

Taxes Pay for Public Services, Including Public Education

DEAR EDITOR:

Re: Job action will hit students, Burnaby NOW, Sept. 9

I'd like to respond to some misperceptions contained in Mr. Evan's letter.

Proper funding of Public Education is not a "handout from government". Taxes are collected from citizens to pay for public services. Just as governments expect their citizens to pay taxes, so too do the citizens expect the governments to properly fund those services! To refer to the proper funding of public education as a "handout", is like saying that when you pay your premiums for insurance and your insurance pays for services when you need them, that you are receiving a handout. I disagree!

I've lived in Burnaby my entire life and I received my entire public education in Burnaby public schools. My teachers worked hard to ensure that I had the best education possible. I was also taught at school and at home that hard work was important. During time at school, I worked extremely hard and benefitted from a high quality public education. Neither I, nor my fellow students, or our families needed to do fundraising in order to go on field trips, buy school sports equipment, pay for playground upgrades, or buy classroom resources or equipment. Less fortunate students were not excluded or left behind. There seemed to be more funding, proper funding of public education, back then.

In the past, in Canada, when taxes were not collected from citizens, there were no public services, since there was no money to pay for them. Only the rich could afford to send their children to school, for only they had the money to pay for it! We've come a long way since then. In Canada, and particularly in British Columbia, we pride ourselves on the fact that we provide a high quality public education system that is accessible to all children. Teachers will fight long and hard to protect and strengthen that high quality public education system!

If we rely on fundraising to pay for a service that should be properly funded with tax money that is collected for education services, we risk a perpetuation of underfunding. Fundraising covers up the underfunding issue and allows the government to evade its responsibility to properly fund a public service.

The purpose of public education is to provide equal opportunity to all students, regardless of their economic background. It's not hard to see that fundraising will be easier and more successful in schools that are located in better off neighbourhoods. What will be the result? "Have" schools and "have not" schools is the result. If we value access to a high quality public education

system for all Burnaby students, then we need to advocate for proper funding of that system. To do otherwise, would be to allow for the slow, steady privatization of education – a progression we've already seen in other parts of the world, where education has become a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder. Teachers in Burnaby do not take Job Action lightly, but will fight to maintain a high quality public education system for all students. We hope you will join us in this fight for the future of our students. Public Education is the most important investment in the future of our society!