



SCHOOL DISTRICT NO 47 (POWELL RIVER)

Board of Education

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Jeanette Scott – Chair, Doug Skinner – Vice-Chair

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December 18, 2012

The Honourable Don McRae
Ministry of Education
Office of the Minister
P.O. Box 9045, Stn. Prov. Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister McRae,

Re: Cooperative Gains Mandate
Your File Ref. 163945

I am writing to you in response to your December 3, 2012 letter to our Board of Education regarding the Cooperative Gains Mandate. We have lived the “savings plan” part of the mandate for years. With declining enrollment each year, we have had to develop an annual saving plan just to maintain service levels. Your Ministry introduced the notion of “funding protection” several years ago in recognition that boards such as ours cannot meet minimal service levels without this additional assistance. We assume that if the Ministry felt that boards could maintain existing service levels without funding protection, this would not have been introduced. Given this premise, we also assume that the Ministry expects those of us in funding protection to respond that savings cannot be found, as any affirmative response would suggest that we do not need funding protection, that we have not been fiscally responsible in the past and that savings incurred would be best spent on wages rather than restoring services.

Over the past ten years we have performed efficiency reviews, redesigned our service delivery model, developed savings through operational cost reductions and have worked to increase and develop additional sources of revenue.

We support fair wage increases for both support staff and teachers. However, we urge government to fund its mandate through savings found in other areas of government without reducing services to taxpayers.

Lastly, we are disappointed that government has intentionally put school districts in a position to be “whipsawed” in this round of negotiations. This mandate may be effective in other sectors, but is ill-advised for a sector where most boards have been forced to reduce their budget every year.

If government is intent on decimating our sector, please start by finding savings from ancillary services that do not affect children. Although these ancillary services are valued by our board, we think perhaps the Ministry should be reflective of what it is they are seeking from us. To that end, we would suggest that you consider reducing or eliminating funding to private schools, eliminating BCPSEA, reducing Ministry of Education personnel and compensate for these reductions by continuing to build capacity with partner organizations such as BCSTA, BCSSA, BCASBO, BCPVPA, BCTF, CUPE, BCCPAC, BCCASE, and FNESEC.

We acknowledge that you have set a tight timeline to receive responses to the cooperative gains savings plan. In order to expedite the process, this letter will also act as official notice that School District #47 (Powell River) has carefully examined our finances and cannot find any savings at this time under the conditions of the cooperative gains mandate.

Yours truly



Dr. Jeanette Scott, Chair
Powell River Board of Education

JY/r-sh/board/jg

c: All BC School District Boards of Education