

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING – MAY 22, 2012

Board of
School Trustees

Chair:

Larry Hayes
604-341-0197

Vice Chair:

Baljinder Narang

Ron Burton

Meiling Chia

Harman Pandher

James Wang

Gary Wong

Last week, the Board of Education from the Cowichan Valley School District voted 5-4 in favour of giving final reading to their 2012/13 budget showing a \$3.7 million deficit. Certainly our colleagues in Cowichan thought long and hard before deciding on this very dramatic action. The B.C. School Act requires all school districts to submit a balanced budget by June 30 ... or face dismissal by the Minister of Education for not doing so.

It almost goes without saying that many school Trustees throughout the Province, faced with an often overwhelming lack of funds and resources in their own Districts, have contemplated such an action and have felt the need to send as strong a message as possible to the Ministry of Education about the continued erosion of our public education system. For the Trustees in Cowichan, this may be the only action they see that will best emphasize this concern to the Government ... and we certainly applaud them for taking such a stand ... but is the Government removal of a publically elected Board, to be replaced by a Ministry appointed Administrator, the best way to get the message out to the public and Government ... and the best way to continue “fighting the fight” for a fully funded public education system?

Everyone’s situation is different ... and in Burnaby we’ve made the decision to fight and work within a very imperfect system to try and make it function as best as possible until the opportunity arises for the system to change. Through the work of our senior District staff, the past number of years has seen us have to make some very difficult choices that brings down our costs, but still meets our goals of providing an exceptional education to our students. Our belief is that continuing to have a democratically elected Board, listening and working with the public, our staff and labour groups, our parents and our students, is the most effective way to keep our District as healthy as possible, despite the many challenges that all are facing. I doubt that a Government appointed Administrator could or would do that.

Let’s all hope that the actions being taken in Cowichan do resonate in Victoria and result in a positive outcome for their students. Unfortunately, I’m not holding out much hope from a Government whose misplaced priorities and lack of substance continues to do little to actually help the students and public that they are supposed to be serving.

Larry Hayes
Board Chair / Trustee
Burnaby Board of Education SD41