

October 29, 2024

Good evening and welcome.

This is my final regular public meeting chairing this board and I reflect on our commitment to effective leadership. While some boards of education opt for a chair to serve a full four-year term or longer, Burnaby has upheld a tradition of rotating leadership to build capacity within individual trustees and the Board as a whole. And at November's meeting we will be electing a new chair to serve the next two years of this term.

Before stepping into the role of chair, I served as vice-chair, gaining valuable insights from a distance. Our board strongly believes in building capacity, which is increasingly vital in today's political landscape.

A recent provincial election has highlighted the fragility of our public education system. This province was perilously close to a government indifferent to the needs of public education.

The BC Conservative Party unveiled an education platform that revealed a fundamental misunderstanding of the requirements of public schools and their students. If they had formed government, their proposed policies threatened to roll back essential support for Burnaby students, families, and caregivers.

Their agenda threatened to divert funding from public schools to benefit elite private institutions. They wanted to eliminate SOGI 123 - a resource proven to combat violence and discrimination. They even suggested overcrowding classrooms further and creating a politically appointed committee to evaluate school materials for "neutrality."

Their platform lacked any concrete solutions to the pressing challenges facing public education. A system that was underfunded for almost 20 years. Underfunded by a government that included the BC Conservative Party leader.

What is needed in public education is dialogue not ideology.

Three years ago, we initiated dialogue with the city council and our Burnaby MLAs, establishing biannual meetings to advocate for and address emerging issues within our public school system. This consultative model has garnered strong support from both the Mayor and Council and our MLAs.

As governors of the Burnaby School District, it is our duty to ensure an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students.

I look forward to supporting the next chair and continuing our collective efforts to benefit Burnaby's students and families.

Bill Brassington, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education