

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release from
SD 73 District Parent Advisory Council
October 15, 2009

On October 13, 2009 the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) met with the Honorable Kevin Krueger, MLA, and the Honourable Terry Lake, MLA, in response to the recent cuts to education. On September 22, 2009, during the monthly DPAC meeting the following two motions were carried:

"That the DPAC executive expresses its dissatisfaction with respect to the educational funding in School District # 73."

and

"That the DPAC executive takes action protesting cuts to gaming funds."

Both of these motions are a response to the combination of recent funding reversals announced this fall and the longer-term issues of underfunding that have plagued education in BC for the past several years. Our district faces a current crisis due to the sudden withdrawal of these funds. Despite having made the difficult decisions required to produce a balanced budget the School District 73 now finds itself in a deficit position due to the reckless and random cuts made partway through the year by the provincial government. This is unacceptable. Our boards are required by law to meet contractual obligations and produce balanced budgets in a timely manner; does this law not also extend to our partners on the provincial level?

The Ministry of Education continually reminds us of the "increased per student funding", but does not cover the cost of government-negotiated pay increases for education staff. Additional costs like the carbon tax and the decision to freeze transportation funds at 2002 rates have put stress on the budget. Less and less money is actually being spent on our children in the classroom.

Into this mix is the recent decision to cut gaming grants to PAC's and DPAC's. Gaming revenues for the Province are on the rise yet the budget update announced a 50% reduction in gaming funds to Parent Advisory Councils. Why? After much discussion it was agreed at that time that DPAC and the MLA's would "agree to disagree".

Overall the meeting was a success, and there was agreement from both parties that this is an exceptional School District. There was acknowledgment of the challenges and that there should be changes to the funding formula, and the capital funding for this District as well that more money is needed for bussing. DPAC clearly stated parents case that the funding changes are too extreme, the timing of the AFG cuts (after a budget year has began) is unfair, and that all these cuts have increasingly negative impact on the children of this District. The success of all students and our education system is DPAC's vision and we look forward to future communication and dialogue with our MLA's.

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