

Vancouver Island North Teachers' Association

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Re: Funding Formula Review

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Vancouver Island North Teachers' Association, a proud autonomous local of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation.

VINTA was very encouraged to hear that the BC Government was establishing this Review Committee to provide a much needed, in-depth review of the Public Education funding formula in our province.

Then we saw the goal and the statement of principles for the committee:

Goal: to ensure that available funding is allocated equitably across BC's 60 Boards of Education

Principles:

Flexible — Respect the autonomy of, and not unnecessarily restrict, individual boards of education in the spending of their funding allocations to further student success.

Accountable — Allocate resources to boards of education in the most efficient manner and ensure that resources provided are being utilized as intended.

Stable and Predictable — Support strategic, multi-year planning for educational programming and school district operations.

Transparent — Calculate funding using a clear and transparent methodology

Equitable — Facilitate access to comparable levels of educational services and opportunities for individual students throughout the province.

Responsive — Allocate available resources among boards of education in consideration of unique local and provincial operational requirements.

Nowhere in the mandate is there any mention of the quantum of funding. With respect, VINTA does not believe that the shell game of moving money from one place to another to make things appear better will solve the underlying problem of our Public Education system – that it has been chronically underfunded for the past 16 years.

Without the ability to look at the overall amount of money invested in our K-12 Public system, VINTA does not believe that the Funding Formula Review will make any difference in addressing the needs of the system - the needs of our students – than any other review that has taken place in the past 16 years.

We were also very concerned to read the Funding Model Review Discussion Paper released in March. This document is far reaching in its scope, and does not appear to be constrained by the goal or the principles listed above. In fact it seems to indicate approval of some key ideas that are in discord with previous statements of this government around funding for students with special needs, and the outcome of the Moore case at the Supreme Court of Canada.

VINTA members are whole-heartedly in support of the submission made by the BCTF, especially the nine core recommendations:

1. The adequacy of total funding for public education should be a central focus of the funding model review.
2. The new funding formula must include specific provisions for funding the costs of provincially bargained collective agreements. In the case of teachers, this should include both changes to compensation, as well as any other bargained language that has clear cost implications.
3. Identified needs should be central to the new funding model.
4. Formula amounts should be automatically adjusted to, at minimum, keep pace with inflation and any other contractually agreed upon increases.
5. The new funding model should be more transparent, increasing accountability for Ministry staff and making judgements of how resources align with public education priorities easier for all British Columbians.
6. Funding for special needs should remain anchored in identified needs and include dedicated funding for identification.
7. The new funding model must take into account and equalize the unequal capacity of school districts to fundraise.
8. No school district loses funding as a result of the funding model review.
9. The funding model review should start from a full picture of the mandate of the public education system.

We hope the members of the Review Committee will undertake to focus on the real needs of the K-12 Public Education system, and not engage in wild discussions around ideas that are non-starters for the stakeholders in our system. We would encourage the Review Committee to stay focused on providing a much needed overhaul of the funding formula, but also keep in mind that, ultimately, if no more money goes into the system then we are not going to see any substantive improvements in our districts.

After sixteen years of funding issues and cuts, it is time to make improvements.

Respectfully,

Shawn Gough
Local President, Vancouver Island North Teachers' Association