



FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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February 25, 2021

Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Education
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To the Honourable Jennifer Whiteside:

On February 24, 2020, the Board of Education of Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools passed the following motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) write to the Minister of Education requesting that the Pay Equity Supplement be rolled into the Operating Grant Block for the 2021-22 school year, and distributed equally, and that the block is increased so that Districts currently receiving a disproportionately higher amount of pay equity funds are not negatively impacted.

As you are likely aware, the Ministry of Education provides a pay equity grant to Districts. The principle of pay equity is defined as equal pay for work of equal value. In the education system, there was not pay equity between typically male dominated positions (custodial, trades etc.) and female dominated positions (Educational Assistants, Secretarial etc.) Pay equity was intended to remedy this. Essentially, the female dominated positions were given lifts over time to bring them to the equivalent of the similar type responsibility of male dominated positions. In other words, the lack of pay equity is discriminatory. As we understand the program began in the period 1998-2003. At that time Districts provided the Ministry a cost estimate to achieve pay equity and the government funded this amount. This amount has remained static.

In the late 90s when this became a provincial issue Districts across the province were at various stages of pay equity. Based purely on the current grants some Districts were far from providing pay equity. However, other Districts, including Nanaimo-Ladysmith, had moved closer or completed the move to pay equity prior to 1998. This meant that the grants to Districts that had previously worked towards pay equity were less, and in the case of Nanaimo-Ladysmith, inconsequential. The amount has not changed despite changes to enrollment (and presumably the amount of impacted staff).

We note that most grants issued by the Ministry of Education are provided on an equitable basis (e.g. based on FTE) or alternatively based on specific issues (e.g. geography, teacher salary average etc.) While we note that the CEF allocation is not necessarily equitable, it is based on local collective agreement language. Pay equity, like FTE, should largely be based on a District's overall FTE. The irony is that the pay equity supplement is not equitable.

It is difficult to understate the impact of this inequity. For instance, our District receives \$160,000 for the grant. This is equivalent to .0012% of out what we receive in our operating grant. In some Districts their pay equity total is over 2% of what they receive in their operating grant. If our district had been provided with a similar amount as other Districts (e.g. 2%) then we would receive over \$2.6 million dollars.

The explanation, as we understand it, is that Nanaimo-Ladysmith was progressive in addressing pay equity and the government of the time would not fund what the District had done prior to 1998. In fact, in 1992 the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District provided EAs a 21% increase, Secretary 2s a 10% increase and Secretary 3s a 17% increase. This means that we were at pay equity six or more years earlier than many Districts in the province. Moreover, because of the inequitable grant issued in late 90s and continued to today (over 20 years and counting), the students of Nanaimo-Ladysmith have missed out on tens of millions of dollars of funding.

Importantly, typically specific funding amounts end up being rolled up into the block. If pay equity were rolled into the block in the early 2000s rather than sitting at specific amounts, the total value would have gone up when the block is increased. While we acknowledge that rolling the amount into the block could have a negative immediate impact on some Districts, it would have an equitable impact on many District and in the long-term benefit everyone.

We note that the funding decision pre-dates anyone currently at the Ministry and this letter is not intended to place blame. However, it is time for the inequity to be rectified. Ultimately, our District has been inequitably impacted due to its progressive actions with respect to a human rights issue. This was recognized by the Independent Panel for the Funding Model Review which recommended adding this special grant to the operating block.

On this basis, we are asking the Ministry of Education to take action on this issue without negatively impacting other Districts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C McKay".

Charlene McKay
Board Chair

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