



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

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

September 26th, 2018

School District 5 Highlights Need For School Replacements in Fernie and Cranbrook

On September 25th, 2018, School District 5 (SD5) Southeast Kootenay presented a Brief to the BC Legislative Assembly's Select Standing Committee on Finances and Government Services* (SSCFGS).

The all-party Committee is tasked each year with compiling a report on public feedback for the next provincial budget (2019) and is empowered to make budget recommendations in accordance with the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act. Each year, the committee hosts public consultations in a number of communities province-wide, including Cranbrook.

Trustee Chris Johns gave the presentation on behalf of SD5, with Trustees Trina Ayling, Gail Brown, Superintendent Lynn Hauptman, and Larry Dureski, acting co-president of the Cranbrook Fernie Teachers' Association also in attendance.

In the past, the SD5 presentation to the Committee has typically included a review of SD5's previous submissions to the SSCFGS, budget-related SD5 correspondence of the past year and confirmation of the Board's unanimous agreement with recommendations made by the SSCFGS regarding K -12 education, as outlined in the Committee's reports going back to 2014.

This year however, Trustee Johns was solidly focused on the pressing need for school replacement outside the lower mainland, with specific focus on Isabelle Dicken Elementary School (IDES) in Fernie, and Mount Baker Secondary School (MBSS) in Cranbrook.

Referring to a letter sent to Education Minister Hon. Rob Fleming in March 2018, Johns pointed to the fact that IDES, built over fifty (50) years ago, is the only elementary school that remains open in Fernie.

"It houses grades kindergarten to six, consists of twenty-three (23) small classrooms, a library and one rather under-sized activity room, currently being utilized as the school gymnasium."

Johns then proceeded to inform the Committee that, since the letter of March, the number of portable classrooms at IDES has increased from six (6), as stated in the letter, to seven (7), with an eighth (8th) portable arriving in November, in order to accommodate the fast-growing community.

Despite the emergent need for school replacement in Fernie, the Board remains steadfast in its decade-long effort to replace MBSS in Cranbrook.

While referring the Committee to a June 2018 letter from the Board to Hon. Minister Fleming requesting a Capital Grant of \$382,250 (the estimated cost required for immediate repairs of the faulty trusses in the MBSS music and drama rooms), Johns reaffirmed the District's commitment to ongoing advocacy for a *full school replacement* saying, "these repairs must be completed for the safety of our students".

In closing, Johns, acknowledged the deferred need for school replacements and seismic upgrades on the Island and in the lower mainland but pointed out the inequity to taxpayers and the cash-strapped Districts in the rest of the province who continue to be forced to allocate vital education dollars on building upkeep due to old, inefficient buildings in need of replacement.

To view the Board's presentation to the SSCFGS, any of the correspondence related to the SSCFGS or replacement efforts for MBSS as an NLC, visit <http://www.sd5.bc.ca/Board/advocacy/>. For information on the SSCFGS, visit <https://www.leg.bc.ca/parliamentary-business/committees/>.

*The "Committee" refers to the Select Standing Committee on Government Finance and Services (SSCGFS)

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