

April 21, 2021

Rhonda Kershaw, Chairperson
Board of Education
School District No. 73
1383 Ninth Avenue
Kamloops, BC. V2C 3X7

Re: Board of Education Budget Process (2021) – KTTA Stakeholder Response

Dear Chairperson Kershaw,

Thank you for inviting the Kamloops Thompson Teachers' Association to provide input regarding the Board of Education budget for the 2021/2022 school year. After reviewing the budget and the April 8, 2021 budget presentation, the Table Officers of the Kamloops Thompson Teachers' Association provide the following response:

The current year has been unprecedented in many ways and it is reasonable to anticipate that the COVID-19 pandemic will have continued impact on school operations. The Association appreciates the need for a conservative budget given the many uncertainties that remain for the upcoming school year. In the face of such a changeable landscape, the KTTA has significant concerns about potential cuts to teaching positions and programs should funding be reduced due to students remaining in Distributed Learning or continuing with homeschooling in September.

With the April 20th release of the Provincial budget subsequent to the District's budget presentation, some of the Association's concerns about funding have been alleviated. It appears that funding to districts will address labour settlement obligations, which should allow current levels of service to be maintained. The outstanding question is whether the announced operational funding will be sufficient to fully address the budget shortfall that the District planned to address with surplus funds.

The Association remains concerned that provincial funding to districts has not been provided specifically for pandemic-related expenses that may continue into the new school year, such as personal protective equipment, ventilation, enhanced cleaning and facilities improvements. We encourage the Board of Trustees to advocate strongly for this funding, so that Districts can be prepared and have the financial flexibility to readily respond to whatever the situation may be in September without having to resort to cuts to staffing, resource or programming or using surplus funds. The Association notes the following:



- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**
The District should be prepared for possibilities such as limited vaccine access prior to September, or that variants of concern may not respond to current vaccines and extra protective measures will be required into the next school year. The Association strongly encourages funding be allocated for PPE, hand sanitizer, plexiglass/physical barriers and other layers of protection in anticipation of a prolonged pandemic period.
- **Air Quality/HVAC**
The District switched to higher quality, more expensive MERV filters this year in response to air quality and ventilation concerns. The Association encourages the continued use of these filters and further improvements to ventilation in all schools through upgraded HVAC systems, which is important to the overall and ongoing health and safety in schools.
- **Cleaning**
Years of reduced provincial funding and failure to meet inflationary costs have impacted cleaning in schools generally. The “enhanced” cleaning protocols necessitated by COVID-19 have brought cleanliness in schools back to where it should be always. The Association is encouraged that the budget provides for the continuation of full-time day custodians, whose work is important to health and safety in schools beyond the current pandemic.
- **Facilities Improvements**
The pandemic has raised concerns in some schools, such as Beattie Elementary and “dry” portables, where lack of handwashing amenities makes hand hygiene challenging and time consuming. The Association encourages the District to allocate funds to ensure these facilities improvements are addressed and reduce the timeframe for completion.

The Association also raises the following items as funding priorities in the 2021-2022 school year:

- **Ventilation in Shop Classes**
Opportunity for student learning and engagement is being wasted with plasma cutters sitting idle due to lack of adequate ventilation to operate the machinery. Trades skills are important to many students, and we ask that the District address this longstanding concern. Ventilation system upgrades should be included in the budget so that this equipment can be safely used and students can gain important practical training in their high school industrial shop classes.
- **Portables**
For the past two years, two classes have been uncomfortably housed in one portable at Sun Peaks Elementary. Private meeting space and room for itinerant teachers and

associated professionals to work with students is desperately needed. The need for classroom and multipurpose/office space at Sun Peaks should be budgeted for.

- **Equity Audit**

The KTTA encourages the District to allot spending for an equity audit, to the recruitment and retention of teachers who self-identify as aboriginal, to the broader goals of Truth and Reconciliation and to social justice. As we expressed last year, the budget should reflect the reality that we live and work in a society where all things are not equal. In this context, we see an obligation for the District to seek out and address systemic inequity and prioritize the necessary funds to do this critical work.

- **Capital Funding**

Lack of provincial capital funding clearly continues to impact the District's budget. The Association asserts that the costs presented at the Special Public Board Meeting of April 19th for portables and/or reopening of schools would be better allocated to services, support and programming for students. The Province should be readily addressing the many capital improvement needs in our district and the KTTA encourages the Board to increase its pressure and advocacy in this area.

We thank you in advance for considering our feedback and insights to the 2021/2022 budget and commit to doing all that we can to advocate for a fully funded public education system and to support the collective work undertaken in the District for safe, healthy and happy working and learning environments. We remain strong in our belief that public education is not a business and that support for students must be the priority.

The KTTA invites discussion relating to our feedback. Please contact our Table Officers, Laurel Macpherson (President) or Darcy Martin (1st Vice President) at any time.

Sincerely,



Laurel Macpherson
KTTA President



Darcy Martin
KTTA 1st Vice President

cc Dr. Terry Sullivan, Superintendent
Mr. Kelvin Stretch, Secretary-Treasurer
Members of the KTTA Executive Committee

