

January 8, 2016

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

Dear Minister Bernier:

Thank you for your recent visit to the Richmond School District, and for the opportunity for the Board of Education to engage in a conversation with you about some of the strategic initiatives that the district is working on. As we discussed, one such initiative is the updating of our long range facility plan, where our focus has been on engaging our public in a dialogue about the need to close schools. While we continue to work towards the goal of closing schools with excess capacity, we also recognize that there are areas in Richmond that are undergoing significant growth and where the need for new schools is imminent.

The funding of infrastructure for schools has always been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. For a number of years, our capital plan has reflected the need for land acquisition in Richmond City Centre as the district's number one priority. We have had ongoing discussions at both the staff and political levels about the need to move forward with the land acquisition, given the dwindling number of sites that are available and the rapidly escalating prices for those properties. The project has yet to be supported by the Ministry, and our Board is extremely concerned that there will be no available sites unless the acquisition can be completed quickly. Our Board has therefore authorized staff to proceed with property negotiations while we await Ministry support for the project. We are therefore asking for your assistance in ensuring that this site acquisition project is fast tracked for funding approval. We recognize that the district will be asked to contribute toward the funding of the project, and have previously indicated that we are willing to contribute funds from our Local Capital Reserve for that purpose.

Thank you for your urgent assistance in this significant issue for the district.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Debbie Tablotney, Chairperson
On Behalf of the Board of Education (Richmond)

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