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**WEST VANCOUVER
SCHOOL DISTRICT**
The premier place for learning.

September 24, 2009

TO: Mayors and Councillors of West Vancouver, Bowen Island and Lions Bay

Dear Mayor Goldsmith-Jones and Members of Council:

Re UBCM Annual Conference

Pursuant to motions made at our Board meeting last week, I'm writing to ask for your support with respect to two matters which will come before you at the upcoming UBCM Annual Conference.

The first relates to a resolution "that the Union of BC Municipalities petition the provincial government to increase funding levels for primary and secondary education in the province".

For many years the West Vancouver School District has received on a per pupil basis the lowest funding of any school district in the province. Despite this, we have been able to achieve the highest test scores and graduation rates in B.C. We have annually supplemented government revenues by approximately 18% through our international program and other revenue sources because government grants have not kept pace with inflation, salary and benefit increases, capital and maintenance costs, and expenses associated with new programs and initiatives, which are often mandated by the Ministry of Education.

Last spring, for the first time in many years our Board was forced to reduce our 2009/10 operating budget by over \$1 million by shaving spending in almost every area including staffing of student support services, school libraries, and district and school administration. Fortunately, due to savings in sick leave and other salary costs, by the end of June we were able to carry a small surplus forward of \$864,000 on a \$59 million budget. An unexpected announcement by the Ministry of Education on August 27th that school districts across the province would not receive their 2008/09 Annual Facilities Grant (for repair and restoration work to our schools performed during the summer) wiped out our contingency fund, which will undoubtedly put us into a deficit position as the year progresses. This chronic underfunding of public education in our district, and across the province, is eroding the learning environment which in the long-run will have far-reaching economic and societal costs. For these reasons, I urge you to **support** the above-stated resolution.

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The second issue relates to two proposed motions that would require boards of education to get approval from local government prior to disposal/lease of school lands and assets; and give local government first opportunity to acquire surplus school lands and facilities at minimal or no cost.

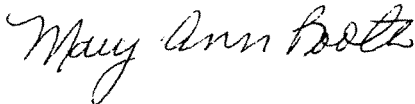
The West Vancouver Board of Education is keenly aware of the value placed on educational programs, resources and use of school buildings and school playgrounds by the greater community. As exemplified by many existing community partnership arrangements with shared facilities such as the Kay Meek Theatre, Bowen Island and Lions Bay Community Schools, and the school sports fields in West Vancouver, our organizations have a long and successful history of working together to develop and manage facilities that provide direct benefits to all residents in each municipality.

Section 74 of the *School Act* clearly states that a duly elected Board of Education is responsible for the management of the schools in its district and for the custody, maintenance and safekeeping of all property owned or leased by the board.

It is critical that the Board maintains the ability to make decisions regarding the management, use and potential future development of school board assets in order to ensure continued delivery of educational programs and resources. As presented, the two proposed motions would severely limit our ability to manage school board assets. We respectfully request that you **oppose** these latter two motions.

We look forward to your response to these requests.

Sincerely,



Mary-Ann Booth
Chairperson

MAB:sr
cc: Trustees & Senior Staff

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