

April 26, 2022

Good evening and welcome.

I would like to acknowledge that this week on April 28 marks the Day of Mourning: a day designated across Canada to remember and honour workers killed or injured in the workplace.

On behalf of the Burnaby Board of Education, we would like to reiterate and renew our commitment to protecting workers. We also invite you to join us in recognizing all workers who have lost their lives, suffered injury, or experienced a work-related tragedy with a moment of silence.

Thank you.

There is no doubt that two years in a pandemic has had a significant impact on our current budget and the upcoming 2022-23 budget. It has also highlighted how reliant we had become on International Education revenue to supplement the services and support Burnaby families and students have come to expect.

In our new reality, and with a recovering International Education program, maintaining the status quo budget would leave us with a shortfall within a few years. This year, trustees were faced with the difficult decision to consider budget adjustments to address this structural deficit yet again. We have applied the surplus to this year's balance as much as possible, recognizing that we must also be fiscally prudent for future years.

Trustees recognize that budget adjustments are more than a line on a paper – they have the potential to directly affect students and their families, as well as school-based and district staff including educators, administrators, and support staff.

I would like to thank our partner groups – BTA, CUPE, BPVPA, DSAC and DPAC – for providing direct input on the potential budget adjustments, and to the many students, staff, and community members who shared their concerns with us. I would also like to thank the parent representatives who attended the public and DPAC budget meetings in order to provide input within the short one-week timeframe. We will work with DPAC to revise the schedule for next year to allow more time.

We appreciate all the input we have received. Many of the concerns we heard from you aligned with our own. What has guided the board through our discussions are the priorities and values outlined in our strategic plan that put students at the centre and reflect the power of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion.

In making decisions as a board, we have strived to have the least possible impact on students, staff, and families. And we continue to approach decisions with an equity lens to support vulnerable students and students with disabilities and diverse abilities.

Therefore, the board has directed staff to present proposals tonight that reflect these priorities including retaining daytime custodial services in elementary schools, retaining elementary band programs, retaining SOGI support teachers as part of the Staff Development Team, and maintaining Reading Recovery at our current staffing levels.

We recognize that we must address the grim reality of our structural deficit. We are currently undergoing a Programs of Choice review to explore changes in service delivery models rather than contemplating budget driven cuts. And we believe this model will help us refresh programs and services to better support students and their families for other areas as well.

As I reflect on our budget consultations, what has stood out to me is that when we are faced with problems that are complex, we were able to find nuanced solutions and a path forward by collaborating together – all the while keeping students at the center of our decisions.

Jen Mezei, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education