



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

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

October 11, 2023

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

Carolyn Broady, President
British Columbia School Trustees' Association
1580 W Broadway
Vancouver BC V6J 5K9

Dear Minister Singh and Ms. Broady,

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

On July 19th, 2023 School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay Board of Education sent a letter of invitation to you to visit SD5, in order to highlight some of our District's unique successes and challenges.

As we have yet to receive a response to our invitation, at School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay public Board Meeting of June 12, 2023, the Board carried the following motion:

That the Board write a follow-up letter to the letter to Hon. Minister Singh and Carolyn Broady, BCSTA President, of June 19, 2023, inviting them to visit our District.

We have included a copy of our original letter of invitation, which we hope you will take the time to re-review. Below is a brief recap of our original letter.

School District 5:

- Has the distinction of being both urban and rural.
- Is one of the furthest east from the lower mainland of any district and one of the closest district to the BC/Alberta border.

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- Is resource and recreationally rich, disproportionately contributing *more per capita* to the GDP provincially than other areas of BC.
- Struggle with many of the same *urban* issues as larger districts;
 - Higher housing prices and shortages
 - A large percentage of students learning in portables
 - A growing population of English Language Learners (ELLs)
- Struggle with many of the same issues as other *rural* districts; the
 - Stretching of resources across a large geographic area
 - Growing cost of transportation
 - Difficulty attracting qualified teaching and support staff (especially as we compete with the higher wages offered in Alberta)
 - Challenge to provide equitable dual credit trades opportunities etc. to our rural students as is available in urban districts, and our urban community of Cranbrook
- Is in dire need of replacement of Mount Baker Secondary School (MBSS) which is:
 - 72 years old
 - The largest school in the East and West Kootenay.
 - Used extensively by the community, including use of the attached Key City Theatre (KCT).
 - Integrated with the plumbing, HVAC etc. of the KCT (which provides considerable opportunity to our students).
- The focus of considerable and concerted effort –since 2008—to secure replacement, including (but not limited to):
 - Conducting public consultations
 - Securing partnerships with the City of Cranbrook and Regional District of East Kootenay.
 - Yearly submissions to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (SSCFGS) regarding the need for replacement.
 - Completing fifteen (15) years' worth of studies and audits identifying major deficiencies in the:
 - Structure
 - Fabric
 - Operation
 - Function
 - Code
 - Compliance, and
 - Accessibility of the school.

These compounding inefficiencies are now to the point where *renovation is no longer a viable option*. These inefficiencies are:

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 • Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

- Costly to the District
- Reduce carbon offset opportunities, and
- Increase safety concerns for our students with each passing year.

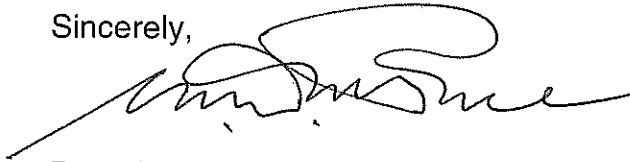
In addition to the challenges faced by the ageing facility of MBSS in the urban community of Cranbrook, is the unprecedented growth challenges we face in the rural community of Fernie.

In the past five years Fernie has grown by almost eighteen percent (18%). Prior to a four-room expansion to Fernie Elementary School, *ten (10) portables were in use*. Following the opening of the expansion this September, *ten (10) portables remain in use*. Despite securing property to build a new middle school in Fernie in 2021, our District is still awaiting final Ministry approval for the build.

Given the geographic size and diversity of our District, we would strongly recommend that you plan an overnight stay when you visit SD5.

We look forward to receiving your response to our invitation, and to arranging for your upcoming visit to our District in the very near future.

Sincerely,



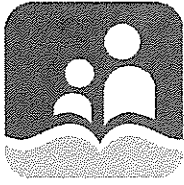
Doug McPhee, Board Chair

Cc*: Hon. David Eby, Premier, Province of BC
 Kevin Falcon, Leader, BC United Party
 John Rustad, Leader, BC Conservative Party
 Sonia Furstenuau, Leader, BC Green Party
 Elenor Sturko, Critic for Education, BC United Party
 Karin Kirkpatrick, Critic for Child and Family Development & Childcare, BC United Party
 Tom Shypitka, MLA Kootenay East
 Carolyn Broady, President, BCSTA
 BCSTA for distribution to member Boards of Education
 Dawn Lang, President, Kootenay Boundary Branch (KBB), for distribution to KBB members
 Clint Johnston, President BC Teachers' Federation
 Laura Ward, President, BCCPAC
 Shelley Balfour & Adrienne Demers, CFTA Co-Chairs, for distribution to staff representatives
 Krista Napi SD5 CUPE President
 Doug McPhee (Chair) • Trina Ayling • Bev Bellina • Irene Bischler • Alysha Clarke
 • Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

