District Teachers' Union



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K-12 Funding Model Review Panel

Ministry of Education

PO Box 9045

Station Provincial Government Victoria,

BC V8W 9E2

Dear Members of the Funding Model Review Panel:

Subject: K-12 Education Funding Model Review Discussion Paper

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Prince Rupert District Teachers' Union in response to the *Funding Model Review Discussion Paper* shared for feedback by the end of April 2018. We have several serious concerns with this document and the implications for our learners. Initially we were hopeful to hear of a funding review as the last 16 years of drastic erosion has left our schools in a dire situation. As a percentage of overall government spending, the previous leadership gutted 40% of the public K-12 funding. This has left many students without supports, lack of timely assessments towards designations, crumbling schools, and a revised curriculum without necessary resources developed. We assumed the discussion paper would be about restoring the needed funds to ensure we are offering a quality public education system in this province that is fully inclusive and equitable. The contents of this discussion paper were very disappointing and worrisome.

The funding model discussion paper provides a summary of the first phases of consultations which we have never heard about and were presumably excluded from. The themes explored make no mention of increased funding or an evaluation as to whether the current structures are adequately funded. It appears that this is a process of creative redistribution of existing funding rather than acknowledging the fundamental and chronic underfunding we've presented at the past few years of the *Select Standing Committee on Finance*.

The themes explored in this document are troubling in how they are presented and explained. The focus on 'outcomes based funding' with discussion of 'incentives' linked to 'individualized learning' is simply alarming if one takes into consideration how this has detrimental practice has played out in other countries. It leads to very poor outcomes and widening inequities for the most at-risk learners. Which leads me to the second troubling theme of 'Education for Special Needs, Vulnerable and Indigenous Students". We can't understand how the authors of this paper thought it would be appropriate to group these students together with discussion of 'integration' as if to conflate identified special needs, with socio-economic disadvantages, or the post-colonial legacy of intergenerational trauma

and disenfranchisement of Indigenous rights. The oversimplification of this discussion in the absence of critical reflection of the impacts of chronic underfunding as a key predictor to the unfortunate gaps in achievement raises larger concerns about the future of education in BC. Per pupil funding is \$1000 less than the national average. Several categories of special needs supports were defunded since 2001. Since then 37.1% fewer claims for students in these categories have been pursued which we know also translates to no additional supports.

We need a system that funds all identified categories under the DSM-V, including specified learning disabilities, gifted, mild intellectual disabilities, and moderate behavior. It is time we had an additional band of funding towards supporting so called 'grey area' students who have clear needs that can't be readily identified or are in the process of being identified. The argument that services are delayed because of paperwork is unfounded. The delays are due to chronic underfunding, lack of staffing, and failure to recruit the necessary educational psychologists. If this was a priority of past governments we would not be having this discussion of how to 'creatively' redistributed funds. Any conversation around de-coupling funding from designations is essentially stripping students of their fundamental rights to necessary accommodations under the *Human Rights Code*. We've heard the revised curriculum is 'flexible' enough to meet the full range of student needs with increased opportunity for personalization. This is a false claim if the curriculum isn't supported with adequate resources to differentiate. This aspect of the curriculum redesign was not explicitly stated to the development teams. It is well supported in the research literature, and case law, that students with exceptionalities deserve the opportunity to have their unique needs identified and be provided appropriate interventions to meet their full potential.

We would be very pleased to provide further feedback and discussion if the funding review panel wishes it.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



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