

Learning for a Lifetime

550 Poirier Street, Coquitlam, BC, Canada V3J 6A7 • Phone: 604-939-9201 • Fax: 604-937-6758

**CHAIR:**

Judy Shirra

**VICE-CHAIR:**

Kerri Palmer Isaak

**TRUSTEES:**

Carol Cahoon

Chuck Denison

Barb Hobson

Lisa Park

Diane Sowden

Michael Thomas

Keith Watkins

May 4, 2015

The Honourable Peter Fassbender  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9045, STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fassbender,

At the April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Board meeting the School District 43 (Coquitlam) Board of Education unanimously passed the following motion:

*"that our Board of Education write a letter to Minister Fassbender, with a copy to our four local MLAs and BCSTA, stating our opposition to Bill 11."*

The Board wishes to express its concerns regarding the proposed legislation - Bill 11 - The Education Statutes Amendment Act. The Ministry of Education purports to model a consultative process and continues to express the importance of collaborative consultation with partners.

The manner in which Bill 11 was instituted is of concern to our Board of Education. The legislation in its current form was created without consultation with Boards of Education. This has resulted in confusion, dismay, and a lack of clarity regarding intent and direction.

In our governance role, the Board of Education wishes to be able to understand Ministry of Education goals, objectives and priorities; and to interpret those for our communities and school district.

The Board of Education believes that it can provide valuable input into how the Ministry can best achieve its goals in terms of shared services, professional development, accountability, student data collection, and achievement. We believe that efficiencies are not always best achieved in the "one-size-fits-all" model.

Although Deputy Minister Byng communicated that the legislation is intended to create an environment of co-governance, our Board of Education feels that Bill 11 will produce the opposite effect, resulting in a diminished relationship between the local Boards and the Province.


.../2

The manner in which Bill 11 was announced seems to signal a change in relationship between Boards and the Ministry of Education. We urge you to create a communication plan that is inclusive and respectful of Boards of Education and will allow us to return to a co-governance model. It is of utmost importance that Trustees who were elected to represent the interests of public education in our communities have the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with yourself and your delegates.

Yours truly,

**SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 43 (COQUITLAM)  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

  
Judy Shirra, Chair

  
Kerri Palmer Isaak, Vice-Chair

  
Carol Cahoon, Trustee

  
Chuck Denison, Trustee

  
Barb Hobson, Trustee

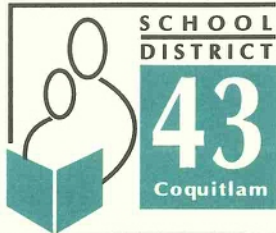
  
Lisa Park, Trustee

  
Diane Sowden, Trustee

  
Michael Thomas, Trustee

  
Keith Watkins, Trustee

- C: Board of Education SD43  
Patricia Gartland, Superintendent  
Mark Ferrari, Secretary-Treasurer  
Ken Cober, President, CPVPA  
Charley King, President, CTA  
Dave Ginter, President, CUPE Local 561  
Craig Woods, President, DPAC  
MLA Mike Farnworth (Port Coquitlam)  
MLA Douglas Horne (Coquitlam-Burke Mountain)  
MLA Linda Reimer (Port Moody-Coquitlam)  
MLA Selina Robinson (Coquitlam-Maillardville)  
All BC Boards of Education via BCSTA



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Chuck Denison

Barb Hobson

Lisa Park

Diane Sowden

Michael Thomas

Keith Watkins

June 16, 2015

The Honourable Peter Fassbender  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9045, STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fassbender,

The community of Coquitlam joined together on the evening of June 16th, 2015 to celebrate the achievement of securing four sites for five new schools on Burke Mountain.

The Board of Education of School District 43 (Coquitlam), the City of Coquitlam, our Members of the Legislative Assembly, and Wesbild shared with the public the good news regarding the new school sites. The collaborative effort of all partners saved taxpayer dollars and helped to expedite the new school development process.

Burke Mountain is a growing community attracting many young families with children. We wish to join in thanking you for the support the Province has provided for our land development plans. We ask for your assistance in expediting the approval of new school construction on Burke Mountain.

