

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO 47 (POWELL RIVER)

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Jeanette Scott – Chair, Doug Skinner – Vice-Chair

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April 21, 2015

The Honourable Peter Fassbender
Minister of Education
P.O. Box 9048, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

via email

Dear Minister Fassbender:

The Powell River Board of Education, the local teachers' and support workers' unions as well as the District Parent Advisory Council wish to express our concerns with regard to the potential impact of Bill 11-2015: The Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2015, on the students in our local school district.

For over a century, the governance of public schools in this province has been the responsibility of locally-elected school trustees. It is clear that over those many years, decisions have been made in the best interest of students in the specific communities by those who were entrusted with these responsibilities through the democratic process. Surely, individuals who live and work and raise children in the community in which they serve understand and are able to hear and respond to the needs and unique characteristic of those communities. Giving power to one individual in the Province to veto and order change to any decision about education made by a local board cuts to the core of the purpose of locally-elected boards of education.

According to the School Act, trustees are elected to play a governance role at the local level and, as such, are directly accountable to the people they serve. The role of trustees is to guide the work of their individual school districts; to set plans and policies in place; and to manage an annual budget based on funding from the Provincial Government. Over the past number of years, this board has faced a number of challenges, including significant declining enrollment and funding constraints. Yet, we have made every effort to create and live within a balanced budget. We have closed schools and sold or repurposed school buildings; we have made significant administrative cuts; and, in addition, we have undertaken a number of "shared service" type initiatives in order to streamline business processes and redirect savings to the classroom. But, it is unlikely moving forward that we will be able to continue doing this without making financial decisions that will have serious impact on student learning.


Presently, the Ministry is promoting the new BC Education Plan. If this plan is to be successfully implemented, it will require adequate resources, funding and professional development. Both teachers

and support workers need time to assess the needs of the students, to meet with parents, colleagues and administrators to collaborate and to develop strategies that will engage students in quality learning experiences. And surely, those teachers and support workers are the ones who are most capable of deciding what professional development is required.

Besides the proposed changes that erode the autonomy of locally-elected school boards and remove teachers' control over their own professional development, we are also concerned about the forced introduction of a system of collection and storage of student data. Along with other school boards in the province, this district, elected to use the Saanich model which we believed would be more cost effective and would address concerns about student privacy which arose with BCeSIS. Surely, if we were truly operating within a model of co-governance, we would have been consulted prior to the mandating of MyEducationBC, a system that has all of the potential of violating the basic tenets of student privacy protection.

We strongly encourage you and your government to consider all of the concerns that are being expressed by trustees, parents, teachers and administrators around the Province and to amend this proposed legislation accordingly.

Yours truly



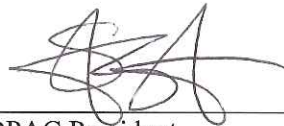
Dr. Jeanette Scott, Chair
Powell River Board of Education



Cathy Fisher, President
Powell River & District Teachers' Association



Daphne Ross, President
CUPE 476



DPAC President
District Parent Advisory Council

JS/jg

c: All via email to:
Nicholas Simons
BCSTA – All School District
The Peak