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Vancouver, British Columbia
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January 6, 2006

The Honourable Colin Hansen
MLA for Vancouver-Quilchena
5640 Dunbar Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6N 1W7

BY FAX

Dear Mr. Hansen:

Re: November 17, 2005 Meeting at Quilchena Elementary School

I would like to thank you, both personally and on behalf of our PAC, for initiating and attending the above-noted meeting with elementary school PAC representatives in Vancouver-Quilchena. We believe meetings such as these are an excellent opportunity for MLAs to gain a sense of opinion and issues in their constituencies.

We hope you left the meeting with a new sense of what parents are experiencing in their children's schools. From a PAC perspective, we found it enlightening to discover and perhaps reinforce that our concerns are not in isolation and that parents, in fact, share many of the same issues.

We do hope that you have been able to act upon our requests to take our concerns to the Minister of Education. To refresh your recollection of our discussions during the meeting, the following is a list of comments and questions we specifically asked you to take to the Minister:

- We hope that the education roundtable will indeed be a step in the right direction to repair damaged relationships among some education stakeholders.
- The views of parents in our corner of the city are not well-represented by BCCPAC, even though they are the parent voice given a place at the roundtable.
- Should providing suitable, safe playgrounds be a function of government funding since play is an integral part of learning, especially now that the Ministry's expanded mandate includes early childhood education with play as a main component?

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- Could the government's goal of completing school seismic upgrading be changed to accomplish the upgrades in 10 years versus 15 years?
- Could we transfer your term "the highest of the high", referring to seismic upgrading, to education and ask the Minister to make adequate funding of public education "the highest of the high" priority?
- If B.C. public school graduates do better than private school graduates in math and science in university, why is so much stock put on the Fraser Institute's annual report?
- The questions on the Ministry's Parent Satisfaction Survey are not the questions our parents want to be asked.
- Would you share the Southlands "Then and Now" document, and the summary of our PAC's spending over the last seven years (roughly \$20,000 per year to supplement a school budget of \$30,000) with the Minister?

Since our meeting, we do note that the Minister is honouring her commitment to keep the school strike savings in the education system. We certainly agree this is where the funds belong but have, frankly, scrambled to meet the requirement for consultation among parents and others within the confines of an extremely tight deadline.

This type of "parachute" funding is an example of a critical flaw that seems to have become routine for public education in British Columbia. A series of special funding "announcements" does not reflect our stated concern that it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive and implement long-term plans and goals without, on balance, long-term, stable funding. One-time grants and "saved" funds may ease certain deficiencies in classrooms but do little to eradicate the systemic problems leading to these deficiencies. After years of eroded services and resources, combined with higher costs, many children's needs are still unable to be met.

Please reiterate to the Minister that we need the Government and Ministry staff to allocate, on a long-term basis, adequate, sustainable and proactive funding because we know funding reactively does not serve our children well. While all of us are committed to investing in the future of British Columbia, we will not be

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making good decisions if we see public education, and our children, as short-term expenditures.

We look forward to seeing a willingness on the part of Government to make this investment, at which point we will happily assure concerned parents that their stated commitment to a quality public education system is well founded and their tax dollars are well spent.

We have a general PAC meeting scheduled for Tuesday, February 7, 2006. Our parents look forward to hearing your comments and any outcomes from our meeting at that time.

We extend our appreciation to you and to the Minister in anticipation of your thoughtful and forthright reply. As always, you are both welcome visitors at Southlands School at any time. I would be happy to make the appropriate arrangements to suit your schedules.

Yours very truly,

Allison Reshef, Chairperson
On Behalf of the Southlands Elementary
School Parent Advisory Council

cc: The Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Education

The Honourable Gordon Campbell
Premier