Yours truly,

Judy Shirra, Chair  
Board of Education  
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 43 (COQUITLAM)

Richard Stewart, Mayor  
CITY OF COQUITLAM

Douglas Horne, MLA  
Coquitlam – Burke Mountain

Kevin Layden, President and CEO  
Wesbild Holdings Ltd.

c: Board of Education  
Patricia Gartland, Superintendent  
Mark Ferrari, Secretary-Treasurer

September 9, 2015

**CHAIR:**

Judy Shirra

**VICE-CHAIR:**

Kerri Palmer Isaak

**TRUSTEES:**

Carol Cahoon

Chuck Denison

Barb Hobson

Lisa Park

Diane Sowden

Michael Thomas

Keith Watkins

Honourable Michael de Jong  
Minister of Finance  
1802 Douglas Street,  
Victoria, BC V8T 4K6

Dear Minister de Jong,

**Retirement Plan for Non-Teaching Employees of School District No. 43 (Coquitlam)**

I am writing today to update you on recent events pertaining to our pension plan ("the Plan"), and to ask for your assistance in addressing a significant matter relating to the Plan's solvency funding.

First let me thank you for your leadership last year in spearheading our success in obtaining an Order in Council (OIC) to relieve the School Board of solvency funding requirements. This was critical to avoid unnecessarily directing monies destined for educational programs into a pension plan that is fully funded on a going concern basis, which is the only basis on which all other school districts in BC and across Canada are required to fund their pension plans.

In discussions with individuals in many areas of government including your office, Treasury Board, Ministry of Education, and the pension regulator (FICOM), as well as with a number of MLAs, we have heard that the intent of the OIC was to relieve SD43 from solvency funding requirements based on a common belief that these rules do not make practical sense for our Plan. Unfortunately, OICs can only be implemented prospectively, and so we were not directly relieved from making the solvency funding payments that were due prior to the OIC effective date of October 24, 2014. In a meeting with two senior FICOM staff, it was agreed that a reasonable approach would be to have the time periods for the outstanding payments extended so that they fall under the OIC. The Superintendent of Pensions has the discretion under Section 6 of the current Pension Benefits Standards Act ("PBSA") to extend time periods.

Accordingly, the School District made a written submission on June 29, 2015 requesting the Superintendent of Pensions to exercise her discretion to extend the period by which these outstanding solvency funding payments must be remitted to the Plan. On August 12, 2015, the Superintendent replied, noting that the discretion was not intended to enable OICs to be applied retroactively. She further stated that, even if she had the discretion in this case, she declined to provide her approval, and noted two main reasons – one was that the School Board has access to a large sum of cash in the Central Deposit Program (CDP) which could be used to make the payments, and the second was that the School Board has not exhausted all efforts to coordinate a letter of credit. Neither of these points is correct.

.../2

Based on her decision not to extend the time limits for the pre-OIC solvency funding payment, the Superintendent subsequently ordered the School District to make immediate payment of \$26.1 million either in cash or by filing a letter of credit with FICOM. At this point, neither of these two options is available to the School Board. All of our cash (including funds held in the CPD) is required to meet our legal obligations, is completely encumbered, and is definitively not available to meet pension solvency funding requirements. In respect of the letter of credit option, Board staff have been engaged for nearly a year in attempting to secure a letter of credit from a financial institution consistent with FICOM requirements and in compliance with the School Act.

Based on legal opinion, our position remains that the School District is prohibited under the School Act from encumbering assets for the purpose of pension plan solvency funding. In order to obtain a letter of credit, the School Board requires written assurance from the Province that it is an acceptable practice for school boards to encumber assets through a letter of credit. We have not been successful in obtaining this assurance. After extensive conversations, the Province has confirmed it will not provide a guarantee for the solvency funding payment, but may assist in facilitating a letter of credit by way of a comfort letter. Even if this solution is successful, the School Board will be required to pay substantial fees for a letter of credit on an annual basis. These would be funds taken out of the educational system for no purpose.

Our management staff has spent countless hours over the past three years on this matter and the Board has spent thousands of dollars engaging with legal counsel to bring resolution to this matter. These are funds that would have otherwise been directed into the classroom.

