



# SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

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

October 11, 2023

Hon. Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care  
Room 124 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Melanie Stewart, Assistant Deputy Minister  
Learning and Education Programs  
melanie.j.stewart@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Singh and Assistant Deputy Minister Stewart,

RE: Educational Resources for Gender Based Violence (GBV) Education  
Response Letter of August 4, 2023

Thank you, Hon. Minister Singh, for your letter of August 4, 2023 in which you responded to our March 29, 2023 letter requesting that the Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC) fund the costs of resources required to educate grade 11 and 12 students on gender-based violence (GBV).

In reviewing your response, our Board believes that our initial request for funding from the MECC to cover the cost of resources required to educate grade 11 and 12 students on GBV was not clearly defined in our letter and so we seek to clarify our request. We also wish to thank you for providing the contact information for Melanie Stewart, Assistant Deputy Minister, Learning and Education Programs and have additionally addressed this correspondence to M. Stewart.

At the School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay public Board Meeting of September 12, 2023, the Board carried the following motion:

*That the Board write a letter in response to the Minister of Education and Child Care's letter of August 4, 2023 regarding educational resources for gender-based violence and that the letter also be addressed to Melanie Stewart, Assistant Deputy Minister, Learning and Education.*

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• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

To clarify the Board's **original intent** in writing our August 4th letter, we wish for the Ministry of Education and Child Care to **adopt and fully fund one of the evidence-based GBV programs** such as *The Fourth R (relationships)*, *Safe Dates*, *Shifting Boundaries* or another program **with significant evidence of its effectiveness and that the program, required resources and training be distributed provincially** to ensure student learning is consistent and free from individual or regional biases.

For your reference, we have included our original letter of August 4, 2023 which provides our rationale. For your convenience, a brief summary of that rationale is included below:

- The current curriculum provides age-appropriate grade markers, building a strong foundation for exploration and meaningful discussion around Gender Based Violence for grades K – 12 but **fails to provide educators** with the training and resources needed to support the emotional, pedagogical, and social sensitivity **of the student population most likely to experience –or perpetrate—GBV.**
- GBV is pervasive in our society and perpetuates the following brutalities:
  - Sexual **assault**
  - Domestic **violence**
  - Honour **killings**
  - **Missing and murdered** Indigenous women and girls
  - The École Polytechnique **massacre**
  - **Violent acts** against (real or perceived) men and boys with non-cis-gender identities, behaviours or sexual partners
  - Other gender-related **crimes**
- GBV is **culturally-rooted**, based on rape culture and toxic masculinity which, while difficult to address, are necessary topics for exploration that **require thoughtful, careful navigation by educators.**
- GBV is **complicated and nuanced** and **requires increased emotional and intellectual labour by the instructor.**
- The World Health Organization (WHO) website says GBV is:
  - a major public and clinical **health problem**
  - a **violation** of women's human rights
  - rooted in and perpetuates **gender inequalities**
- GBV disproportionately affects:
  - **women and girls**
  - **women** with disabilities
  - Indigenous **women**
  - racialized **women**
  - **trans and non-binary** people
  - **women** who are homeless or underhoused.

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• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

- Various institutions and organizations have identified the following statistics of **sexual offences**:
  - Sexual offences were **the most reported crimes among girls aged 12–17**
  - Police-reported violence against females in Canada **peaked at age 15**
  - **Women are five (5) times more likely** than men to experience sexual assault.
  - Approximately **4.7 million women** fifteen (15) years of age and older report having experienced sexual assault at least once
  - There is a **crisis of sexualized violence** at post-secondary institutions

**GBV will continue to occur until the roots of gender inequality, abuses of power and harmful norms that currently exist in our society are exposed, discussed and understood.** This journey of understanding begins with our youth.

Teachers cannot –and should not be expected to—provide students with this **“difficult, complicated and nuanced knowledge”** without standardized and effective resources that can support them in facilitating evidence-based GBV programs provincially to ensure student learning is consistent and free from individual or regional biases.

Our Board applauds the MECC for the proactive policies that support students of diverse ethnicities, gender/sexual identities, abilities, and economic status, for the funding and thoughtful programming that ensures the safety and wellbeing of these students, and for the investment in a better future for those groups who have been stigmatized, brutalized and/or marginalized in the past.

Women may not be a minority but they have historically been stigmatized, brutalized and marginalized in this country regardless of—or in addition to—their ethnicity, identity, ability or economic status. Public education is doing good work toward exposing, discussing and dispelling the inequality, abuses of power and harmful norms historically suffered by people of diverse ethnicities, gender/sexual identities, abilities, and economic status. Now it’s time to do so for women.

**We ask that the Ministry initiate an evidence-based, fully funded program – with resources and teacher training for grades 11 – 12, standardized across the province, without delay.**

Doug McPhee (Chair) • Trina Ayling • Bev Bellina • Irene Bischler • Alysha Clarke  
• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

Once again we look forward to your thoughtful consideration of –and timely response to–our request for funding of these **vitaly important** resources and training.

