



British Columbia
School Trustees Association

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November 20, 2006

The Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Education
PO Box 9052
Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Bond,

At its meeting on October 20th, BCSTA's Board of Directors passed the following motion:

That BCSTA approach the Minister of Education to request that government proceed quickly with measures that will have the effect of protecting education programs and allowing school boards the flexibility to provide a wide selection of course offerings responsive to the needs of their local communities.

This motion arises from the concern that school boards have to ensure that the recent court decision respecting school fees does not erode the array of educational opportunities, nor the quality of programming currently available to students.

Reasonable people can disagree on whether any fees should be charged for programs or activities in the K-12 public schools or the degree to which there is sufficient funding within the system to absorb the loss of existing fees. The plain fact is that if legislation is not enacted and school boards have to comply with the decision as it stands then despite the best efforts of the Boards to re-allocate funding many programs will have to be modified (or worse, eliminated), resulting in substantial numbers of students receiving a lesser quality educational experience than has been available to now. If no legislation is enacted, it is possible that over time, depending on future funding levels, school boards might be able to re-build educational opportunities to current levels, but that will be no consolation to the students who currently benefit but will not do so in the interim. There are further concerns that if the enhanced experiences for students that communities have built with their school boards are driven out of the public education system, no provision for hardship will occur, resulting in further inequities.

BCSTA is developing some proposed changes which would address this dilemma whilst respecting the concept of free public education balanced with enhanced opportunities equitably accessible. We are keen to consult with your officials to explore such options.



Improving student achievement through community engagement

School boards will do their duty and comply with the law; however, when they view an interpretation of the law as being detrimental to the quality of education on offer then they also have a duty to advocate for legislative change to prevent an adverse outcome for students. The recent school fees judgment is such a case.

BCSTA respectfully requests your government to give serious consideration to enacting legislation to meet this challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penny Tees". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

Penny Tees
President

Cc: Deputy Minister Emery Dossall
School Board Chairs, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers