



Office of the
**The Kootenay Lake
District Parents' Advisory Council
(DPAC)
School District No. 8**

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September 25, 2009

via email

Honourable Rich Coleman
PO Box 9058 STN Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E1

Dear Minister Coleman,

We are writing to express our deep concern over the 50% reduction to the Direct Access Grants (DAG) to Parents' Advisory Councils (PAC) and District Parents' Advisory Councils (DPAC) announced a few weeks ago. We see the DAG as the most efficient use of ministry money as nearly 100% goes directly to benefiting students.

In a Victoria Times-Columnist newspaper article dated September 11 you were quoted "I haven't had a bunch of blowback from PACs since the {education} minister mentioned on Tuesday they would probably get half." Please be assured the 22 PACs in our school district, and this DPAC are extremely angry about this announcement and upset over the timing. This cut comes at a time when many parents are just getting their children back into the swing of school. Many PACs do not meet until the end of September and are now in a very difficult position of either fund raising more or have our children lose out on programs and equipment.

In the same article you suggest "...ordinary parents recognize the government had to fund the CommunityLINK hot lunch program for inner-city schools instead of fully-funding PACs." It seems you're not fully informed as to what the CommunityLINK program is. The purpose of CommunityLINK program is to improve the educational performance, including the academic achievement and social functioning, of vulnerable students. It is not just for inner-city schools, but a program for all vulnerable students in the 60 school districts across our province.

Also, we are outraged at your treatment of our provincial parent voice, BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils. Dismissing their protest of these cuts as "...typical anger from provincial organizations..." truly shows your ignorance in dealing with parents.

We would also like to remind you, Minister Coleman that parents are not "ordinary." Parents in the Kootenay Lake School District No. 8 have proven to be extra-ordinary, passionate and very thoughtful when it comes to their children's education. "Ordinary" parents attend PAC meetings. "Ordinary" parents fund raise to provide playgrounds, library books, sports equipment, computers, winter programs and the list goes on. These education necessities were once provided by the government, but are now off-loaded onto parent volunteer councils.

We believe that the learning environment that is marked by positive parental involvement supports and enhances the public school education system.

One wonders where our students and schools would be without the time and energy spent by “ordinary” parents?

These same “ordinary” parents benefited from the DAG for DPACs through our support of parent education by sending parents to conferences and organizing local workshops. The cost to send “ordinary” parents in the Kootenay Lake School District to conferences is extremely high and this cut now puts into jeopardy our ability to provide opportunities for our parents to network with parents from across our province.

The cuts to the Direct Access Grants to PACs and DPACs will affect each and every student in our school district. Whether it is less sports equipment to play with, fewer library books to read, or a reduction in field trips for our rural remote students, all schools in our district will feel this cut.

Please consider this letter a “blowback” and we request the immediate reinstatement of the \$20/FTE DAG to PACs and \$2500 DAG to DPACs.

Sincerely,

Susan Wilson, Chair
Kootenay Lake DPAC

cc- All SD 8 PACs
SD 8 Board of Education
Pat Dooley, Superintendent SD 8
Kootenay Lake Teachers’ Federation
Kootenay Lake Principals and Vice-Principals Association
CUPE Local 748
Honourable Margaret MacDiarmid
Premier Gordon Campbell
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
Katrine Conroy, MLA
Michelle Mungall, MLA

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