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Report of the Education Advisory Council

April 21, 2010

In Attendance: Ministry of Education (James Gorman, Sherri Mohoruk, Rick Davis and Recording Secretary), BCCT, BCTF, BCSTA, BCPVPA, ABCDE, CSFC, British Columbia Student Voice (BCSV),FNESC and BCCPAC (Director Baker).

The agenda included an update from the Ministry, a Policy discussion regarding Environmental Sustainable Education, Policy discussion regarding Middle School and Instructional Minutes as well as an update from the Representatives attending.

MINISTRY UPDATE

James Gorman reported the "unusual" appointment of the Special Advisor to Vancouver Board of Education. The "Team" met with Vancouver to outline the process. The process is to conclude on May 31st.

The Legislative Session is expected to end June 3rd. The current discussion on the HST is expected to continue to the end of this month. There isn't an expectation of too much on education in this session with the exception of some BCCT matters in regard to video surveillance.

The Throne Speech referenced "Reforms to advance into the 21st Century" – James Gorman indicated the Ministry is still reviewing learning initiatives within existing budgets. They are exploring shared services such as payroll systems and procurement of goods and services. There were a few comments concerning the idea of moving into new initiatives for education when funding is challenged for today's budget.

Full Day Kindergarten – There is Capitol planning for financing the space requirements for 2011/2012. Some Districts have decided not to implement Full Day Kindergarten this year as they are choosing to implement all at the same time to allow for equitable introduction. The enrolment projections for Aboriginal FDK are not known yet and the Ministry is still assessing the requirements. Responding to a question regarding equity recruitment, it was noted that agreements are in place through BCPSEA and BCFT which allow for equity recruitment. There has been at least one Equity issue that has gone to the Human Rights Tribunal. BCTF suggested any applications to the Human Rights Tribunal should be joint applications to assist with the matters being expedited through process rather than going into formal tribunal processes.

The Ministry reported there are a number of Districts indicating a desire for shared services. When asked if the Ministry has reviewed the Health Sector experience regarding shared services, the answer was there is no intention to review that experience in relation to education.

Rick Davis commented on the curriculum with respect to attending to a different approach to teaching "critical thinking" with subjects being part of the assisting "critical thinking" versus teaching subject matter under the current curriculum.

Responding to a question on the current methodology for finance there were comments highlighting the formula as allocation of funds rather than generating funds for needs in education. The current funding protects those Districts facing declining enrolment but does not attend to the financial challenges of increased enrolment.

BCTF raised a concern with the Agreement on Internal Trade which would allow the opportunity for one Ontario University program certifying teachers with only an eight month program to be certified within BC. BC's standard is much more stringent for qualifications and the ability for a Teacher with only eight months training being able to teach in BC is of concern to BCTF. There was an observation that rural areas could end up with an inequity of qualified teachers as many of those areas. FNESC raised similar concerns. (Note: This may be an issue to raise with Canadian Home and School Federation).

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

The Minister has received a complaint from a Victoria parent regarding the minimum hours of instruction required under the School Act. The complaint stems from the difference between grade 1 to 7 requirement of 4.75 hours and grade 8 to 12 requirement of 5.15 hours averaged over the year. The Ministry was looking for input from the members on the EAC. There was some discussion although no conclusion. The issue is not Victoria specific as the question is prevalent for all Middle Schools. A list of all Middle Schools was provided (attached).

RETHINK EDUCATION

Responding to a question about doing a Royal Commission on Education, James Gorman indicated the Government has an interest in reviewing and discussing ways to "re-look on education" but no interest in a broader discussion.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

There was a review of some initiatives for "greening" from schools around BC. The Ministry is supporting some of these initiatives through Sustainable Schools. (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools/sustbestpractice.htm)

The participants reviewed some of the "winners" from the BC Green Games (http://2010.bcgreengames.ca/gallery/the-winners.html).

TECHNOLOGY

The next meeting will include a presentation on Technology in Education. The Student Representatives have been asked to lead the discussion.

REPORTS

BCPVPA President Marilyn Merler will be completing her term on June 30th and will be returning to her District with Jameel Aziz taking the President's office on July 1st.

BCSTA will hold their AGM in Victoria on April 22nd to 23rd.

FNESC provided a written report of their activities (attached).

BC Student Representatives provided a copy of their newsletter (attached).

BCCPAC reported on our election results and highlighted some of the resolutions postponed and passed.

BCTF reported on some of their activities and commented on the next round of Bargaining scheduled to commence next year.

There were no other reports.

Next meeting is scheduled for June 16th - location to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Baker, Director