Sincerely,



Doug McPhee, Board Chair

Cc\*: Hon. David Eby, Premier, Province of BC  
Kevin Falcon, Leader, BC United Party  
John Rustad, Leader, BC Conservative Party  
Sonia Furstenau, Leader, BC Green Party  
Elenor Sturko, Critic for Education, BC United Party  
Karin Kirkpatrick, Critic for Child and Family Development & Childcare, BC United Party  
Tom Shypitka, MLA Kootenay East  
Carolyn Broady, President, BCSTA  
BCSTA for distribution to member Boards of Education  
Dawn Lang, President, Kootenay Boundary Branch (KBB), for distribution to KBB members  
Clint Johnston, President BC Teachers' Federation  
Laura Ward, President, BCCPAC  
Shelley Balfour & Adrienne Demers, CFTA Co-Chairs, for distribution to staff representatives  
Krista Napl SD5 CUPE President  
Lies Salvador, DPAC Chair  
Aaron Thorn, President, SD5 Administrators' Association  
Chris Walker/Corey Bullock, CBC Radio  
Dennis Walker, 107.5 Today FM Radio  
Wylie Henderson, Rewind Radio 102.9  
Jeff Johnson, Wild B104 Radio  
Josiah Spyker/Ryley McCormack, 107.5 Today FM  
Barry Coulter/Trevor Crawley, Cranbrook Daily Townsman  
Ian Cobb, e-know Online News  
Joshua Fischlin, Fernie Free Press  
SD5 Trustees and District Management

Doug McPhee (Chair) • Trina Ayling • Bev Bellina • Irene Bischler • Alysha Clarke  
• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

\*This correspondence is public and transparent. Please feel free to share and/or respond with comment.

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• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

940 Industrial Road #1, Cranbrook BC, V1C 4C6 • Tel: 250.417.2055 • Fax: 250.489.5460 • [www.sd5.bc.ca](http://www.sd5.bc.ca)



August 4, 2023

Ref: 290162

Doug McPhee, Chair  
Board of Education  
School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)  
Email: [c/o Jane.Nixon@sd5.bc.ca](mailto:c/o.Jane.Nixon@sd5.bc.ca)

Dear Doug McPhee:

Thank you for your letter of March 29, 2023, regarding educational resources for gender-based violence (GBV) education in School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay). Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in responding.

For the 2023/24 school year, the Ministry of Education and Child Care will be providing \$77.6 million in operating grants to School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay), a \$7.1 million increase compared to 2022/23. As part of the District's supplementary funding, the Curriculum and Learning Support Fund continues to be provided for the upcoming school year, which can be leveraged with other operating funding to support the development of gender-based violence educational resources.

School districts are able to use a variety of approaches to meet the needs of their students, such as bringing in outside experts or working with school staff to integrate these topics into existing Grade 11 and 12 subject areas. Strategies that are currently used to provide physical education and health content for Grade 9 and 10 PHE courses could also be expanded to include Grade 11 and Grade 12 students.

The Ministry has also worked with BC teachers to develop the Supporting Student Health guides for elementary and secondary teachers. These guides provide background information and teaching suggestions to help teachers feel more confident and comfortable addressing sensitive health topics with their students. These guides are available on the Ministry's website at:

- [https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/subject/phe/Supporting\\_Student\\_Health\\_Elementary.pdf](https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/subject/phe/Supporting_Student_Health_Elementary.pdf)
- [https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/subject/phe/Supporting\\_Student\\_Health\\_Secondary.pdf](https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/subject/phe/Supporting_Student_Health_Secondary.pdf)

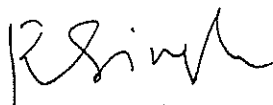
The [erase website](#) was also recently updated to enhance information and resources on gender-based violence, for educators, students and families.

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While education is a powerful tool in generating and creating change, we recognize that gender-based violence remains prevalent in communities throughout BC, and that there is more work to do. Through the Gender Equity Office, the Province has committed to develop an action plan to prevent, address and respond to gender based violence.

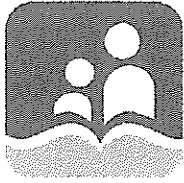
Please connect with Melanie Stewart, Assistant Deputy Minister – Learning and Education Programs, by email at [melanie.j.stewart@gov.bc.ca](mailto:melanie.j.stewart@gov.bc.ca), should you wish to discuss learning supports further. Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Singh', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Rachna Singh  
Minister

pc: Melanie Stewart, Assistant Deputy Minister, Learning and Education Programs



# SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

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

March 29, 2023

Hon. Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care  
Room 124 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Singh,

RE: Educational Resources for Gender Based Violence (GBV) Education

At the School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay public Board Meeting of March 14, 2023, the Board carried the following motion:

*That the Board write a letter requesting funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care to cover the costs of resources required to educate grade 11 and 12 students on gender-based violence as requested by the Ministry.*

Our Board applauds the efforts of the Ministry of Education and Child Care in developing the *Supporting Student Health Guide* resources for elementary and secondary grade level students to support educators in teaching about sexual health using an age-appropriate and non-discriminatory approach in the classroom.

