



VSTA Response to the 2016-17 Revised Preliminary Budget Proposals

April 25, 2016

Respectfully and through the Chair;

Public School Secondary Teachers in Vancouver remain deeply committed to the education of our students and as such must recommend to the Board that the current proposed budget be rejected as educationally unsound. To reduce service to students, to cancel programs, to restrict access to translation, to cut teacher time for the Gifted, to further squeeze budgets for supplies, to abandon maintenance of schools, to eliminate support for field trips, to restrict and slash supports for teachers in difficult classes, to further treat fee-paying international students like bank machines and reduce service to them, to decimate support staff in schools, to abandon curricular support teachers in the midst of a curriculum transformation, to walk away from the idea of an Anti-Racism Mentor and an Anti-Homophobia Mentor, to reduce service to blind, deaf and home-bound students, to entirely eliminate career information staff in secondary schools, to eliminate teacher peer support for technology, to erode teaching support for students who can't read, to reduce the number of Special Education workers, to erode school libraries and finally and most egregiously, to purposefully allow secondary school classes to exceed the class size limit of thirty students set in law is irresponsible and devoid of the reverence essential to Trusteeship that is afforded in the School Act.

The VSTA remains committed to recommendations we have made to initial budget proposals. We urge the Board to examine reductions in both district and site-based management positions. Although the work these individuals do is important to the system, the reductions contemplated to teaching and support staff is not commensurate to the reduction contemplated in management staff. We also reiterate our call for detailed information and examination of the Attendance Management portion of the Attendance Support Program. It is seen as regressive, punitive and costly by our members. We are deeply dismayed with the proposal to increase the number of International Education students (an isolated and vulnerable group) while diluting their student-teacher ratio. The elimination of many of the Teacher Mentors will be a net cost to the Board. Contemplating a reduction to School Flex Budgets will diminish the quality of education to students. From Science to Home Economics to Math, School Flex Budgets are used and committed to programs for students.

The narrative that the Vancouver School Board is the author of its own budget misfortunes for not closing schools is a foolish and naive assessment. Jurisdictions as close as Calgary have as a goal school capacity utilization at 80%. It is clear to Vancouver Secondary Teachers that the burden of responsibility for the enormous cuts to service in this budget lies squarely at the feet of the current and past Liberal provincial governments. As the VSTA pointed out in its initial presentation in this budget process, B.C. has the 2nd lowest per-student funding in Canada and funds education a full \$1000 dollars less per student than the national average. This is unacceptable and must change. Our students are no less in need of teachers, support workers and safe, clean buildings than other

students across the country and yet we see a provincial government that increases funding to private school education while passing on increases in costs to public school districts across the province. In every measure available – a percentage of GDP, student-educator ratio or percentage change in number of teachers over time, B.C. hobbles the future of students and the economy by a decay of funding to public education. It is time for Trustees of the Vancouver Board of Education to make the difficult decisions that they were elected to make and vote against this destructive and educationally unsound budget.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rory Brown
VSTA President