

**March 11, 2025**

Good evening and welcome.

As you may have heard in recent weeks, Glacier Media announced the forthcoming closure of three of its local media outlets: the *New Westminster Record*, the *Tri-City News* and the *Burnaby Now*. This evening I want to acknowledge the profound loss of the *Burnaby Now* – not just for our schools, but for the entire Burnaby community. Local news is the backbone of a thriving, engaged society, and *Burnaby Now* has played a critical role in shaping our collective understanding of the issues, triumphs, and challenges that define our city. Its absence leaves a void that will be difficult, if not impossible, to fill.

For many years, *Burnaby Now* reporter Cornelia Naylor has been a fixture in Burnaby Schools, reporting with tenacity, curiosity, and an unwavering commitment to truth. Her work has illuminated the stories that matter most – those of students, educators and school district staff, and our community. She has held the School District and the Board accountable, asking tough but fair questions on budget decisions, funding announcements, and policy changes. Her reporting has ensured that the public remained informed and engaged in the governance of our schools.

While Cornelia has challenged us, she has also been one of our greatest allies. She has never failed to highlight the good in Burnaby Schools – the accomplishments of students, the dedication of staff, and the pride we take in our school community. Her ability to balance accountability with appreciation is a testament to her journalistic integrity and deep understanding of the role schools play in shaping young lives. Perhaps her connection to education has always been inevitable – after all, before becoming a journalist, Cornelia was an English teacher. Her gift for storytelling and critical analysis, once directed toward inspiring students in the classroom, has for years inspired an entire community through her reporting.

I remember my first experience being interviewed by Cornelia. It was in 2016 when I was first elected DPAC Chair. I was equal parts excited and scared to meet with Cornelia. I wanted to share my plans for my new role and express my views on the importance of parent advocacy, but I was also keenly aware that Cornelia was a ‘no-holds-barred’ reporter who would ask tough questions and hold me accountable. That interview set the tone for what I would come to appreciate about Cornelia – her fairness, her deep knowledge of the education system, and her ability to get to the heart of an issue. She had a way of ensuring that stories were told with both accuracy and depth and, over the years, I have come to value her presence in Burnaby Schools immensely, especially in the moments when she pushed us to be better.

As we reflect on the loss of *Burnaby Now*, we must also consider what this means for the future of local journalism. A strong, independent press is vital to a healthy democracy. Without it, we risk losing the shared narratives that bring us together. As New Westminster Mayor Patrick Johnstone so powerfully wrote in a recent social media post, "*I am also terrified of the impact this has on all of us, because I don't*

*know what a community is when it can no longer tell its stories. When there is no 'record' of our day-to-day, never mind our history."*

The closure of *Burnaby Now* is part of a troubling trend in Canada, where more than 340 communities have lost their local news providers since 2008. This erosion of local journalism has far-reaching consequences. Without dedicated local reporters, communities become more polarized, less trusting of one another, and disconnected from the institutions that serve them. Schools, courts, and city councils all require scrutiny to function effectively and without a robust local press, that accountability is weakened.

For the Burnaby School District, this loss is particularly significant. Our partnership with *Burnaby Now* has helped bring the stories of our schools, staff, and students to the broader community. From celebrating student achievements to shining a light on important education issues, *Burnaby Now* has been instrumental in ensuring that public education in Burnaby remains a shared priority. Without this platform, we face the challenge of how to continue sharing these vital stories in a way that maintains the same level of reach, depth, and community engagement.

Local news connects people through everyday moments, from school events to important civic discussions, while also serving as a watchdog for democracy. Without it, the vacuum is filled by national news, which is often more divisive, and by social media, where misinformation spreads unchecked. The role of local news is not just about storytelling; it is about ensuring that people remain engaged, informed, and empowered in the decisions that affect their lives.

As a Board, we recognize the importance of informed, engaged residents, and we urge our community to seek ways to support and sustain local storytelling. The stories of Burnaby Schools – and our city – deserve to be told, now and always.

I'd like to conclude this Chair report with a message for Cornelia: Cornelia, your impact on Burnaby Schools and the broader community cannot be overstated. You have supported the work of the District and the Board in countless ways – by holding us accountable, amplifying the voices of students and families, and ensuring that education remains central to community conversations. Thank you for your dedication, integrity, and for the care you've shown in sharing our stories with honesty and heart. While this chapter may be closing, your impact will endure. I wish you all the best in your next adventure and hope you will always remain connected to Burnaby Schools.

Thank you.

**Kristin Schnider, Chair  
Burnaby Board of Education**