



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

November 3rd, 2017

Hon. Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
1020 Hillside Ave
Victoria, BC V8T 2A3

Dear Hon. Minister Fleming:

RE: Invitation to Visit and Tour School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay

The SD5 Board of Education wishes to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister of Education and would like to invite you to visit our District, as per our October 10th public Board meeting motion:

That the Board extend an invitation to the Minister of Education, Honorable Rob Fleming, to visit and tour School District 5, with particular focus on Mount Baker Secondary School (MBSS), and the needs of the Community of Fernie.

As you must be aware, having been copied on all letters our Board has written to government over the past nine years, our Board has expended considerable and concerted effort to secure the replacement of MBSS including (but not limited to) public consultations, facility reports and securing partnerships.

MBSS, located in Cranbrook, is almost 70 years old and is the largest school in the East *and* West Kootenay. There is extensive use of the school by the community including use of the Key City Theatre (KCT). The KCT shares plumbing, HVAC etc. with the school and provides considerable opportunity to our students.

Studies and audits of the past 20 years identify major deficiencies in structure, fabric, operation, function, code, compliance and accessibility of the school. Exterior deficiencies include a lack of air/vapour barriers and adequate insulation; single glazed and wood framed windows and ineffective solar control devices. These inefficiencies are costly to the District in both utility costs and carbon offsets.

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Interior concerns include uneven flooring, vinyl asbestos tile, asbestos board and low, damaged ceiling areas. Clean up has taken place due to mercury contamination, and “temporary” repairs to roof trusses, due to snow load, continue to require attention.

Isabella Dicken Elementary School (IDES) is the only elementary school that remains open in Fernie. It houses grades kindergarten to six. IDES is over 50 years old, operates 23 classrooms (five of which are kindergarten this year) and has required six portable classrooms to accommodate the community’s ever-increasing enrolment needs. In addition to these classrooms, the school supports two student services teachers and one counselor, a music and a band program. It houses a library and one rather under-sized activity room (that is utilized as the school gymnasium).

The City of Fernie grew by eighteen percent (18%) last year and boasts the *highest growth rate of all cities in Canada.*

The parents and community of Fernie are so concerned about the City’s growth that the Mayor and Council met not just with our Board of Education; in March 2017, City representatives met with the Ministry of Education to discuss the need for expansion of IDES.

Our Board understands that the inaction of the previous government to adequately address seismic upgrades and overcrowding issues in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island during their tenure places considerable demand on your government to redress these issues.

While still inadequate, the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island have received a number of school replacements and seismic upgrades while government has remained mostly indifferent to the needs of districts in the rest of the province. This practice has been unfair to students, taxpayers and the cash-strapped Districts who are forced to allocate vital education dollars on building upkeep and carbon taxes simply because their buildings are old, inefficient and in need of replacement.

We are hopeful that the current government will be considerate of all capital replacement and upgrade needs equally across the province.

Given the geographic size, and the diversity of our District, we would strongly recommend that you plan an overnight stay when you plan your visit to SD5. We look forward to touring you around our District to share the amazing educational opportunities our dedicated teachers, support staff and administrators continue to

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provide for our students, despite the restrictions that limited and inadequate building infrastructure poses to twenty-first century education and the implementation of the province's newly revised curriculum.

Sincerely,



Frank Lento, Board Chair,
SD5

Cc*: John Horgan, Premier, BC New Democratic Party
Andrew Weaver, Leader, Green Party
Mike De Jong, House Leader, Liberal Party
Tom Shypitka, MLA Kootenay East BC
Mary Polak and Dan Davies, Education Critics, BC Liberal Party
Gordon Swan, President, BCSTA
BCSTA for distribution to member Boards of Education
Vancouver School Board
Glen Hansman, President BC Teachers' Federation
Jen Mezei, President, BCCPAC
Shelley Balfour & Chris Kielpinski, CFTA Co-Chairs
Debbie Therrien, DPAC Chair
Aaron Thorn, President, SD5 Administrators' Association
Charley Beresford, Columbia Institute
Catherine Shaw, FACE BC Vancouver
Summit 107 Radio
Drive 102.9/B104 Radio
Black Press
Black Rock News
Cranbrook Daily Townsman
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