



February 14, 2017

## **BC Government Gets a Failing Grade in its Provision for Public Education**

### *Parent Advocacy Groups Demand Increased Investment to Restore Public Education*

**VANCOUVER**—Today, as the new legislative session begins and the Speech from the Throne will extoll the accomplishments of government, the Parent Advocacy Network for Public Education (PAN) is demanding increased investment in public education. The provision of a high-quality K-12 public education for all children in BC is the government’s legal obligation and duty as representatives of the citizens of British Columbia—an obligation the government has failed to satisfy.

Structural underfunding, the persistent erosion of the breadth and quality of educational programs, and the continual reduction of resources within the public system have cumulatively created unacceptable levels of inequality and discrimination that violate the democratic purpose of the education system. This has dire implications for the future health, stability, and economic prosperity of our province as they are dependent on the strength of our public education system, as the foundation of our common “wealth”.

In cooperation with parent and advocacy groups—Chilliwack DPAC, Comox Valley Families for Public Education, Families Against Cuts to Education, Public Education Network Society, Richmond Schools Stand United, Seismic Safety for BC Schools Committee, South East Kootenay DPAC, Surrey Students Now—PAN demands that the provincial government increase K-12 public education annual operational funding by 20% to redress all of the current deficiencies and fully prioritize and revitalize our education system to ensure an equitable quality education for all BC children.

“All of us, parents, grandparents, and citizens share a collective responsibility to ensure that the democratic values of equality, tolerance, and social justice are passed on to the children who will shape our future through a strong public education system. We demand that government fulfill its legal responsibility to provide adequate, sustainable and predictable funding to public education to ensure this end,” said Maggie Milne Martens, parent and PAN co-founder.

“Funding pressures created by the provincial government are dismantling the democratic foundations of public education, by undermining equity and increasing pressure to compensate through fundraising and outsourcing privately what has been stripped away from public system,” added Martens.

The current service plan of \$4.6 billion in operational grants for public education for 2016/17 is insufficient to provide all children in BC equal access to educational opportunities across the entire curriculum and in accordance with their learning needs to allow them to reach their full potential as individuals and as citizens of our society.

“As parents are compelled to raise funds to equip schools with basic educational necessities—classroom supplies, library books, digital technologies, sports equipment, musical instruments, art supplies, and even items like desks and chairs, blackout curtains, and carpets—it is self-evident that the government is not providing enough funding for even the basic resources necessary to operate schools,” said Andrea Sinclair, parent and co-founder of PAN.

This grave situation has repeatedly been brought to the attention of the government by its own all-party Select Standing Committee for Finance and Government Services (2014/15, 2015/16, and 2016/17) which affirmed that public education is not adequately supported by public funds. Most recently the unequivocal ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada (November 2016) has confirmed that the stripping of class size and composition language from the teachers' collective agreement was unlawful—an action that has had innumerable detrimental impacts on educational opportunities for children over the past 15 years.

“The provincial government has neither invested in the priorities of its citizens nor invested in school infrastructure to keep communities strong and children safe. Current provincial funding for K-12 public education fails to meet the government’s obligation to all our children,” added Sinclair.

The government of British Columbia has claimed that our province “has the strongest and fastest growing economy in Canada.” In a province of prosperity with a \$2-billion-plus budget surplus, there is no impediment for government to satisfy its mandate to provide quality education, without discrimination, to all learners as outlined in the BC School Act, the BC Statement of Education Policy Order and in the revised BC curriculum.

Investing in the provision of a high-quality education for all children in this province is the government’s legal obligation and duty; anything less is a betrayal of public trust.

See Provincial Letter and Declaration in Defence of Public Education, attached.

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### **About the Parent Advocacy Network**

The Parent Advocacy Network for Public Education (PAN), is a non-partisan grassroots collective of parents and community members who share a commitment to public education. We are working to address the chronic underfunding and devaluing of public education in Vancouver and across British Columbia by creating a strong network of parents who support one another in advocacy.

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### **Provincial Letter Signatories**

[Parent Advocacy Network for Public Education](#)

[Chilliwack District Parent Advisory Council](#)

[Comox Valley Families for Public Education](#)

[Families Against Cuts to Education](#)

[Public Education Network Society](#)

[Richmond Schools Stand United](#)

[Seismic Safety for BC Schools Committee](#)

[South East Kootenay District Parent Advisory Council](#)

[Surrey Students Now](#)