Minister De Jong, we know that your staff engages frequently with FICOM and the Superintendent of Pensions. We are asking for your assistance in providing clarification to the Superintendent that she can utilize her discretion to allow for all outstanding solvency special payments to be deferred until October 24, 2014 so that the OIC applies to them. This is consistent with our understanding as to the intent of the OIC based on extensive conversations with many government officials and representatives.

Thank you again for your continued support of the educational services provided throughout the Province and, in particular, the Coquitlam School Board.

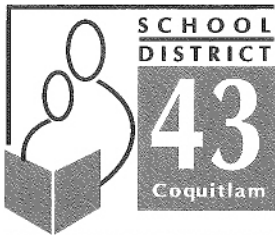
Yours truly,

School District No. 43 (Coquitlam)



Judy Shirra,  
Chair, Board of Education

cc: Board of Education  
Patricia Gartland, Superintendent SD43  
Mark Ferrari, Secretary-Treasurer SD43  
Honourable Mike Bernier, Minister of Education  
Dave Byng, Deputy Minister of Education  
Deborah Fayad, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education  
Chris Nicolls, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, Pension Administrator SD43



Learning for a Lifetime

550 Poirier Street, Coquitlam, BC, Canada V3J 6A7 • Phone: 604-939-9201 • Fax: 604-937-6758

**CHAIR:**

Judy Shirra

October 6, 2015

**VICE-CHAIR:**

Kerri Palmer Isaak

The Honourable Mike Bernier  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9045, Stn. Prov. Govt.  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 9E2

**TRUSTEES:**

Carol Cahoon

Chuck Denison

Barb Hobson

Lisa Park

Diane Sowden

Michael Thomas

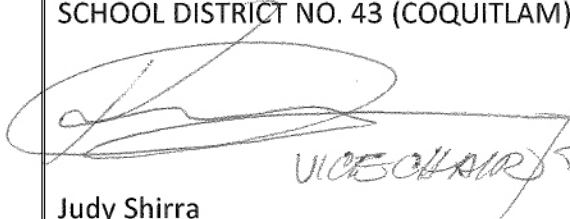
Keith Watkins

Dear Honourable Bernier:

The Board of Education formally requests approval to under spend the targeted Aboriginal amounts for the 2014/15 school year in the amount up to \$22,131.

Approval is requested for a variation of direction under Section 106.4(2) of the *School Act*. Our district understands that any underspent funds from 2014/15 will be added to the 2015/16 school year Aboriginal education targeted amounts to be expended on Aboriginal education programs.

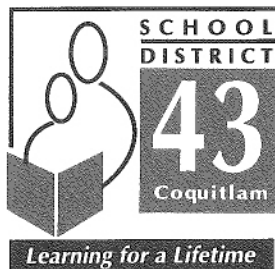
Yours truly,  
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 43 (COQUITLAM)



VICE CHAIR / PALMER ISAAK

Judy Shirra  
Chair  
Board of Education

- c. Board of Education  
Patricia Gartland, Superintendent of Schools  
Mark Ferrari, Secretary - Treasurer  
Chris Nicolls, Assistant, Secretary Treasurer  
Ian Aaron, Ministry of Education



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September 9, 2015

**CHAIR:**

Judy Shirra

**VICE-CHAIR:**

Kerri Palmer Isaak

**TRUSTEES:**

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Chuck Denison

Barb Hobson

Lisa Park

Diane Sowden

Michael Thomas

Keith Watkins

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Victoria, BC V8T 4K6

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Thank you again for your continued support of the educational services provided throughout the Province and, in particular, the Coquitlam School Board.

