

## **Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)**

### **Vancouver DPAC Responds To \$27.26M Shortfall in the VSB budget**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Vancouver, BC – Vancouver DPAC is perplexed and concerned about the \$27.26M Shortfall in the VSB budget, which will be implemented in Sept. 2016.**

Education and Student Services Committee and Finance & Legal Committee (Plenary Committee III/V) presented a Preliminary Operating Budget Proposals for 2016/2017 School year and it was no surprise that there was a budget cut for public school funding for the City of Vancouver. A budget shortfall proposing \$27.26 million to be exact.

While the consistent underfunding of public education may come at no surprise, it is contradictory to the forecasted surplus by the newly elected government and ought to have an allocation from the said surplus towards the future of our nation and our province. The province has consistently underfunded public education, blaming the Vancouver School Board for managing funds poorly and this political ping pong between the VSB and the government of BC has one main loser— the students. The Vancouver DPAC is speaking up and against the extremely serious impact of proposed cuts on children and youth, particularly those most vulnerable.

Budget shortfalls come with cut and some of the cuts proposed are:

- Important programs and personnel which support Indigenous students, anti-racism, anti-homophobia, students with disabilities, new immigrants;
- Music programs;
- Distance learning;
- Substance Use Prevention Initiative (SACY);
- Social Service Workers (SSW);
- Fine and performing arts;
- Home instruction;
- Reduced field trips (as teachers and support staff replacements for staff accompanying students on field trips are also on the proposed chopping block; field trips assist students learning in many ways and this proposed cut will make a sharp impact on education)
- Gifted learners, mini schools and other district programs may be closed as a result of proposed cuts to support staff and planning blocks;
- Proposed cuts to adult education will deprive adult learners the vital opportunity to access public education.

Why are these things crucial to the public education system? Because these specialized programs are highly celebrated as they provide vulnerable students who may have been bullied elsewhere a safe learning space. Losing district programming of this nature is a serious loss to hundreds and hundreds of families in Vancouver. Demand for mini schools, for example, is extremely high. Most mini schools have at least twice the

applicants that they can accept. If mini schools are closed, some families may migrate to the private system. Mini schools help to retain enrolment in the public system.

Robust, sustainable public education is one of the most vital mechanisms for our society to build a meritocracy. Educated citizens create more democratic institutions. Better education helps graduates to get better jobs and helps build a stronger economy. A strong public education system promotes better population health. In short, well funded public education which focuses on the intellectual, social and emotional development of children is the great equalizer. The Vancouver DPAC believes that our tax dollars ought to be spent on supporting strong public education and calls for a complete reversal of this \$27.26 M cut to the students in the city.

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