



BC CONFEDERATION OF PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

Suite 350, 5172 Kingsway, Burnaby, BC V5H 2E8
Tel: (604) 687-4433 Toll free: 1-866-529-4397 Fax: (604) 687-4488
E-mail: info@bccpac.bc.ca

December 18, 2008

The Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Education
Deputy Premier
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC

Re: District parent Advisory Councils requiring Parent Advisory Councils to pay a membership fee

Dear Minister Bond;

BCCPAC encourages and promotes a meaningful parent involvement at the school, district and provincial levels of B.C.'s public education system. From our conversations to date I know that you also believe in and support meaningful parent involvement.

I write to you today in response to an issue that a BCCPAC member PAC has drawn to my attention. On November 25th I attended a meeting of the Metchosin Hans Helgesen Parent Advisory Councils (MHHPAC) in School District #62 Sooke at the invitation of the PAC President Shannon Rempel. At the meeting I was informed of discussion that the members of MHHPAC held related to the use of PAC funds for parent education at its October 28th meeting. MHHPAC members had wanted to allocate money for that purpose. One of their members, a member of the Sooke Parent Education Advisory Council (SPEAC, Sooke's DPAC) and I regret to say also a BCCPAC Board member, informed them that it was the role of SPEAC to provide and allocate funds for parent education in the District. To complicate matters the executive of MHHPAC have been advised by both their own member and SPEAC's President that in order to be eligible for any available funds for parent education that MHHPAC is required to pay a membership fee in order to become members in "good standing."

Sections 8.3 and 8.4 of the School Act deal with the creation, membership and operation of District Parent Advisory Councils. These provisions appear to create a "right" of membership for any Parent Advisory Council within a district that chooses to exercise that right. The Act, however, is silent on the issue of a District Parent Advisory Council's ability to require payment of a fee as a condition of membership.

It is not clear what knowledge of this situation that the Sooke board of Education and/or its Superintendent have. Nor is it clear what position, if any, that they have taken regarding this issue.

I am not aware of any other similar situation in any other school district. This is a situation that concerns BCCPAC greatly and is not one that we would like to see duplicated in any other district.

Would you please provide an interpretation of the School Act's intent related to the apparent right of membership it implies for any Parent Advisory Council as well as advice on the appropriateness of a right being restricted by a District Parent Advisory Council in requiring payment of a membership fee.

For your reference I have attached a copy of SPEAC's Constitution and Bylaws, minutes of the October meeting of MHHPAC, Reports of the President and Representative to SPEAC presented at MHHPAC's November 25th meeting.

Your insight and advice on this matter is greatly appreciated.

For the future for ALL our children,

Ron Broda
President

Cc:

James Gorman, Deputy Minister of Education

Wendy Hobbs, Chair, Sooke Board of Education

Brian Fox, Superintendent, School District #62 Sooke

Georgina Tran, President, Sooke Parent Education Advisory Council

Shannon Rempel, President, Metchosin Hans Helegesen Parent Advisory Council