



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

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

June 24th, 2016

“Administrative Savings” Not Additional Money for Boards of Education

On June 14th, School District 5 (SD5) Southeast Kootenay held its final Board meeting of the 2015/16 school year. In addition to standard Board business the Board carried an annual balanced budget as required by law and unanimously determined to “set the record straight” regarding the \$25 million government recently “redirected” back to school districts across the province.

According to SD5 Board Chair, Frank Lento, this “redirection” of monies is not, as government alleged in its press release, for the reason that “Districts made real efforts to reduce spending on their administration costs... ma[king] it possible to help flow those resources into classrooms and services for students.”

“At best government is correcting an error, having realized their chronic underfunding of public education finally pushed some Boards to the brink”, says Lento. “At worst this is a calculated campaign strategy for the upcoming provincial election.”

Lento says that, according to *Statistics Canada*, BC has the lowest per pupil district administration costs in Canada. A recent report commissioned by the *BC Association of School Business Officials* (BCASBO) confirmed that BC school districts spend one-third less on administrative costs than other Canadian provinces, with an average of only 6.67% of education funding going toward the administration of education.

“Despite what are obviously sound financial decisions made by BC’s Boards of Education, government still demanded Boards “find” \$29 million in savings in 2015 and an additional \$25 million in 2016” says Lento. “Yes, this year’s \$25 million is being returned to Districts –but only after districts spent valuable time and resources trying to identify these non-existent savings.”

While the Board is pleased to now be able to keep its share of the \$25 million –a total of \$277,277— Lento says this money is about the same amount it is now costing SD5 for its *Next Generation Network* (NGN). NGN is the new provincial

student information and reporting system that government is now requiring Boards to use. According to the *B.C. School Trustees' Association* (BCSTA) this network will cost Districts across the province as much as \$24 million. "This was originally supposed to be paid for by government", says Lento, "but once again Districts have been left to foot the bill."

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