



May 18, 2016

PARENTS WEAR RED TO PROTEST STATE OF FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Parent Advocacy Network and Families Against Cuts to Education Respond to BC Budget 2016

VANCOUVER — Thursday, May 19, marks the end of the current Legislative session and the passing of the BC Liberal government's balanced budget. Sadly, while BC may be in the black, public education is surely in the red. As part of a joint FACE-PAN campaign — **#bcedinred** — FACE has been tracking school district budget shortfalls. As of Wednesday, May 18, half of the 60 School Boards had reported operating budget shortfalls with a combined total of \$84.17 million.

The BC public education system has seen a long history of adverse policies and chronic structural underfunding which has crippled the public system forcing school boards to cut programming, support staff, resource workers, counselors, specialist teachers, librarians, maintenance, resources and supplies while increasing class sizes and closing schools.

“Every year, structural underfunding forces students, schools and communities across BC to compete for increasingly scarce dollars. It forces school boards to make impossible choices over which vital program to save or to cut, and it forces PACs to fundraise inordinate amounts of money to compensate for these losses, creating inequality between schools,” said Jennifer Stewart, parent and co-founder of FACE.

BC school boards are required by law to balance their budgets; they must find ways to cover the shortfalls. This means programs, services, and school closures are on the chopping block throughout the 60 school districts. The collateral damage to-date is dire and continues to expand: Osoyoos has seen its only high school closed; Quesnel has closed three schools and still need to make cuts; parents in Courtenay fought successfully to save Ecole Puntledge Park, but the district must still make cuts to cover its shortfall; school buses are being cut in Maple Ridge; Vancouver Trustees refused to pass a budget containing \$24 million in cuts; and Saanich has also balked at making cuts.

“Over the last decade, parents have seen a relentless depletion of services within our schools, resulting in the loss of teachers, counselors, specialists, learning supports, librarians, arts programs, and basic educational resources” said Andrea Sinclair, parent and co-founder of PAN.





Parents know these cuts cannot be dismissed as “local decisions”; they are the result of decisions made at the provincial level. The government decided to increase public school operational funding by less than 1% in Budget 2016 — this does not even cover inflation. It also doesn’t cover spending decisions made at the provincial level, such as construction of the Next Generation Network. These costs are downloaded onto the Boards, who must find a way to cover them without any additional funding.

The 2016/17 BC budget indicates that we live in a province of relative prosperity. Unfortunately, public education is not being funded accordingly, much to the detriment of our future society. PAN and FACE believe that a high-quality public education system is the cornerstone of a democratic society. We cannot condone a budget that is balanced on the backs of children in public schools. **On Thursday, May 19, we encourage all citizens across BC to join us in wearing RED to mark the fact that, although the BC budget is in the black, public education is in the red.**

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Supporting Resources

#BCEDINRED - <http://www.panvancouver.ca/bcedinred.html>
<https://facebc.wordpress.com/2016/04/10/bcedinred/>
 <http://www.panvancouver.ca> <https://facebc.wordpress.com/>
 [PAN Vancouver@PAN_Vancouver](https://twitter.com/PAN_Vancouver) [@FACE_BC](https://twitter.com/FACE_BC)
 www.facebook.com/PANVancouver www.facebook.com/FACEVancouver
 parentadvocacynetwork@gmail.com

About the Parent Advocacy Network

The Parent Advocacy Network for Public Education (PAN), formed in 2015, is a grassroots collective of parents and community members who want to address the chronic underfunding and cuts to education services in Vancouver and across British Columbia. Our mission is to create a strong network of parents across schools and to support one another in advocacy. Our network enables us to share information and experiences, and to stand together in protecting public education.

About Families Against Cuts to Education

Parents and citizens who care about public education came together in 2015 to form Families Against Cuts to Education (FACE). We believe public education needs to be a priority again, that public education is more important than politics, that a strong public education system benefits us all, and that all children must be able to benefit from high quality public education.

Media Contacts

For PAN - Andrea Sinclair, 604-240-9834, andreasinclair@gmail.com

For FACE - Jennifer Stewart, 604-790-9929, jenniferjoanstewart@gmail.com



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