



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

November 1, 2023

The Honourable David Eby
Premier of British Columbia
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Dear Premier Eby,

Subject: Recent meeting to discuss disruptions and protests in school districts

Thank you for meeting with me on October 17 to discuss the protests and disruptions that have taken place on and near school sites and at recent board of education meetings. We appreciate your time and commitment to finding a path forward regarding these current disruptions, especially as they relate to the safety of students, staff and elected officials. We also appreciate the strong stance you have publicly taken to support vulnerable students and commend you on highlighting the risks they face when schools are not safe and inclusive.

As we shared during our meeting, the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) has taken several proactive steps to support boards of education in responding to these situations, which includes advocating to you for support. As you requested, I am providing you with examples to illustrate just some of the disturbances that have occurred:

- General disruptions have occurred across the province, including in Delta, Kootenay-Columbia, Mission, Nechako Lakes, Prince George and Vernon, where anti-SOGI groups have regularly disrupted meetings and protested at school board offices and near school sites.
- Some groups are promoting and encouraging joint attendance at protests based on proximity to neighbouring school districts and planned disruptions at Chilliwack, Langley, Abbotsford and Surrey public meetings. These larger groups elevate safety concerns, as noted below:
 - At the June Surrey board meeting, protestors voiced concerns about SOGI and books in the district's library, which resulted in a call for the Surrey Police to ensure the safety of the board of education and staff.
 - Hundreds of anti-SOGI protesters interrupted the September Abbotsford board meeting, and trustees required police escorts to exit safely. The meeting was subsequently moved online due to ongoing safety concerns.

- These concerns are not limited to board of education meetings. A West Vancouver district parent advisory council meeting saw approximately 20 individuals attend to raise concerns about SOGI. While community feedback is vital, parent volunteers should not be intimidated.
- During our most recent Provincial Council in October, a trustee shared her personal story of facing ongoing harassment and the impact this has had on her and her family. She expressed how family members now fear for her safety when she attends school-related meetings.
- We have also been made aware of trustees facing harassment that now extends past the boundaries of school board offices and school sites. This includes threats sent to a trustee's home and implied threats of violence toward family members.

These examples represent only a fraction of the experiences students, staff and school leaders have faced. In addition to these actions, protests have also occurred in other places, such as at city halls and civic centres.

In conjunction with the examples above, I would like to reiterate the requests made during our meeting so that we may begin to take action on this pressing issue:

- **Safety:** The safety of students, staff and elected officials is paramount, and we must prioritize safe and inclusive learning environments for all students. I understand that implementing exclusion zones around school sites is incredibly complex, but I want to reiterate that your consideration of this specific request is being made on behalf of boards of education across B.C.
- **Misunderstandings:** There is a lack of understanding that the Human Rights Code protects sexual orientation and gender identity and that SOGI-123 resources are available to assist educators as needed. Erroneous information is being spread, implying that SOGI resources are part of the curriculum rather than age-appropriate materials to support educators and students who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. In connecting with members of your staff within the Ministry of Education and Child Care, it is our understanding that communication materials for district use are currently being finalized, as is a joint K-12 partners letter of support for safe, inclusive schools. We appreciate these efforts and also ask that the government provide supporting information specifically created and translated for newcomers. These materials will aid those who are new to our public education system to understand the important work being done to keep vulnerable students safe in schools. The ARC Foundation currently provides some translated materials, but additional information developed and distributed by the government would further increase knowledge and understanding.



- **Unity:** We ask that all members of your government strongly indicate their support for safe and inclusive schools. A unified voice will signal stability and support for what has unfortunately been a divisive issue. The protests have been a notable topic of interest across parties, and during our recent Provincial Advocacy Day in Victoria with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), discussions regarding these disruptions eclipsed other themes as board chairs and MLAs discussed current events in public education. Your government's complete and unequivocal support would signal to all parties the importance of supporting vulnerable students and help forge a path forward.

I thank you for considering the potential actions outlined above. This problem will not be solved with time and patience alone. Together, we must find a path forward that will allow boards of education to govern safely, staff to feel unincumbered and students to thrive in safe and inclusive learning environments. We encourage parents and guardians to participate and provide feedback for the education students receive, and while all reasonable voices should be heard, we cannot tolerate acts of hatred or intimidation. Thank you for being an advocate for public education. I would be pleased to meet with you or a member of your staff if you require further information or if we can assist you in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn Broady". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Carolyn Broady

President

British Columbia School Trustees Association

CC: The Honourable Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care
Christina Zacharuk, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Child Care
Teresa Downs, president, British Columbia School Superintendents Association
Ray Velestuk, president, British Columbia Association of School Business Officials
BCSTA member boards of education
Suzanne Hoffman, CEO, BCSTA
BCSTA Board of Directors