



October 16, 2017

via email

Right Hon. Bob D'Eith, Chair
Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

RE: Questions arising from [PAN Presentation to Committee](#), October 6, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity for the Parent Advocacy Network for Public Education (PAN) to present our concerns regarding funding priorities for Budget 2018/19.

As requested, this is our formal response to the two questions asked regarding priorities for the funding formula review and the costs associated with restoring the depletion within our current public education system.

R. Leonard: I was hoping that you could maybe comment on your perspective in terms of the review that's coming up on the funding formula for students so that we can make sure to capture the essence of what you want to see in education.

With respect to the funding formula review, we echo the submission calls of the [British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils](#) (BCCPAC) and [Families Against Cuts to Education](#) (FACE) to develop a model for adequate, stable and predictable funding that reflects the true cost of delivering educational services, which strives to meet the learning needs of all children and is responsive to the unique demographic, geographic and infrastructural challenges faced by diverse school districts.

M. Dean: Because I think the values base is very aligned with the new government, I'm interested to know whether you've actually broken that down into some costings.

Addressing the cumulative depletion of human and material resources within schools and restoring the breadth and quality of educational opportunities for all children will require extensive consultation with school boards and reinvestment through additional targeted and ongoing funding. It is the responsibility of the Minister of Education and the government to determine this costing, as per the [School Act](#). Education advocates and parents believe that true costing must also seek to reverse the uneven delivery of educational services between schools that has resulted from private subsidization of public education in the face of chronic underfunding. We offer the following recommendations regarding arts education as a case example, based on our research and out of respect for the genuine interest in determining actual costs.

The restoration of equitable access to arts education will require a strategic and multi-faceted approach for rebuilding capacity. Research shows that quality education in the arts is dependent on access to specialist teachers and designated space. Both have been decimated over the last 25 years as a result of funding cutbacks; including the incorporation of arts specialists into prep time, the loss of arts education training at the university level and the loss of district level teacher supports. In Vancouver for example, this has resulted in an 85% loss of elementary music specialists and a 98% loss of art specialists over the



last 25 years. Now, only 1/3 of elementary schools in Vancouver have a full-time music teachers, with more than 1/3 receiving no music instruction at all. Currently, only 2 of the 90 elementary schools in Vancouver have a specialist K-7 art teacher. The loss of foundational arts instruction has further impacted the breadth and quality of secondary level arts instruction. At a minimum, restoring quality arts education as an essential component of a comprehensive public school education would require:

- A comprehensive and qualitative survey on the availability and capacity for the delivery of arts education across the province as a vital first step. The province of Manitoba has conducted such a [survey](#) that could serve as a model – [see Appendix C](#). On the basis of this, targeted and protected funding for the arts must be allocated to allow each school district flexibility in combining a variety of strategies to provide the training, specialists and material resources needed for quality instruction in the arts for all students.
- Secondly, it is crucial to review the [Ministry Area Standards](#) document introduced in 2004 that determines the allocated square footage for new and retrofitted school builds and has resulted in schools that are 30% smaller for equivalent populations and does not include art, music or performance space. If this is not addressed, the arts will be systematically and structurally eliminated as schools are built and replaced. This is all the more pressing given the government’s commitment to building and fast tracking new schools needed within the Seismic Program.

We recognize that a genuine commitment to rebuilding a strong and equitable public education system is one that will require a clarity of vision, determination and significant financial investment over time. We and other education advocates will continue to work to provide research and analysis on the impact of funding and policy decisions to this end. PAN is hopeful that this new government will use this opportunity to truly invest in public education as the foundation of a “healthy democratic and pluralistic society, as well as a prosperous and sustainable economy.”

With respect,

Maggie Milne Martens and Heather Legal
On behalf of the PAN Steering Committee