



# SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

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

March 29, 2023

Hon. Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care  
Room 124 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Singh,

RE: Educational Resources for Gender Based Violence (GBV) Education

At the School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay public Board Meeting of March 14, 2023, the Board carried the following motion:

*That the Board write a letter requesting funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care to cover the costs of resources required to educate grade 11 and 12 students on gender-based violence as requested by the Ministry.*

Our Board applauds the efforts of the Ministry of Education and Child Care in developing the *Supporting Student Health Guide* resources for elementary and secondary grade level students to support educators in teaching about sexual health using an age-appropriate and non-discriminatory approach in the classroom.

The Guide provides a thoughtful K – Grade ten (10) overview of “suggested topics” that explore healthy relationships, gender and sexual diversity, sexual and physical development, sexual decision making, contraception and sexually transmitted infections. These resources provide age-appropriate grade markers and this guide provides a strong foundation for exploration and meaningful discussion around Gender Based Violence (GBV) as students move into grades eleven (11) and twelve (12).

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Unfortunately, while it is vital that educators support the emotional, pedagogical, and social sensitivity of students from all sexual, racial and socio-economic backgrounds when exploring GBV topics with students, educators have not been provided with the resources to do so for these senior grades.

GBV-based issues such as sexual assault, domestic violence, GBV against men and boys, historical incidents of GBV (ie: missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the École Polytechnique massacre, honour killings etc.) and the contributing, culturally-rooted causes of GBV such as rape culture and toxic masculinity, while difficult to address, are necessary topics for exploration that require thoughtful, careful navigation by educators.

*Teaching and Teacher Education, Volume 116, August 2022 (Vanner, Holloway, Almanssori)* describes GBV as “difficult knowledge” that is “complicated and nuanced, constituting an act of bravery and involving increased emotional and intellectual labour”.

The World Health Organization (WHO) website describes GBV as “a major public and clinical health problem and a violation of women's human rights [that] is rooted in and perpetuates gender inequalities”. GBV disproportionately affects women and girls, women with disabilities, Indigenous women, racialized women, trans and non-binary people, and women who are homeless or underhoused.

In 2017, police-reported violence against females in Canada peaked at age 15 and sexual offences were the most reported crimes among girls aged 12–17 (Conroy, 2018). In 2021, Statistics Canada identified women as being five (5) times more likely than men to experience sexual assault.

In 2022, the Canadian Women's Foundation estimated that approximately **4.7 million women** fifteen (15) years of age and older report having **experienced sexual assault at least once**.

And in February of this year (2023), the *Alliance of BC Students* wrote an open letter to Premier David Eby, calling for the provincial government to “take urgent action to address the **crisis of sexualized violence** at post-secondary institutions.”

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GBV will continue to occur until the roots of gender inequality, abuses of power and harmful norms that currently exist in our society are exposed, discussed and understood. This journey of understanding begins with our youth.

Teachers cannot –and should not be expected to—provide students with this “difficult, complicated and nuanced knowledge” without resources that can support them in facilitating evidence-based GBV programs such as The Fourth R (relationships), Safe Dates, Shifting Boundaries or other programs that show significant evidence of their effectiveness. It is also important that these proven-effective resources be developed/distributed provincially to ensure student learning is consistent and free from individual or regional biases.

We ask that the Ministry fully fund these critically-needed resources and look forward to your thoughtful consideration of –and timely response to—our request for funding of these vitally important resources.

Sincerely,



Doug McPhee, Board Chair

Cc\*: Hon. David Eby, Premier, Province of BC  
Kevin Falcon, Leader, BC Liberal Party  
Sonia Furstenau, Leader, BC Green Party  
Tom Shypitka, MLA Kootenay East BC  
Elenor Sturko, Critic for Education, BC Liberal Party  
Karin Kirkpatrick, Critic for Child and Family Development & Childcare, BC Liberal Party  
Hon. Katrine Conroy, Minister of Finance  
Chris Brown, Assistant Deputy Minister, Resource Management Division  
Carolyn Broady, President, BCSTA  
BCSTA for distribution to member Boards of Education  
Clint Johnston, President BC Teachers' Federation  
Chris Schultz-Lorentzen, President, BCCPAC  
Shelley Balfour & Adrienne Demers, CFTA Co-Chairs  
SD5 CUPE President  
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Lies Salvador, DPAC Chair  
Aaron Thorn, President, SD5 Administrators' Association  
Chris Walker/Corey Bullock, CBC Radio  
Dennis Walker, 107.5 Today FM Radio  
Wylie Henerson, Rewind Radio 102.9  
Jeff Johnson, Wild B104 Radio  
Josiah Spyker/Ryley McCormack, 107.5 Today FM  
Barry Coulter/Trevor Crawley, Cranbrook Daily Townsman  
Ian Cobb, e-know Online News  
Joshua Fischlin, Fernie Free Press

\*This correspondence is public and transparent. Please feel free to share and/or respond with comment.

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