

School District No. 60

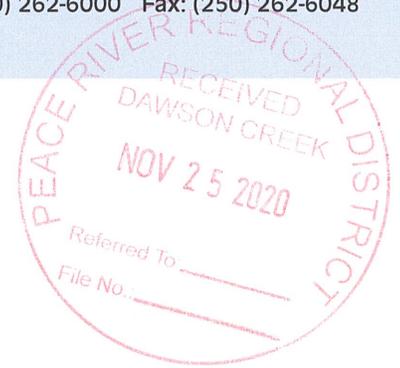
PEACE RIVER NORTH

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

November 13, 2020

Brad Sperling, Board Chair
Peace River Regional District
PO Box 810
Dawson Creek, BC V1G 4H8



Dear Brad:

I would like to take the opportunity to introduce our group to you and the intent of this letter. We are the elected Board of Trustees for School District #60, Peace River North. As an elected body, our role is not only fiduciary but also advocacy to make change on behalf of our more vulnerable students and staff. We are a group of seven with varying degrees of time as a trustee from 22 years to 3 years.

Our intent with this letter is to ask for advocacy support from your organization to assist us in providing adequate internet connectivity to our more rural and remote students. This has always been a challenge for us, and never more so than right now during the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty with the future of learning. This past spring we saw a move to online learning and the connectivity struggles of some of our students. This challenge remains for our students and continues to be at the forefront of our advocacy focus into the future.

As Viveca Ellis, BCPRC Interim Community Organizer states, "Now more than ever, affordable, fast, at-home Internet access is as essential to every home in B.C. as heat and hot water. We must act now to end the digital divide and ensure all people in B.C., regardless of income, have the Internet access they need to survive and thrive through the pandemic and beyond" (<http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/2020/09/digital-justice-for-b-c-press-release/?fbclid=IwAR1qx9tAiiyQpqK6MPPqq2PK9a6iNcs9TC93FAcqmSg0wgrQDNTQP-Mn4NA>). Without appropriate infrastructure and affordability, the digital divide is increasing. This divide is negatively impacting our students.

The Canadian School Board Association and the Canadian Association of School System Administrators have written a letter of advocacy to the Honourable Maryam Monsef and the Honourable Navdeep Bains. This letter continued to highlight the digital gap between students and families who have consistent and reliable internet service and those who do not. Indigenous communities, remote and isolated communities and families living in poverty need our advocacy the most to ensure equity of digital access.

We are asking for your assistance to advocate for connectivity and access to internet for all students in British Columbia. Further, we are asking you to bring this issue to your provincial organization as a motion to advocate to the provincial government. In the

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Helen Gilbert – Board Chair Nicole Gilliss – Vice Chair Ida Campbell
Erin Evans Madeleine Lehmann David Scott-Moncrieff Bill Snow

past, we have realized that the more advocacy support we receive from other provincial organizations will keep this issue on the government's radar.

If you require further information, please feel free to reach out to any of the trustees listed below. Thank you for considering this request.

Yours truly,

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
School District No. 60 (Peace River North)

Helen Gilbert, Board Chair

HG:ee

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