Yours truly,

School District No. 43 (Coquitlam)



Judy Shirra,  
Chair, Board of Education

cc: Board of Education  
Patricia Gartland, Superintendent SD43  
Mark Ferrari, Secretary-Treasurer SD43  
Honourable Mike Bernier, Minister of Education  
Dave Byng, Deputy Minister of Education  
Deborah Fayad, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education  
Chris Nicolls, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, Pension Administrator SD43

**CHAIR:**

Judy Shirra

**VICE-CHAIR:**

Kerri Palmer Isaak

**TRUSTEES:**

Carol Cahoon

Chuck Denison

Barb Hobson

Lisa Park

Diane Sowden

Michael Thomas

Keith Watkins

November 18, 2015

Sent via email: EDUC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Mike Bernier  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9045, STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Honourable Minister Bernier,

The Board of Education of School District No. 43 (Coquitlam) is providing you with an update on some of the Capital Program work that our district has undertaken over the past several months and to express our concerns over delays in funding announcements for some of our high priority projects. In particular we are deeply concerned over delays in funding for a new elementary school in the Smiling Creek neighbourhood of Burke Mountain in Coquitlam and for a seismic replacement project for Minnekhada Middle School in Port Coquitlam.

Our Board and district has done tremendous work to support this government and our taxpayers by being fiscally responsible with public funds within our Capital Program. This past spring we worked collaboratively with the City of Coquitlam and Wesbild in saving tens of millions of dollars in land purchases and amenities for capital projects for the five schools required in the fast-growing Burke Mountain region. Included in this is a near five million dollar saving already realized at the Smiling Creek school site by working cooperatively with the City of Coquitlam in forming a joint school/park where the City contributed land and will build a field for use by students and community members.

Our Board is also willing to contribute funds to these projects through property sales. One property has already sold, a second property is part of a swap for land at the Smiling Creek school site, a third is currently being marketed and a fourth is being prepared for future sale. This is further testimony to our willingness to cooperate with government in order to help create the best possible learning environments for our students.

We have not sat idly by blaming this government for not yet fully funding these important Capital projects. Instead, we have taken proactive and innovative steps to be part of the funding solution. In fact, our Board has already invested upwards of \$500,000 to keep the Smiling Creek school project moving forward in design and site preparation stages. Because the Board took this step, community members have been relatively patient and understanding; however, community patience is running out and we anticipate additional increased and perhaps acrimonious lobbying activity by community members.

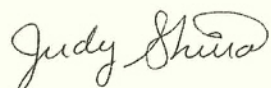
The investment decision to keep the Smiling Creek project moving forward was made by our Board to keep it on schedule and support this government's due diligence process. Our proactive work and investment means that the Smiling Creek project will be ready to apply for its building permit at the beginning of December. However, due to the substantial costs we have invested to date, if funding support does not come in a timely manner it will be very difficult for this Board to continue funding this project to keep it moving forward, and that will not serve our collective stakeholders and taxpayers.

In addition to the Smiling Creek project funding, we request the expedited advancement of funding for the Minnekhada Middle School seismic replacement. Our district has completed all required steps and submitted all required documentation for the Minnekhada project to proceed including a draft Project Agreement in December 2014. To complete the project quickly and cost-effectively, we are exploring using a modified repeat design from the Banting Middle School project which is presently in design development and will be ready for tender in Spring 2016. Our Board has been patiently waiting for this funding also and like the Burke Mountain community members, the neighbouring Minnekhada community members are becoming increasingly frustrated by the delay in funding.

We respectfully urge this government to provide the funding for these important and highly needed projects. We look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

On behalf of the Board of Education,

Sincerely,



Ms. Judy Shirra  
Chair  
Board of Education  
School District No. 43 (Coquitlam)

c: Patricia Gartland, Superintendent  
Mark Ferrari, Secretary-Treasurer

**CHAIR:**

Judy Shirra

**VICE-CHAIR:**

Kerri Palmer Isaak

**TRUSTEES:**

Carol Cahoon

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Diane Sowden

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December 7, 2015

The Honourable Mike Bernier  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9045, STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

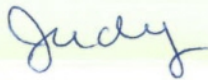
Dear Minister Bernier,

School District No. 43 (Coquitlam) Board of Education would like to thank you for your recent visit to the School District that allowed the Board to meet with you to discuss their topics of concern, tour two of our schools Eagle Mountain Middle and Heritage Woods Secondary and most excitingly attend the announcement of funding for an elementary school on Smiling Creek.

