

COPACS

The Confederation of Parents' Advisory Councils of Saanich

May 2, 2023

FAO: Parents' Advisory Councils of School District 63 (Saanich)

Re: Impacts of unfunded inflationary costs on schools - call for advocacy from PACs and SD63 families

We (the Confederation of Parents' Advisory Councils of Saanich, COPACS) are writing to highlight a serious concern relating to the sustainable funding of our School District's budgets in forthcoming school years. These concerns are the result of inadequate Provincial funding, which does not fully fund rising costs driven by inflation (cost of living) and student growth. Unless this funding shortfall is fixed, our District will almost certainly experience cuts to programming that will affect the education of our children. We need your help to avoid this eventuality.

The Situation

As discussed at the School Board Budget public consultation meeting on April 13, 2023 ([link to Budget Consultation document](#)), the School District is unable to balance the 2023/24 budget solely using funds provided by the Province. School districts are facing unprecedented inflationary costs that are not being fully matched by adjustments to funding rates from the Province. School districts with large enough increases in enrolment can manage these inflationary pressures – the increase in funding they receive due to their rapid growth is sufficient to also offset the increase in inflationary pressures; however, districts with stable enrolment or modest enrolment growth (like SD63) cannot fully offset growing costs through grant revenues. For those districts, budgets can only be balanced through progressive reductions to programs over time, counterbalancing the progressive increase in inflationary pressures. This is a critical flaw in the funding model that, if not addressed, means many school districts will increasingly struggle to balance their budgets and offer stable programming.

The Resulting Problem

This shortfall leaves the School District facing \$1,683,000 in unfunded costs for next year. The School District proposes to balance these unfunded costs through the use of contingency reserves.

As the District themselves recognises, the use of contingency funds to offset unfunded costs is regrettable but necessary to avoid cuts to current programming (at least for the forthcoming school year). While preferable to reductions and program cuts, the problems with this approach are two-fold:

- 1) Contingency funds should not be used for balancing budgets. The purpose of contingency funds is as a 'safety net'. They are there for emergency situations, such as unexpected repairs, flood clean-up, etc.. By draining these reserves, the District is sacrificing the resilience afforded by these contingency funds until they can be replenished.
- 2) The approach is not sustainable: in using the contingency reserves now, the District will be unable to buffer any similar shortfalls in Provincial funding in future years. Further, unlike PACs, school districts are greatly limited in their range of available revenue

sources beyond Provincial funding, making it challenging to raise funds to offset unfunded costs. As a result, unless the Province adjusts their funding formula such that inflationary and growth costs are fully funded, our District will be forced to lower costs by implementing reductions and cuts to programming.

How You can Help

COPACS requests your support in the following ways:

- PACs: Vote (directly or via proxy) in support of our BCCPAC proposal 2023.10 (re: Implementation of [Funding Model Review](#) Recommendations) at the upcoming [BCCPAC AGM on May 6, 2023](#).
- PAC members: Contact your MLAs ([Adam Olsen](#) – MLA for Saanich North and The Islands; or [Lana Popham](#) – MLA For Saanich South) to advocate for a review of the funding model and to request increases to education funding to cover inflationary costs.

Thank you in advance for your help in addressing the increasingly concerning issue of underfunding for our school district.

Sincerely,

COPACS Executive

To: SD63 PACs

cc:

- Tim Dunford, Chair SD 63 Board of Trustees (tdunford@saanichschools.ca)
- Saanich Teachers' Association (lp63@bctf.ca)
- Dave Eberwein, School District 63 Superintendent (deberwein@saanichschools.ca)
- Jason Reid, School District 63 Secretary Treasurer (jreid@saanichschools.ca)
- Canadian Parents for French, Saanich Chapter (CPF.Saanich@gmail.com)
- Steve MacGregor and Aaron Buckham, Co-Presidents, Saanich Administrators Association (smacgregor@saanichschools.ca and abuckham@saanichschools.ca)
- Elizabeth May, MP Saanich / Gulf Islands (elizabeth.may@parl.gc.ca)
- Adam Olsen, MLA Saanich North and the Islands (adam.olsen.MLA@leg.bc.ca)
- Lana Popham, MLA Saanich South (lane.popham.MLA@leg.bc.ca)
- Rachna Singh, MLA Minister of Education and Child Care (ECC.Minister@gov.bc.ca)