



November 4, 2019

To the Hon. Rob Fleming, Minister of Education,

On behalf of the parents and families in SD 63 Saanich we want to express our concern on how ongoing wage disparity issues within our support staff are hampering the ability of our Board to meet the needs of all of our children in an inclusive classroom.

The competitive job market on the lower island is putting our District at a distinct disadvantage in recruitment and retention efforts for skilled staff in such areas as educational assistant, secretarial and custodial roles, to name a few. The high turnover rates mean that the district is constantly recruiting and training people in these roles. Only to lose them again to higher paying job offers in other adjacent school districts and public service sector settings.

This constant staff shortage is adding to the stress and workload of existing staff thus reinforcing the cycle as they themselves seek employment elsewhere.

It is clear that both the District and CUPE 441 want to tackle and address this issue in the current contract negotiations. Wage parity is an issue that both parties have a vested interest in resolving.

It is equally clear that both parties are struggling to find a solution as they do not have the tools and resources they need at their disposal. A provincial one size fits all approach will not meet the needs we have here in Saanich.

Wage parity is obviously a concern for the Province in that it has included elements to address the issue in the 2019 Sustainable Services Negotiating Mandate. Our hope is that the Province will be able to support the employer and employees finding a solution as it has done in other contracts in other public service areas.

The ongoing labour disruption in Saanich has entered its second week. Having children out of school is having a huge impact on our kids and families. It is tearing at the very community we have laboured to nurture over the years. Just as damaging will be the long term consequences on our classrooms if we do not act now.

Our children are worth investing in. We believe a properly resourced inclusive classroom will better serve the needs of everyone. The first step we need to take to make that happen is to insure all our staff are fairly compensated for the invaluable work they do.

Respectfully yours,

Confederation of Parents' Advisory Councils of Saanich