

November 23, 2021

Attention: Board Chair and Trustees of School District 68

Re: Cancellation of School Activities (School Sports)

Yesterday we were advised that School District 68 has directed that before and after school sporting activities would be cancelled in order to eliminate non-essential travel. This impacts both elementary and secondary school aged children.

There are not many things that would prompt either of us to write a letter to the Trustees of the School District - but this is definitely one of those things.

The decision of School District 68 to cancel all school activities including children's sports is not at all in the best interests of the students of SD68.

The Provincial Ministerial Orders include two things:

- 1) Restrictions on purchasing vehicle fuel up to 30 liters, and
- 2) Restrictions on non-essential travel along severely damaged highways

The orders do not restrict personal travel, and we believe the School District is being unrealistic with its reaction to the ministerial orders. Many school age children live in the catchment area for the school that they attend, meaning they can walk or bike to get there. If they don't live in the catchment area, their parents will be driving them to school anyways, because school is an essential service.

Many schools are not long distances from each other. As an example, McGirr Elementary, Uplands Elementary, and Randerson Elementary are all in close proximity. It is frustrating that in this scenario the very first thing the School District decides is to blanket cancel all school activities. This is not consistent with the actions of other School Districts on Vancouver Island.

The cancellation of kids sports and activities (at all levels) doesn't come without consequences. There are large amounts of children in SD68 that are already dealing with the mental and physical impacts of COVID-19. Children in sport (and children with other creative interests) have finally been able to resume participating in active, productive, lifestyles and then everything that they enjoy doing is cancelled because the School District is over-interpreting orders from the Province?

Our children attend both McGirr Elementary and Dover Bay Secondary, and both are able to walk or bike to school. Sporting activities including volleyball and basketball are huge parts of their lives, and take place directly before or after school starts. At the very least, they could remain practicing or playing other teams within a certain number of kilometers around them.

The impact that the cancellation of all sports has on kids is massive from both a physical health and mental health perspective. I have watched it with my own two children - as they spend more time on electronic devices and less time exercising and socializing with other kids their own age.

Our kids are fortunate, they have other sports programs that they can continue on with that are outside of the School District. For many less fortunate children, school sports programs are all they have to rely on.

Honestly, we are surprised that the School District would make this decision so lightly and we would urge the District to reconsider this decision, as we don't believe that it is in the best interests of any of the SD68 students in the long-term.

As residents of BC we are all responsible for curbing our fuel usage, and that there are ways to make that happen without having a directly negative impact on our children.

Thank you for your consideration,



Jamie Slater, CPA, CA



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