Lies Salvador, DPAC Chair
Aaron Thorn, President, SD5 Administrators' Association
Chris Walker/Corey Bullock, CBC Radio
Dennis Walker, 107.5 Today FM Radio
Wylie Henderson, 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
SD5 Trustees and District Management

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

Doug McPhee (Chair) • Trina Ayling • Bev Bellina • Irene Bischler • Alysha Clarke
• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

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

June 19th, 2023

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

Carolyn Broady, President
British Columbia School Trustees' Association
1580 W Broadway
Vancouver BC V6J 5K9

Dear Minister Singh and Ms. Broady,

RE: Invitation to Visit Our District

At the School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay public Board Meeting of June 12, 2023, the Board carried the following motion:

THAT the Board of Education invite the President of the BCSTA and the Minister of Education to visit Mount Baker Secondary School.

Our Board wishes to extend an invitation to visit our District in the coming 2023/2024 school year in order to highlight some of our District's unique successes and challenges.

Unlike most districts, which identify as either "urban" or "rural" our district has the distinction of being both urban *and* rural. Our District is also the farthest east of any district from the lower mainland and the closest district to the BC/Alberta border. The Southeast Kootenay is resource and recreationally rich, disproportionately contributing more per capita to the GDP provincially.

We struggle with many of the same urban issues as larger districts such as higher

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housing prices and shortages, too many students learning in portables, and a growing population of English Language Learners (ELLs) as more people immigrate to our area. We also struggle with rural issues such as the growing cost of transportation and the stretching of resources across a large geographic area, difficulty attracting qualified teaching and support staff as we compete with the higher wages available in Alberta, and equity challenges for dual credit opportunities etc.

In the urban community of Cranbrook we are in dire need of replacement of Mount Baker Secondary School (MBSS) which is 72 years old and is the largest school in the East *and* West Kootenay. This school is used extensively by the community, including use of the attached Key City Theatre (KCT). The KCT plumbing, HVAC etc. is integrated with the school and the Theatre provides considerable opportunity to our students.

Our Board has expended considerable and concerted effort since 2008 to secure the replacement of MBSS including (but not limited to) public consultations, facility reports and securing partnerships. We have made yearly submissions to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (SSCFGS).

Studies and audits of the past 20 years identify major deficiencies in structure, fabric, operation, function, code, compliance and accessibility of the school.

These compounding inefficiencies are now to the point where renovation is no longer a viable option. They are costly to the District, reduce carbon offset opportunities and increase safety concerns for our students with each passing year.

In the rural city of Fernie we face unprecedented growth challenges. In the past five years Fernie has grown by almost eighteen percent (18%). While we have secured property to build a new middle school we are still awaiting final Ministry approval for the build.

We are hopeful that you will take the time to visit our District, so that you can better understand that there are legitimately urgent capital replacement and upgrade needs spread equally across the province and that not all districts face *only* urban or *only* rural challenges, requiring more flexibility on the part of

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government if parity among districts is to be achieved.

Given the geographic size and diversity of our District, we would strongly recommend that you plan an overnight stay when you visit 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 provide for our students, despite the restrictions that limited and inadequate building infrastructure poses to twenty-first century education, the implementation of the province's revised curriculum and embedded principles of Indigenous learning.

We look forward to receiving your response to our invitation, and to arranging for your upcoming visit to our District in the very near future.

Sincerely,

Doug McPhee, Board Chair

Cc*: Hon. David Eby, Premier, Province of BC
Kevin Falcon, Leader, BC United Party
Sonia Furstenu, Leader, BC Green Party
Elenor Sturko, Critic for Education, BC United Party
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Barry Coulter/Trevor Crawley, Cranbrook Daily Townsman
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Joshua Fischlin, Fernie Free Press
SD5 Trustees and District Management

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Doug McPhee (Chair) • Trina Ayling • Bev Bellina • Irene Bischler • Alysha Clarke
• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

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