



April 26, 2016

CONCERNED PARENTS “WEAR RED” TO PROTEST PROPOSED CUTS TO VSB BUDGET

Cuts to targeted services and arts programming to disproportionately impact vulnerable and special needs students.

VANCOUVER (April 26, 2016) — At last night’s final Vancouver School Board (VSB) Public Budget Consultation session, hundreds of concerned parents from all over Vancouver wore red to mark the fact that while the BC budget may be in the black, public education is in the red.

Organized by the Parent Advocacy Network for Public Education (PAN), the protest was intended to draw attention to the fact that ALL children, regardless of their economic background, race, or ability, have the right to a quality education that meets their learning needs, and which gives them the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Allowing them to do so is key to the health and benefit of our whole society, and is the goal of public education as set forth in the BC School Act.

“Over the last decade, parents in Vancouver have seen a relentless depletion of services within our schools, resulting in the loss of teachers, counselors, specialists, learning supports, librarians, arts programs, and basic educational resources” said Andrea Sinclair, co-founder and spokesperson for PAN, “And after all this, we are now being asked to absorb a further \$24 million in cuts (in addition to the forced closure of up to 21 schools), all in the name of greater efficiency.”

As part of the consultation process, many parents and service providers delivered presentations to the VSB Trustees and senior management staff outlining the impacts of the proposed cuts. During its own presentation, PAN urged the Trustees to reject the budget as contrary to the interests of the children of Vancouver and to demand from the government the immediate restoration of adequate and sustainable funding for public education.

“The VSB budget is a direct result of chronic underfunding by the provincial government — a government that has repeatedly disregarded the recommendations of its own Standing Committee on Finance, and by extension the priorities of British Columbians,” said Maggie Milne Martens, parent and PAN co-founder.

At least 25 districts across the province are facing shortfalls this year, totaling over \$70 million, despite previous years of austerity cuts. Every year, structural under-funding forces students, schools and communities across BC to compete for increasingly scarce dollars. It forces school boards to make impossible choices over which vital program to save or to cut, and it forces

PACs to fundraise inordinate amounts of money to compensate for these losses, creating divisiveness and inequality between schools.

“Governments at all levels need to understand that these cuts will have very real, detrimental, and permanent impacts on children and families,” concluded Sinclair. “When balancing a budget requires the removal of foundational supports for some of our most vulnerable students, we know we are witnessing the dissolution of our public education system and everything that it stands for. The time has come to say enough.” [#BCEDINRED](#)

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Supporting Resources

#BCEDINRED - <http://www.panvancouver.ca/bcedinred.html>

 <http://www.panvancouver.ca>

 [PAN Vancouver@PAN Vancouver](https://twitter.com/PAN_Vancouver)

 www.facebook.com/PANVancouver

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About the Parent Advocacy Network

The Parent Advocacy Network for Public Education (PAN), formed in 2015, is a grassroots collective of parents from over 55 schools (and growing) across Vancouver who share a commitment to public education. Our mission is to connect parents across the district to support one another in advocacy. The network enables us to share information, experiences and stand together in protecting public education. In this way we see ourselves as supporting and complementing existing groups such as FACE, PENS, and PPEN in the work they are doing.

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