



VANCOUVER and DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL



April 12, 2023

Victoria Jung, Chair, Vancouver School Board
Helen McGregor, Superintendent, Vancouver School Board

VIA Email: victoria.jung@vsb.bc.ca, info@vsb.bc.ca

Greetings,

We are writing as members of the Vancouver and District Labour Council, representing over 60,000 union members working in the City of Vancouver and neighbouring municipalities. We are writing to outline our concerns with drastic changes, both recent and over the last few years, in the opportunities for stakeholders and the public to be active participants in the governance of the Vancouver School Board.

The Vancouver School Board has incrementally transitioned from an institution that valued diverse opinions, fostered healthy debate and welcomed the community as active participants in decision making to a place where information is hidden and embargoed, standing committees are neutered of substance, stakeholders are siloed and separated when solicited for opinions (if solicited at all), administrative costs have skyrocketed due to relationships being broken and above all, direct, public and clear communication has been lost. Agendas are set in secret, reports are verbal, documents aren't shared, and text is redacted. Most recently there have been decisions made to close many previously open to the public meetings to only online participation. In short, the Vancouver School Board has become a fortress.

It is the practice, belief, and ethic of Vancouver's unionized workers to participate actively and democratically in their workplaces. When this happens, decisions are made in the spirit of cooperation and are easier to implement – even when tough choices need to be contemplated. It's what our members expect of their elected officials. The premise of participatory democracy has been lost at the Vancouver School Board and has been replaced by secrecy, confusion, and exclusion. In absence of open democratic processes, working and learning conditions can be negatively impacted without stakeholders or the public being informed or given a say. These are not the values we teach our children, and they are certainly not the behaviours we expect of our School Board.

Pg. 2/...

To: Victoria Jung, Chair and Helen McGregor, Superintendent
Vancouver School Board

Pg. 2

Re: Concerns with Public Access to VSB Proceedings

We call for immediate review of the substance, procedures, length and frequency of all committee and stakeholder meetings of the Vancouver School Board. We ask that trustees examine their assumptions about the costs and benefits of holding stakeholders and the public out of decision making, and finally we ask that the Vancouver School Board welcome inclusive, participatory, and substantive public debate of its decisions.

Yours Truly,



Stephen von Sychowski
President, VDLC

On behalf of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 15, Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 407, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 963, Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society, Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association, Vancouver and District Labour Council.

cc: VDLC Executive Board

svs/eb

moveup