Trustees were thrilled to share this good news with the community. The collaborative effort of all partners saved taxpayer dollars and helped to expedite the new school development process. Burke Mountain is a growing community attracting many young families with children. We wish to join in thanking you for the support the Province has provided for our land development plans.

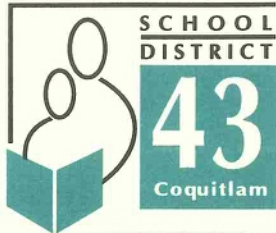
Also, Trustees extend an invitation for you to return to visit our school district to observe the diversity of programs that embrace the new curriculum such as iHub and CABE.

Yours truly,  
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 43 (COQUITLAM)



Judy Shirra  
Chair  
Board of Education

c: Board of Education  
Patricia Gartland, Superintendent  
Mark Ferrari, Secretary-Treasurer



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June 16, 2015

The Honourable Peter Fassbender  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9045, STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fassbender,

The community of Coquitlam joined together on the evening of June 16th, 2015 to celebrate the achievement of securing four sites for five new schools on Burke Mountain.

The Board of Education of School District 43 (Coquitlam), the City of Coquitlam, our Members of the Legislative Assembly, and Wesbild shared with the public the good news regarding the new school sites. The collaborative effort of all partners saved taxpayer dollars and helped to expedite the new school development process.

Burke Mountain is a growing community attracting many young families with children. We wish to join in thanking you for the support the Province has provided for our land development plans. We ask for your assistance in expediting the approval of new school construction on Burke Mountain.

Yours truly,

Judy Shirra, Chair  
Board of Education  
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 43 (COQUITLAM)

Richard Stewart, Mayor  
CITY OF COQUITLAM

Douglas Horne, MLA  
Coquitlam – Burke Mountain

Kevin Layden, President and CEO  
Wesbild Holdings Ltd.

c: Board of Education  
Patricia Gartland, Superintendent  
Mark Ferrari, Secretary-Treasurer



December 29, 2015

Ref: 185026/182628

Judy Shirra, Chair  
Board of Education  
School District No. 43 (Coquitlam)  
**Email: [jshirra@sd43.bc.ca](mailto:jshirra@sd43.bc.ca)**

Dear Ms. Shirra:

Thank you for your letters of June 16 and November 18, 2015, regarding the funding for some of the high priority projects within School District No. 43 (Coquitlam).

I want to commend the Board and your partners for your collaborative effort in advancing capital priorities within School District No. 43 (Coquitlam). The Ministry recognizes that the Board has been progressive and proactive in partnering with both the local municipality, as well as local land developer, to acquire lands for future school sites in northeastern Coquitlam. The Board is actively pursuing land dispositions as appropriate, which will allow for funding contributions towards future capital investment priorities in the District. The Ministry is also aware of the deserved reputation of District staff in delivering major capital projects at or below their approved budgets. These are resounding successes and examples of what can be accomplished when local stakeholders work together to achieve mutually beneficial goals.

As the northeast area of the City continues to experience elementary student enrolment growth, the Ministry appreciates the Council's view of the need to expand the Coquitlam School District's capacity in this growing community. It is because of this growth that the building of a new elementary school in the Smiling Creek area is the highest capital priority for the School District. I am very pleased to confirm, as you now know, that the Province has approved funding for this project, and the District can now move toward tender and construction of this new school.

I understand the School District has completed substantial planning, analysis, cost estimating and pre-engineering work to date to finalize a Project Development Report (PDR) for the proposed seismic replacement of Minnehada Middle School. Ministry staff have recently undertaken a

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due diligence review of the PDR to ensure it is consistent with provincial standards, costs and priorities, among other considerations. It is now being advanced for consideration against other provincial capital priorities, and anticipate seeking a funding decision this winter.

I want to thank you, again, for your continued commitment to advancing these capital projects in the best interests of student learning in School District No. 43 (Coquitlam). If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Renee Mounteney, Executive Director, Capital Delivery Branch by phone at (250) 208-8876 or by email at [Renee.Mounteney@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Renee.Mounteney@gov.bc.ca).

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernier", with a small dot at the end.

Mike Bernier  
Minister

pc: Renee Mounteney, Executive Director, Capital Delivery Branch