The Guide provides a thoughtful K – Grade ten (10) overview of “suggested topics” that explore healthy relationships, gender and sexual diversity, sexual and physical development, sexual decision making, contraception and sexually transmitted infections. These resources provide age-appropriate grade markers and this guide provides a strong foundation for exploration and meaningful discussion around Gender Based Violence (GBV) as students move into grades eleven (11) and twelve (12).

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• Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner



Unfortunately, while it is vital that educators support the emotional, pedagogical, and social sensitivity of students from all sexual, racial and socio-economic backgrounds when exploring GBV topics with students, educators have not been provided with the resources to do so for these senior grades.

GBV-based issues such as sexual assault, domestic violence, GBV against men and boys, historical incidents of GBV (ie: missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the École Polytechnique massacre, honour killings etc.) and the contributing, culturally-rooted causes of GBV such as rape culture and toxic masculinity, while difficult to address, are necessary topics for exploration that require thoughtful, careful navigation by educators.

*Teaching and Teacher Education, Volume 116, August 2022 (Vanner, Holloway, Almanssori)* describes GBV as “difficult knowledge” that is “complicated and nuanced, constituting an act of bravery and involving increased emotional and intellectual labour”.

The World Health Organization (WHO) website describes GBV as “a major public and clinical health problem and a violation of women’s human rights [that] is rooted in and perpetuates gender inequalities”. GBV disproportionately affects women and girls, women with disabilities, Indigenous women, racialized women, trans and non-binary people, and women who are homeless or underhoused.

In 2017, police-reported violence against females in Canada peaked at age 15 and sexual offences were the most reported crimes among girls aged 12–17 (Conroy, 2018). In 2021, Statistics Canada identified women as being five (5) times more likely than men to experience sexual assault.

In 2022, the Canadian Women's Foundation estimated that approximately **4.7 million women** fifteen (15) years of age and older report having **experienced sexual assault at least once**.

And in February of this year (2023), the *Alliance of BC Students* wrote an open letter to Premier David Eby, calling for the provincial government to “take urgent action to address the **crisis of sexualized violence** at post-secondary institutions.”

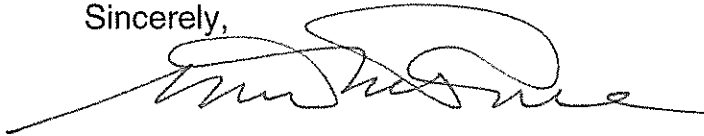
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GBV will continue to occur until the roots of gender inequality, abuses of power and harmful norms that currently exist in our society are exposed, discussed and understood. This journey of understanding begins with our youth.

Teachers cannot –and should not be expected to—provide students with this “difficult, complicated and nuanced knowledge” without resources that can support them in facilitating evidence-based GBV programs such as The Fourth R (relationships), Safe Dates, Shifting Boundaries or other programs that show significant evidence of their effectiveness. It is also important that these proven-effective resources be developed/distributed provincially to ensure student learning is consistent and free from individual or regional biases.

We ask that the Ministry fully fund these critically-needed resources and look forward to your thoughtful consideration of –and timely response to—our request for funding of these vitally important resources.

Sincerely,



Doug McPhee, Board Chair

Cc\*: Hon. David Eby, Premier, Province of BC  
Kevin Falcon, Leader, BC Liberal Party  
Sonia Furstenu, Leader, BC Green Party  
Tom Shypitka, MLA Kootenay East BC  
Elenor Sturko, Critic for Education, BC Liberal Party  
Karin Kirkpatrick, Critic for Child and Family Development & Childcare, BC Liberal Party  
Hon. Katrine Conroy, Minister of Finance  
Chris Brown, Assistant Deputy Minister, Resource Management Division  
Carolyn Broady, President, BCSTA  
BCSTA for distribution to member Boards of Education  
Clint Johnston, President BC Teachers' Federation  
Chris Schultz-Lorentzen, President, BCCPAC  
Shelley Balfour & Adrienne Demers, CFTA Co-Chairs  
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Lies Salvador, DPAC Chair  
Aaron Thorn, President, SD5 Administrators' Association  
Chris Walker/Corey Bullock, CBC Radio  
Dennis Walker, 107.5 Today FM Radio  
Wylie Henerson, Rewind Radio 102.9  
Jeff Johnson, Wild B104 Radio  
Josiah Spyker/Ryley McCormack, 107.5 Today FM  
Barry Coulter/Trevor Crawley, Cranbrook Daily Townsman  
Ian Cobb, e-know Online News  
Joshua Fischlin, Fernie Free Press

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